# REASON PAPERS

## A Journal of Interdisciplinary Normative Studies

# REASON PAPERS

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# Editorial

After serving for twelve years—first as Co-Managing-Editor and then as Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Reason Papers*—Carrie-Ann Biondi will step down from her Co-Editor-in-Chief position. Demoting herself to Book Review Editor will allow her time to turn to other projects calling from the wings. Beginning with issue 40.2, Shawn Klein will serve as the Editor-in-Chief of *Reason Papers*.[1]

The topics of the two symposia in this issue of *Reason Papers* may seem unrelated—a reconsideration of Stoicism and an attempt to integrate free markets with Existentialism—but they share an interesting sub-theme: wariness of consumerism. What ties them together is a concern for responsibly exercising one's freedom in ways that enhance each individual's autonomy.

In her introduction to the Stoicism Reconsidered symposium, Jennifer Baker sets the stage for Massimo Pigliucci's and Brian Johnson's exchange by identifying a number of benefits that the resurgence of Stoicism can provide in a world full of distractions and challenges. Pigliucci welcomes modern Stoicism as the most attractive variant of virtue ethics on the moral philosophy scene. He also develops and updates this ancient theory for practical use in the twenty-first century by taking into account insights from cognitive-behavioral therapy and explaining how key Stoic tenets are compatible with both religious and non-religious belief systems. It's an important opportunity, he argues, for professional philosophers to reach and help millions of people. Johnson, however, is dubious that even an updated Stoicism can be sold to modern audiences. His main worry concerns Stoicism's view about how we ought not be emotionally attached to "externals" or "indifferents" in our quest for tranquility of mind. Most troubling, he argues, is that Stoicism seems to imply that it is irrational to grieve the loss of loved ones, which he regards as "ethical sociopathy." Pigliucci seeks in his rejoinder to clarify the nature of Stoic indifferents so as to defuse Johnson's charge and establish an emotionally healthy form of Stoicism.

The second symposium focuses on William Irwin's book *The Free Market Existentialist: Capitalism without Consumerism*. This

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[1] Note from Carrie-Ann Biondi: I am delighted to be able to hand editorship of *Reason Papers* to someone as conscientious and excellent at editing as Shawn Klein is. Editing a journal takes a tremendous amount of skill, judgment, and dedication—all of which Shawn possesses in abundance. I look forward to seeing to what new heights he takes *Reason Papers*.

thought-provoking work integrates insights about individualism, authenticity, and responsibility that can be gleaned from libertarian political philosophy and Existentialism. Both strands of thought emphasize that individuals need freedom. Rather than seeing these views—as many have—as antagonistic to one another, Irwin argues that Existentialism can be "the perfect accompaniment to capitalism, allowing us to reap the benefits of a free market while encouraging us to resist crass consumerism."[2] While broadly sympathetic with Irwin's project of reconciling political liberty and free markets with Existentialism, Jason Walker argues that Irwin's moral anti-realism leaves a libertarian political and legal system vulnerable to the whimsy of its citizens. Without normative grounds, why would people obey the law or respect the rights of fellow citizens? Like Walker, Mark White lauds Irwin's attempt to reconcile two seemingly conflicting views in a nuanced way and worries that moral anti-realism is not up to the task Irwin sets for it. White, though, has an additional critique: he is dubious that many readers who are not already supporters of free markets would be persuaded of the soundness of Existentialist-inspired arguments for libertarian political philosophy. White thinks that Irwin's book would have been strengthened by focusing primarily on how Existentialist insights could bolster our ability to live authentically in a world full of market pressures to do otherwise. While grateful that Walker and White appreciate his main project, Irwin is confident that his account of prudence is sufficient for guiding action in a free market system and protecting the individual liberty they all value.

In a previous issue of *Reason Papers*, Gary James Jason analyzed four early Holocaust documentaries with the aim of understanding what makes them effective (or not) as examples of their genre.[3] Here, he resumes that project by describing and analyzing several later Holocaust documentaries. In both parts of this extended study, Jason finds that such documentaries—when they incorporate actual footage and steer clear of assigning "collective guilt"—avoid being classified as propaganda and succeed in being powerful tools to educate posterity.

Three book reviews round out this issue. Raymond Raad offers a mixed verdict on Harry Binswanger's *How We Know: Epistemology*

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[2] William Irwin, *The Free Market Existentialist: Capitalism without Consumerism* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 3.

[3] Gary James Jason, "Memorializing Genocide I: Earlier Holocaust Documentaries," *Reason Papers* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2016), pp. 64-88.

*on an Objectivist Foundation*. Raad argues that the strongest chapters are those that explain and unpack Ayn Rand's distinctive epistemology. Others are weaker, though, in their attempt to venture into new terrain (e.g., propositions) and in missed opportunities to engage with recent scholarship. Thornton Lockwood tackles Shawn Klein's edited collection *Defining Sport*. Although he finds that the first half of the volume—focused on the necessary and sufficient conditions of sport—does not really break new ground, Lockwood thinks that the second half offers a rich examination of "borderline" cases about what might count (or not) as a sport. Finally, Alex Abbandonato reviews the most recent edition of *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, which remains a popular classic in the field of peace and conflict studies. He finds this fourth edition—with its emphasis on "bottom-up" peacebuilding, transnational cooperation, and mediation—to be an improvement over previous editions. In a world as marked as it has ever been with geopolitical strife, fresh approaches to conflict resolution are always welcome.

Thank you for reading *Reason Papers*. The editorial leadership may be changing, but we will still aim to publish the highest quality normative inquiries and debates.[4]

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[4] Note from Shawn Klein: The masthead may say Co-Editors-in-Chief, but Carrie-Ann did the lion's share of the work and deserves the lion's share of the praise. *Reason Papers* is what it is today because of her efforts and dedication. She has been, and I know will continue to be, a great mentor, colleague, and friend. I only hope that I will be able to match her legacy of excellence at *Reason Papers*.

**Symposium: Stoicism Reconsidered**

## Choose the Hyundai

Jennifer Baker
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Jules Evans shares a telling anecdote in one of his books on the practical uses of philosophy. After asking a scholar of Stoicism whether he follows the ideas in his own life, he is told, "Oh God no, I hope things never get that bad."[1] I have had a similar experience, though things had gotten "that bad." In an attempt to reassure a colleague, an excellent Stoic scholar, that I was doing okay after the sudden death of my beloved sister, I said, "Some of the Stoic lines are helping." He replied with a bit of panic, "Oh I think you will want to see a professional!" I did see a professional, but all of these years later, it still seems like a waste of money and time. All she did was ask curious questions about my sister. I left her office, after paying two hundred dollars, wondering whether it could be possible that such a highly recommended therapist had nothing to say about the meaning of death. And so I stuck with the Stoics.

To me and others, there is no question that Stoicism is practical. We use it, after all, not because it is in any way trendy, but for its effects. Let me quickly point to some of these.

(1) Stoicism makes it difficult to justify being selfish, as it does not encourage us even to think of ourselves in such a way. Contrary to the impression that the phrase "preferred indifferents" makes, Stoicism emphasizes that other people are permanently part of my circle of concern. My main ethical task is to manage my care for others. One of the authors in this symposium, Brian Johnson, explains that when the Stoics tell us to know ourselves, that is as much about

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[1] Jules Evans, *Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2012), p. 12.

"paying attention" to others and "harmonizing with them" as it is about self-control.[2]

(2) Stoicism encourages me to refuse to do things. We get endless advice from friends, the media, and family about what we can do. So many courses of action and various ways of reacting can be considered prudent, justified, and practical, but many of them are unsavory. Also, it is difficult to know when to stop scheming, once you start. Stoicism, by placing integrity above other hoped-for outcomes, guides me to bite my tongue, pass on the cheap shot, and aim for self-control.

(3) Rather than offering a set of criteria which we are told to consult as needed, Stoicism makes ethics a fully engaging and ongoing project. I figure out something about virtue each day, by watching others and tracking my own mistakes. Despite the impression it can give, Stoicism is not overly demanding. Seneca describes a daily ritual of self-pardon, where you review the inevitable mistakes of your day and then say to yourself, "See that you do not do it again, but this time, I pardon you."[3]

An example of how Stoicism can make ethics livable is the case of General James Stockdale. When captured and kept as a prisoner of war (POW) for seven years during the Vietnam War, recalling Stoic lines he had once learned in school was of some help. He replaced the wholly unrealistic and terminally demoralizing guidelines the Army had issued for POWs (e.g., "Give up no information") with new guidelines, still too demanding for most of us, but realistic enough for him and his fellow soldiers (e.g., "Give up inaccurate information").[4]

(4) Despite common misconceptions, accepting Stoicism can also lead to nice emotional effects, such as the joy they prescribe. The stakes involved in Stoic ethics do not involve being jealous of other people's happiness or suspicious of their virtue. Whether someone is "virtue signaling" or not does not matter. Nor does the view encourage

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[2] Brian Johnson, *The Role Ethics of Epictetus: Stoicism in Ordinary Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 12.

[3] Seneca, "On Anger," in *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca: Essays and Letters*, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: Norton, 1958), III.36.

[4] James Stockdale, *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1995).

you to take personally other people's moral mistakes. These, and so many other concerns, are not germane to someone who believes that she has her own "work to do."

It is possible that these kinds of benefits might be offered by all sorts of other sources. Even Martha Nussbaum, who has found much to borrow from the Stoic account of emotion, explicitly recommends that we read widely and find inspiration from as many ethical sources as we can.[5] The first challenge put to any modern Stoic is: Why adopt an ancient account? The response to this is to point out that we now have updated, wholly modern versions of Stoicism.[6] The next challenge, one that Nussbaum regards as unmet, is: Why commit to Stoic ethical theory as if it were necessary or exclusive?

One response might be that we are more or less philosophical, and some of us will not be satisfied with handy bromides. For such people, further explanation will be sought. For them, modernized versions of Stoic ethics are useful.

Another response might be that all of us, if we are to maintain a counter-cultural view concerning the goods of life, need the assistance of Stoic insights. The theory, in other words, provokes us to recognize things that would otherwise likely remain hidden. For example, I once asked the students in a class each to turn to their neighbors and discuss which car they would choose, given the choice of being gifted an equally reliable Mercedes or a Hyundai. They stayed silent, which meant something was wrong. As I turned from the board, I realized what I had forgotten to say: "Sorry, we are reviewing the Stoics!" After I uttered the prompt, they stopped looking puzzled and the classroom quickly filled with the usual argumentative din. I thought that this was remarkable evidence of how Stoic proposals are so counter-cultural that we cannot recognize without assistance the questions Stoicism puts to us. The way we should value material goods is so commonly considered a settled and unphilosophical matter, that it is difficult even to imagine that people might believe a Hyundai could be better for you than a Mercedes.

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[5] "Interview with Martha Nussbaum: The Renowned Philosopher on Stoicism, Emotions, and Must-Read Books," *Daily Stoic*, February 6, 2018, accessed online at: https://dailystoic.com/martha-nussbaum/.

[6] Lawrence C. Becker, *A New Stoicism*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

Yet the Stoics argue that if you get accustomed to driving a fancy car, when a less fancy one would do, your self-identity gets weakened a bit, as it comes to depend on the car. Have some of you had a nice car? Did you ever, in that time, have to take a ride in a not-so-nice car, and hesitate a bit before getting in, worried about the impression you would now be making? Have you ever had an inexpensive car? Was it any trouble getting into a nicer one for a ride? Do you really believe that you are a better person if you have a Mercedes? Do you want to convince yourself of that? It is easy to, but Stoicism will point out that you have lost something when you hesitate to ride in a car that you consider embarrassing.

While we can all test the usefulness of Stoic ideas, some of their claims (e.g., that highly prized objects and even our loved ones are "preferred indifferents") are hardly intuitive. Modern-day Stoics are going to need to make use of, and continue to develop, their theory. This is desirable and possible, as Massimo Pigliucci points out[7] when rejecting Johnson's view that "preferred indifferents" cannot be sold to a modern audience. Their exchange in this symposium concerning this issue parallels similar debates throughout the history of Stoic thought.[8]

Let me end with one more example, this one on how Stoicism sometimes gets associated with seeing life in a darker and colder way than is necessary. In one of her class lectures that I attended as an undergraduate, Nussbaum memorably described how researchers had described those living in western Alaska as "stoic," after observing their burial rituals when the tundra was frozen and they could not bury their dead.[9] The class discussed whether we would choose this option (i.e., looking upon our unburied deceased loved ones) or an alternative, Aristotelian one. She illustrated the alternative with the story of

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[7] Massimo Pigliucci, "Stoicism, Friendship, and Grief: A Response to Johnson," *Reason Papers* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2018), pp. 37-38.

[8] See, e.g., Anthony A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Anthony A. Long, *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Vol. II, Books 6-10, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Loeb Classical Library, 1925); Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[9] Clark M. Garber, "Some Mortuary Customs of the Western Alaska Eskimos," *The Scientific Monthly* 39, no. 3 (September 1934), pp. 203-20.

American G.I.s coming upon the Dachau concentration camp. They were so shaken by what they saw that they violated military law by shooting some of the German prison guards on site.[10] The answer, to us at the time, seemed obvious. When it came to who you would rather be—a soldier coursing with outrage and emotion or an Eskimo facing unburied, frozen loved ones—we opted for the former. That's how inhumane and cold the Stoic option appeared to us at the time.

But had we thought through Nussbaum's examples? If I could return to that classroom, I would have more to say in our discussion group. It can seem as if accepting Stoicism means that we are somehow choosing terrible things, being asked to prepare for them even when days are sunny. Such musings violate a lot of taboos, but is it really more humane to pretend that people, including children, do not die in the Alaskan tundra?

Stoicism emphasizes that we are mortal because we are. It does nothing to create that fact. However, that it acknowledges this fact, makes all the difference. It is not as if learning about Stoicism lessens our grief, but it does offer what I could find no place else: useful advice on how to move forward by focusing on the only things that we can control: "sin and crime and wicked thoughts and greedy schemes and blind lust and avarice."[11] This is something, when you feel left with nothing. Nor does it need revision when your world fills again with bright value.

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[10] "Dachau Liberation Reprisals," Wikipedia, accessed online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dachau_liberation_reprisals.

[11] Seneca, "On Providence," in *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca*, ed. Hadas, p. 43.

# Toward the Fifth Stoa: The Return of Virtue Ethics

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## 1. Introduction

  Stoicism is back. After a hiatus of about eighteen centuries (if one does not count the brief interval of Neo-Stoicism instigated by Justus Lipsius during the Renaissance[1]), the Greco-Roman philosophy often (wrongly) associated with suppressing emotions and going through life with a stiff upper lip is back in the news. Literally. Major national and international newspapers and media outlets, including but not limited to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, the BBC, *Der Standard*, *El Mundo*, *El Pais*, and even *Marie Claire*, are suddenly talking about Stoicism. The major online community of people interested in the philosophy, on Facebook, counts over 40,000 members.[2]

  It is easy and tempting for professional philosophers to scoff at this phenomenon, but it would be unwise. I suggest that what is known as modern Stoicism is to be situated within a broader renaissance of virtue ethics in both technical philosophy and popular culture. I will also argue that this is a clear benefit (despite some caveats) for professional philosophy, for general education, and arguably for society at large. Philosophers should therefore take notice, understand, and insofar as it is possible, contribute to the increasing interest in practical philosophy, of which modern Stoicism is but one manifestation.

  I will proceed by summarizing the basic ideas underlying virtue ethics and tracing a brief history of their return to prominence in

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[1] Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[2] See "Stoicism Group (Stoic Philosophy)," on Facebook, accessed online at: https://facebook.com/groups/466338856752556.

contemporary philosophy. I will then suggest a number of factors that have contributed to the rise of modern Stoicism. After recapping the main tenets of Stoic philosophy, as they are interpreted currently, I will conclude with an overview of the ongoing project of updating Stoicism for the twenty-first century, what I refer to as the Fifth Stoa.

## 2. Virtue Ethics: What It Is and How It Came Back

Virtue ethics is the general label for a large family of moral philosophies that find their roots in the Greco-Roman world, particularly, but not only, in Socrates and Aristotle. As Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove put it, it "is currently one of three major approaches in normative ethics. It may, initially, be identified as the one that emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach that emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or that emphasizes the consequences of actions (consequentialism)."[3]

The three basic concepts around which all virtue ethical approaches are built are *aretê* (virtue, excellence), *phronêsis* (prudence, or practical wisdom), and *eudaimonia* (flourishing). The fundamental goal is to live a life worth living, a eudaimonic existence, though what this means, precisely, varies from school to school. We achieve this goal by practicing a number of virtues, practical wisdom being the one that teaches us the crucial difference between what is and is not good for us, morally speaking.

John-Stewart Gordon provides a handy classification of the major Hellenistic schools of virtue ethics, relating them as a function of which aspect of Socratic philosophy they emphasized or even rejected.[4] The major entries are represented by the Academics (followers of Plato), the Peripatetics (Aristotle), the Cyrenaics (Aristippus), the Epicureans (Epicurus), the Cynics (Antisthenes, Diogenes of Sinope), and the Stoics (Zeno of Citium). The first two are related by direct descent from Socrates (first Plato, then Aristotle), though they diverged sharply in their philosophies. The Academics first adopted a highly abstract theory of the forms and then turned

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[3] Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove, "Virtue Ethics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed online at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/.

[4] John-Stewart Gordon, "Modern Morality and Ancient Ethics," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed online at: http://www.iep.utm.edu/anci-mod/.

skeptical. The Peripatetics evolved an approach in which virtue is necessary but not sufficient for *eudaimonia*; one also needs a degree of luck, as manifested in the availability of external goods, including wealth, health, education, and even good looks.

The Cyrenaics and the Epicureans represent a separate branch, characterized mostly by the rejection of Socratic philosophy in favor of an approach that—while still rooted in virtue—emphasizes the importance of seeking pleasure and, especially, avoiding pain. The difference between the two schools lies principally in the fact that the Cyrenaics were concerned solely with physical pleasures and pain, while the Epicureans emphasized the primacy of emotional and intellectual pleasures and pains, hence the latters' influence on John Stuart Mill's famous distinction between "high" and "low" pleasures.[5] Both schools counseled disengagement from social and political activities, which is liable to bring pain rather than pleasure.

The third branch includes the Stoics and their immediate predecessors, the Cynics. Both schools consider virtue to be necessary and sufficient for *eudaimonia*, aligning themselves most closely with Socratic philosophy. They do differ, however, in the treatment of external goods, which they call "indifferents." For the Cynics, externals (wealth, fame, even family and friends) get in the way of practicing virtue, as they saw their mission in life to live a minimalist existence and to preach virtue (their name means "dog-like," as in the style of living they adopted). For the Stoics, by contrast, externals are divided into the classes of preferred and dispreferred "indifferents." I will elaborate below on what this means and why it is crucial for Stoic philosophy.

Virtue ethics is not found only in the Western philosophical tradition; for instance, Confucianism is often considered akin to Aristotelian virtue ethics.[6] Several authors have also expounded on the similarities between Stoicism, in particular, and Buddhism.[7] This

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[5] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. John Robson, vol. 10, accessed online at: http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mill-collected-works-of-john-stuart-mill-in-33-vols.

[6] Stephen Angle and Michael Slote, *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2013).

[7] Antonia Macaro, *More Than Happiness: Buddhist and Stoic Wisdom for a Sceptical Age* (London: Icon Books, 2018).

article, however, confines itself to the Western canon, within which virtue ethics went into decline with the turn of the Roman Empire to Christianity, and then throughout the Middle Ages, although it must be noted that four of the seven Christian virtues identified by Thomas Aquinas were, in fact, Stoic.[8]

The modern return of virtue ethics on the philosophical, if not popular, scene owes much to the work of four philosophers: Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Bernard Williams.[9] Anscombe advanced the view that we should simply stop doing moral philosophy as it has been done so far, until we develop what she calls a philosophy of psychology. For her, concepts like moral obligation and moral duty are obsolete, the remnants of a way of thinking that is no longer tenable in light of the modern scientific understanding of the world. Consequently, she regards the well-known differences among modern moral philosophers to be, essentially, irrelevant. Her demolition job on moral philosophy paved the way for the resurgence of virtue ethics, especially through her influence on MacIntyre.

Foot famously changed her position about crucial aspects of her meta-ethics during her career, but she was instrumental in articulating a Neo-Aristotelian view of virtue ethics as well as sustained criticisms of consequentialism and non-cognitivism. She introduced the philosophical device of "trolley dilemmas" to explore our moral intuitions (and coined the term "consequentialism"). She also articulated a moral philosophy constructed on hypothetical imperatives. Most crucially for my purposes here, Foot conceived a type of natural goodness that is contingent (as opposed to the Kantian idea of a universal moral law) in the sense that it depends on the kind of biological organism that *Homo sapiens* is, just as the Stoics had proposed long ago when they articulated their apparently paradoxical slogan: "Live according to (human) nature."

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[8] Christopher Kaczor, *Thomas Aquinas on the Cardinal Virtues: Edited and Explained for Everyone* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009).

[9] Elizabeth E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (1958), pp. 1-19; Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Taylor & Francis, 1985).

MacIntyre rejected both of the then-current major systems in moral philosophy, utilitarianism and Kantian deontology, going so far as to consider them irrational. His seminal book *After Virtue* is arguably the most important work in the modern revival of virtue ethics. MacIntyre singled out Aristotle, but more broadly made the case that the Greco-Roman approach to ethics was in far better shape than the modern one.

Finally, Williams also produced scathing criticisms of both utilitarianism and Kantian deontology, and he was generally skeptical of moral philosophical systems. Real life, he thought, is just too complex for such narrow straightjackets. That, naturally, led him to abandon the Kantian question of duty and to arch back to what interested the Greeks: What sort of life should we live? What kind of persons do we want to be?

The way I see the contributions of these four authors (and of several more who followed and are following in their footsteps) is in terms of a dual approach, what Bacon would call a "negative project" and a "positive project."[10] Anscombe and especially Williams did more of the former, while Foot and MacIntyre more clearly contributed to the latter.

The negative project consists in a sustained criticism not just of the various specific systems of modern moral philosophy, but in a wholesale rejection of the entire approach they instantiate. Both utilitarianism and Kantian deontology attempt to articulate universal principles, focusing respectively on the outcomes of actions (independently of the agent's intentions) or on the agent's intentions (independently of the outcome of actions). It is their common assumption that it is meaningful to search for relatively simple universal moral principles that is rejected, for various reasons and in different fashions, by all of the authors mentioned above. What then?

The positive project, in all of these cases, depends on a return to the Greco-Roman conception of ethics as the study of how to live one's life, with a focus on the agent's character, from which right motivations emerged and, fate permitting, right outcomes derive. This is a return to the roots even literally in a linguistic sense. "Ethics" comes from the Greek *êthos*, a word related to our idea of character. "Morality," in turn, is how Cicero translated *êthos*, and it captures a

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[10] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (1620), accessed online at: http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/bacon-novum-organum.

reference to the habits and customs of people, that is, how they actually behave in a society.

As we have seen from the brief sketch given above, much of the resurgence of virtue ethics, at least within academic philosophy, has taken the form of Neo-Aristotelianism. Outside the academy, however, the focus has increasingly been on Stoicism. This has, in turn, triggered serious academic work not only on the ancient Stoics, but also on the practicality of their version of eudaimonism in modern times.

## 3. Why Stoicism?

In ancient times, Stoicism went through three phases, known as the early, middle, and late Stoas.[11] The early period was centered in Athens around figures such as Zeno of Citium, the founder of the sect, his student Cleanthes, and Chrysippus, one of the major logicians of antiquity. The middle period marked the diaspora from Athens and the spread throughout the Hellenistic and Republican Roman worlds, with the major figures being Panaetius and Posidonius (the latter was also Cicero's teacher). The late period is the one from which we have the most extant documents; it spans the first two centuries of the Roman Empire; and it is characterized by authors like Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

After Marcus Aurelius, in the second part of the second century, we do not have a record of other prominent Stoics, though the philosophy influenced Christian writers from Paul of Tarsus to Thomas Aquinas as well as major modern philosophers, including René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Adam Smith.[12] As mentioned above, there was also a brief period during the Renaissance when Justus Lipsius attempted a formal reconciliation of Stoicism and Christianity; his Neo-Stoicism attracted thinkers like Michel de Montaigne.[13]

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[11] David Sedley, "The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 7-32; Chris Gill, "The School in the Roman Imperial Period," in *ibid.*, pp. 33-58.

[12] Anthony A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[13] John Sellars, "Neo-Stoicism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed online at: http://www.iep.utm.edu/neostoic/.

We have to wait until the second half of the twentieth century for the emergence of modern Stoicism. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact dynamics for this, as there are no sociological studies available that I am aware of. However, several factors seem to have played a role, in sequence or simultaneously:

(A) The development, after World War II, of cognitive-based psychotherapies, particularly Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, Albert Ellis's rational-emotive behavioral therapy (REBT), and Aaron Beck's early cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). I am not aware of an explicit acknowledgment of Stoicism by Frankl, but both Ellis and Beck were openly influenced by the Stoics, particularly by Epictetus.[14]

(B) The work of Pierre Hadot, who almost single-handedly put (back) on the map the concept of practical philosophy with a series of influential books, especially *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (which includes a discussion of Stoicism), and *The Inner Citadel* (devoted to an analysis in modern terms of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*).[15] As he put it, ancient philosophers conceived of philosophy as involving a therapy of the soul, or a "remedy for human worries, anguish, and misery brought about for the Cynics, by social constraints and conventions; for the Epicureans, by the quest for false pleasures; for the Stoics, by the pursuit of pleasure and egoistic self-interest; and for the skeptics, by false opinions."[16]

(C) The appearance in 1998 of Lawrence Becker's book *A New Stoicism* (recently updated). This is nothing less than a systematic, if partial, attempt at updating Stoic philosophy for modern times.

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[14] Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1959 [1946]); Albert Ellis and Robert Harper, *A Guide to Rational Living* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961); Aaron Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, Inc., 1975).

[15] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 1995); Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[16] Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 102.

Becker examines all of the major aspects of ancient Stoicism, from its metaphysics and logic to, especially, the various components of its ethics, and re-interprets them in light of the intervening two millennia of philosophical and scientific progress.[17]

(D) The explosion of applied modern Stoicism made possible by social media platforms. Other than the already mentioned main Facebook presence, people interested in Stoicism find themselves on a number of additional, more focused Facebook pages, but also on Twitter, Google+, and so on. This has made possible the enormous success of annual events like the Stoicon conference and the online "Stoic Week" training seminar.

(E) The above has naturally generated a market for trade books devoted to the theory and practice of Stoic philosophy.[18]

(F) This, in turn, has led to a demand for new translations of the major Stoics.[19]

(G) Finally, the above has also triggered—or has perhaps been accompanied by—a renaissance of scholarly monographs on Stoicism.[20]

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[17] Lawrence C. Becker, *A New Stoicism*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[18] See, e.g., William B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Massimo Pigliucci, *How to Be a Stoic: Using Ancient Philosophy to Live a Modern Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); Donald Robertson, *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (Abingdon, UK: Teach Yourself, 2013).

[19] *Letters on Ethics: To Lucilius by Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, trans. Margaret Graver (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015); *Epictetus: Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); *Meditations by Marcus Aurelius*, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[20] See, e.g., Long, *Epictetus*; Brian E. Johnson, *The Role Ethics of Epictetus: Stoicism in Ordinary Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2013); Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007); René Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood, and Socrates* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

**4. (Modernized) Stoicism 101**

What does modern Stoicism look like? Just as contemporary interest in Aristotle's ideas about ethics has brought about forms of Neo-Aristotelianism, so contemporary interest in Stoicism is shaping a number of projects seeking to update the ancient philosophy for modern times. There is, however, a major difference between the two: while much of the literature on Neo-Aristotelianism in ethics is part of the scholarly revival of that approach, modern Stoicism is largely a grassroots movement, albeit one that is informed by the contributions of some scholars in ancient philosophy as well as practitioners of cognitive-behavioral and allied therapies. In other words, the emphasis is on the applied aspect of the philosophy.

As noted above, the most comprehensive effort at updating Stoicism for the twenty-first century is Becker's book *A New Stoicism*. A number of other authors (including myself), though, have published books and essays aimed at a general public that consciously seek to modernize the philosophy in light of developments in science and general philosophy over the intervening two millennia.[21] In what follows I will sketch five fundamental principles of ancient Stoicism and how they are being translated and applied to a modern setting.

*a. Living according to nature*

This motto was one of the famous Stoic "paradoxes" of antiquity, that is, a deliberately provocative phrase that was meant to stimulate discussion about Stoic doctrine. As Diogenes Laertius summarizes it:

> This is why Zeno was the first (in his treatise *On the Nature of Man*) to designate as the end "life in agreement with nature" (or living agreeably to nature), which is the same as a virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us. So too Cleanthes in his treatise *On Pleasure*, as also Posidonius, and Hecato in his work *On Ends*. Again, living virtuously is equivalent to living in accordance with experience of the actual

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[21] For examples of essays seeking to modernize Stoicism in an accessible way, see my website, *How to Be a Stoic*, accessed online at:
https://howtobeastoic.wordpress.com/category/modern-stoicism/.

course of nature, as Chrysippus says in the first book of his *De finibus*; for our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe.[22]

The ancient Stoics were pantheists and relied on a conception of Providence (especially in Epictetus) that, although certainly different from the Christian one, still guaranteed a teleological component to their philosophy.[23] Their "living according to nature," therefore, was a relatively straightforward extension of their metaphysics. We are part and parcel of the Logos that permeates the cosmos; a major directive in life is to keep in harmony with the Logos, regardless of the fact that in specific instances things do not seem to us to be going in a way that is conducive to our own flourishing.

Most (though not all) modern Stoics, however, reject any strong sense of the transcendental, even the relatively limited Stoic conception of God as coinciding with the universe itself. Nonetheless, we can retain a meaningful sense of "living according to nature" at both levels identified by the early Stoics. In terms of the nature of the cosmos, as Becker puts it, this translates to "follow the facts," that is, do not engage in a metaphysics that ignores or does not take on board the best understanding of how the world actually works. More importantly, in terms of human nature (which does not need to be understood in essentialist fashion), we can still agree with the original Stoic idea that crucial aspects of it are the fact that we thrive in social groups and the fact that we are capable of reason. "Living according to nature" in that sense, then, translates to applying reason to improve social living.[24]

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[22] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, VII.87, accessed online at:
https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Lives_of_the_Eminent_Philosophers.

[23] Keimpe Algra, "Stoic theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Inwood, pp. 153-78.

[24] See Skye Cleary and Massimo Pigliucci, "Human Nature Matters," *Aeon*, accessed online at: https://aeon.co/essays/theres-no-philosophy-of-life-without-a-theory-of-human-nature; Massimo Pigliucci, "Living According to Nature," *How to Be a Stoic*, accessed online at:
https://howtobeastoic.wordpress.com/2017/11/29/living-according-to-nature/.

### *b. The dichotomy of control*

One of the fundamental principles of both ancient and modern Stoicism is the so-called dichotomy of control, famously expressed by Epictetus at the beginning of the *Enchiridion* in this fashion: "Some things are within our power, while others are not. Within our power are opinion, motivation, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever is of our own doing; not within our power are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, whatever is not of our own doing."[25] It sounded as counterintuitive then as it does now, since one's immediate reaction most likely is to object that surely some things are under my partial control, including all those listed by Epictetus as being not so: my body, my property, my reputation, and so forth. Indeed, modern Stoic William Irvine has attempted to introduce a significant modification of this doctrine, which he calls the trichotomy of control.[26] Some things are under our control (our judgments, opinions, and so forth). Others are outside of our control (the weather, major international events, natural catastrophes). Much else falls in the middle (the body: I can eat healthy and go to the gym; reputation: I can work toward improving or safeguarding it; and so on).

Donald Robertson and I have objected to Irvine's revision as essentially destroying an important aspect of Stoic doctrine.[27] To begin with, surely Epictetus knew the difference between what we can do about the weather (nothing) and our body (something), so he must have meant something very specific. The common interpretation is that he was making a distinction between things that are completely under our control versus things we either do not control at all or can only influence. The idea is that our *eudaimonia* should depend only on things which we completely control; the rest should be accepted with equanimity. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose; sometimes things go our way, at other times they don't. It is this interpretation that makes sense of a nearby passage in the *Enchiridion*:

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[25] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.1.

[26] Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life*.

[27] See, e.g., Donald Robertson, "Review of Irvine's *A Guide to the Good Life*," accessed online at: https://donaldrobertson.name/2013/05/17/review-of-irvines-a-guide-to-the-good-life-the-ancient-art-of-stoic-joy-2009/.

Remember, then, that if you attribute freedom to things by nature dependent and take what belongs to others for your own, you will be hindered, you will lament, you will be disturbed, you will find fault both with gods and men. But if you take for your own only that which is your own and view what belongs to others just as it really is, then no one will ever compel you, no one will restrict you; you will find fault with no one, you will accuse no one, you will do nothing against your will; no one will hurt you, you will not have an enemy, nor will you suffer any harm.[28]

The most frequent modern rendition of the dichotomy of control is that it encourages us to internalize our goals, a view derived from a famous passage in Cicero, where he uses the metaphor of an archer attempting to hit a target.[29] The archer controls how much time he practices, his choice and maintenance of bows and arrows, his focus before letting the arrow go, and the precise moment at which to let it go. Beyond that, the outcome is entirely outside of his control, as a gust of wind or a sudden evasive maneuver by the target (say, an enemy soldier), could ruin the best shot. This holds similarly with the things we care about: It is misguided to want a job promotion, to be loved, or to be healthy. We should, instead, do whatever we are capable of in order to deserve the job, we should be loving, and we should take care of our body. The rest is up to the universe.

A second objection is that contemporary cognitive science seems to restrict significantly the range of things that are "up to us," according to Epictetus. Daniel Kahneman's distinction between system 1 and system 2 thought processes[30] (as well as research on cognitive biases[31]), which shows that a lot of our thinking takes place below the threshold of consciousness, appears to be at odds with this fundamental Stoic idea. However, the ancient Stoics were well aware of the fact that

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[28] Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 1.3.

[29] Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, III.22.

[30] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

[31] Thomas Gilovich et al., eds., *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

we have instinctive reactions and automatic thoughts over which we have no control, as made explicitly clear, for instance, by Seneca's treatment of the phases of development of anger in *De Ira*. Indeed, research by Joseph LeDoux on cognitive components of emotions,[32] as well as the effectiveness of evidence-based approaches to psychotherapy inspired by Stoicism, like cognitive-behavioral therapy, demonstrate that the Stoics got their psychology broadly right, on the basis of their keen direct observation of human behavior. Nonetheless, a modern Stoic would do well, of course, to be aware of what recent research in psychology and neuroscience has to say about the dynamics of human thinking and decision-making.[33]

### c. The cardinal virtues

The Stoics inherited from Socrates the view that there are four, deeply interconnected, virtues that we need to practice in order to become better persons: practical wisdom or prudence (*phronêsis*, Latin *prudentia*), courage (*andreia*), justice (*dikaiosynê*), and temperance (*sôphrosynê*). Practical wisdom is knowledge of what is good and evil for us, which essentially reduces to understanding that the only things really good for us are our correct judgments, decisions, and values, while the only evils for us are our own incorrect judgments, decisions, and values (see dichotomy of control, above). Courage is not just physical, but above all moral, as in the courage to stand up for the right thing. Justice is what tells you what that right thing is, and in general how to treat fellow human beings. Temperance is acting in right measure, neither too little nor too much, in proportion to what the circumstances require.

Socrates famously defended the controversial view of the "unity of virtues" (for instance, in "Laches"), which was adopted by the Stoics and is being reinterpreted by modern authors favorable to

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[32] Joseph LeDoux, *Anxious: Using the Brain to Understand and Treat Fear and Anxiety* (New York, Viking, 2015).

[33] It is worth noting that the concept of a dichotomy of control is found also in several other traditions, from the eighth-century Buddhist Shantideva (Shantideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, rev. ed., trans. Padmakara Translation Group [Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2006], chap. 6, verse 10) to the eleventh-century Jewish philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol (Solomon ibn Gabriol, *A Choice of Pearls*, trans. A. Cohen [New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1925]) to the 1934 serenity prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr (http://skdesigns.com/internet/articles/prose/niebuhr/serenity_prayer/).

that tradition.[34] In essence, this view holds that one cannot possess one of the virtues without possessing all of them. It is impossible, for instance, to be courageous and yet unjust, since "courage" here refers to a moral property, not just to bravery in the face of danger. Interpreted this way, the doctrine of the unity of virtues says that the four are different facets of the same fundamental thing, namely, wisdom.[35]

Interestingly, cross-cultural research on the concept of virtue finds that there is a core set of virtues, virtue-like behavioral tendencies, or character traits, that are universally (or nearly so) recognized across literate cultures throughout history.[36] This core includes the Stoic cardinal virtues, plus two more that are recognized by the Stoics but not treated as virtues: "humanity" (a sense of brotherhood with all other human beings, which falls under the Stoic heading of cosmopolitanism) and "transcendence" (which for the Stoics translates to a sense of kinship with the cosmos, via the universality of the Logos).

### d. Preferred versus dispreferred indifferents

One of the most "paradoxical" principles (in the literal ancient sense of being contrary to, *para*, popular opinion, *doxan*) is the Stoic treatment of "externals," such as health, wealth, education, physical appearance, and so forth, as either preferred or dispreferred indifferents. At face value, the phrase does sound oxymoronic, until one realizes that "indifference" here refers to the moral value of such externals. Being rich (or poor), healthy (or sick), or educated (or ignorant) does not, in itself, make you a better or worse person. That said, some externals (wealth, health, education) are preferred, other things being equal, while other externals (poverty, sickness, ignorance) are dispreferred.

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[34] Becker, *A New Stoicism*.

[35] I visualize this geometrically, with each virtue being a face of a tetrahedron; see my "Disciplines, Fields, and Virtues," *How to Be a Stoic*, accessed online at: https://howtobeastoic.wordpress.com/2017/12/11/disciplines-fields-and-virtues-the-full-stoic-system-in-one-neat-package/.

[36] Katherine Dahlsgaard, Christopher Peterson, and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths across Culture and History," *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2005), pp. 203-13.

Arguably, this treatment of externals positioned the Stoics somewhere in the middle of the conceptual space between two closely allied Hellenistic schools: the Cynics and the Aristotelians. For Aristotle, a eudaimonic life is not possible without at least some measure of external goods, while for the Cynics, externals get in the way of one's practice of wisdom (hence their famous "dog-like" lifestyle). The Stoics neatly recognized both the Aristotelian point (yes, some degree of externals are a welcome addition to one's life) and the Cynic one (yes, a focus on externals is dangerous and likely distracting one from the pursuit of virtue).

It is interesting to note that a number of modern Stoics (including myself) tend to be skeptical of the increasingly popular appropriation of Stoicism as self-help philosophy for aspiring entrepreneurs and business people. We see this as a corruption of the chief aim of Stoicism, namely, the pursuit of virtue. In a sense, this is analogous to a similar corruption of Christianity known as the "prosperity gospel."[37]

### e. The three disciplines

Finally, most modern Stoics have adopted the same general approach to understand and teach Stoicism that was used by Epictetus, as reconstructed by Hadot, with modifications suggested by Brian Johnson.[38] This is Epictetus's sequence of three disciplines: of desire, of action, and of assent:

> There are three things in which a man ought to exercise himself who would be wise and good. The first concerns the desires and the aversions, that a man may not fail to get what he desires, and that he may not fall into that which he does not desire. The second concerns the movements (toward) and the movements from an object, and generally in doing what a man ought to do, that he may act according to order, to reason, and not carelessly. The third thing concerns freedom from deception and rashness in judgment, and generally it concerns the assents. Of these topics the chief and the most urgent is that which relates to the affects. . . . The second topic concerns the

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[37] Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[38] Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*; Johnson, *The Role Ethics of Epictetus*.

duties of a man. . . . The third topic is that which . . . concerns the security of the other two, so that not even in sleep any appearance unexamined may surprise us, nor in intoxication, nor in melancholy.[39]

The idea, roughly, is that one first has to get clear on what is truly good and evil (i.e., one's own judgments), the only things to desire or avoid. This has to do with the virtue of practical wisdom, as we have seen. Then, one can apply the remaining three virtues to how to act in the world. Finally, the advanced student can use logical reasoning to understand more deeply the nature of human judgment, fine-tuning his own and making it automatic.

## 5. Toward the Fifth Stoa

I refer to Modern Stoicism as the Fifth Stoa, after the early (Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus), middle (Panaetius, Posidonius), late (Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), and the Renaissance interlude of Neo-Stoicism (Justus Lipsius). The ongoing development of the Fifth Stoa is fascinating from the point of view of a professional philosopher because it is happening mostly as a grassroots movement in applied philosophy, and yet welcomes the input and support of professionals. We have a possibly unique opportunity to make a difference for potentially millions of people, all the while doing something that is also stimulating in terms of scholarship. We should not pass up this chance.

How does the Fifth Stoa differ from the first three? (I will not make comparisons with Lipsius's Neo-Stoicism, due to its specific Christian nature, although there certainly is something to learn from that attempt as well.) While I have given several hints above, here is a provisional summary of how I think things are unfolding:

| Topic | Early Stoas | Fifth Stoa |
|-------|-------------|------------|
| Theology | Pantheism | Compatible with a range from theism, deism, and pantheism to agnosticism and atheism |

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[39] Epictetus, *Discourses*, III.2.

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|---|---|---|
| Metaphysics | Logos implies Providence (though not in the Christian sense)<br><br>The universe is a living organism | Logos understood as the generating principle of the universe, laws of nature, web of cause-effect<br><br>The universe is whatever fundamental physics says it is |
| Logic | Definite knowledge is possible (for the sage) | Human knowledge affected by inevitable cognitive biases, knowledge is a social phenomenon |
| Psychology | Unhealthy emotions (*pathē*) to be eliminated, only healthy ones (*eupatheiai*) to be cultivated | The goal is to shift the emotional spectrum away from unhealthy and toward healthy emotions |
| Ethics | Live according to nature, cosmopolitanism | Follow the facts, cosmopolitanism |

Much more would have to be said to justify the entries in the table above. However, I have provided the reader with a number of resources throughout this discussion that justify the perspectival shift sketched here. Stoicism is alive and well in the twenty-first century, almost two-and-a-half millennia after it was introduced by Zeno of Citium. It is incumbent on professional philosophers to do their part to see that it thrives and helps people live a life that is truly worth living.

# Can the Modern Stoic Grieve? Comments on Massimo Pigliucci's "Toward the Fifth Stoa: The Return of Virtue Ethics"[1]

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I appreciate Massimo's remarkable efforts on behalf of Stoicism. I have long been impressed by his ability to communicate philosophy to the layman while remaining accurate in the technical details. That is a rare achievement. I am equally intrigued by his pursuit of a modernized Stoicism that will work within both secular and theological frameworks.

In this comment, I will raise what I believe is the major impediment to modern Stoicism as well as propose a possible way forward. Specifically, I am interested in what the Stoics say about externals, or preferred indifferents, and our feelings about them. According to the Stoics, only virtue is good (*agathos*), only virtue is up to us, and only virtue should be desired. By contrast, externals have mere "worth" (*axia*), but they are not up to us and are not to be desired; they are to be "selected."[2]

The Stoics have two main arguments for holding such a view. First, they rely on a theological argument where God has logically, and thus providentially, arranged the world. If you desire what God has put outside of your control (e.g., you desire to live until you are 200 years old), you are being impious. You are acting, as Epictetus says, ignorantly and like a stranger in the universe.[3] This theological argument doubles as an ethical argument.

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[1] Massimo Pigliucci, "Toward the Fifth Stoa: The Return of Virtue Ethics," *Reason Papers* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2018), pp. 14-30.

[2] See A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), sec. 58.

[3] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.24.21.

However, since Massimo has indicated that he seeks a Stoicism which accommodates both theism and atheism, we should set aside this first argument. This brings us to the second argument, one that appeals to tranquility. The basic idea, again expressed by Epictetus, is that we should only want what actually happens so that our desire will never be frustrated. By confining ourselves only to our volition, we will be tranquil.[4]

Perhaps the Stoics are right in this second argument. If I regard no external as a good, I could never feel grief about its loss. If I regard other people as "little corpses" (using Epictetus's provocative phrase),[5] I will not be grieved at their death. And yet, by the same token, we equally give up being *eudaimôn* (i.e., in a state of well-being) about the birth of a child or about any of the joyous elements of life, from birthdays to weddings, from falling in love to experiencing a transformational piece of art. We have purchased our tranquility at the cost of becoming an "ethical sociopath."[6]

Moreover, and here is the point I want to press, the tranquility argument entails an unwarranted assumption: emotional distress is necessarily irrational. I can easily grant that emotional upset is unpleasant, but is its experience proof of irrationality, proof that we are acting contrary to nature (small "n")? Although the Stoics wish to say, "Yes," their assumption about distress is not supportable from the available (non-theological) Stoic premises. The Stoics rightfully distinguish between what is and is not up to us. This distinction is the proper grounds for praise and blame; we should praise or blame only actions that are up to each person. In turn, this distinction is a fitting basis for acceptance; we should accept the things we cannot change (here borrowing from Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer). I also think that the Stoics are right to infer that our beliefs about good and bad are up to us; we have choices about our values. Insofar as our choices are reasonable or unreasonable, we should be praised or blamed for the goods that we choose.

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[4] Ibid., 1.27.10; cf. 1.17.23-28, 2.17.31, and 3.2.2-3.

[5] Epictetus, *Discourses*, frag. 26, originally reported by Marcus Aurelius in *Meditations* IV.41. Compare also Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 3 and 11.

[6] This phrase is not my own, but I have long lost track of where I acquired it.

So far, so good. However, from these available premises, does it follow that it is unreasonable to consider something a good, even if it is partially or entirely out of my control? Does it follow that I am unreasonable to be distressed when I lose such a good? I answer, "No," on both counts. Once we have set aside Stoic theology, we can no longer appeal to God in order to assert that it is wrong to value an external as a good or that it is wrong to feel upset about the loss of an external.

Once we let go of the Stoic God, as it were, ancient virtue ethics has only one measure for good and bad, right and wrong: *eudaimonia* (which I will translate as "well-being"). When we make well-being our standard, it quickly becomes evident that we ought to reckon certain externals as necessary goods to our *eudaimonia*. Aristotle, I think, makes this most clear when it comes to *philia* (friendship). If, as he argues in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9, that *philia* is necessary for *eudaimonia*, then *philia* is a good.

It is here, I think, that the Stoics go beyond the available premises when they try to section off friends as a preferred indifferent. My brother has worth (*axia*), but, as Epictetus says, he is not a good (*agathos*).[7] This claim appears to have force to students of Stoicism because friendship is not up to us, whereas virtue (the good) is up to us. And yet, I submit, none of the foregoing premises (including my added point about *eudaimonia* as the measure of good and bad) permits us to equate what we can control with the elements of *eudaimonia*.

To make my point clear, let us take up the analogy of a healthy body. Health has components that are up to us and components that are not up us. I have choice over bodily exercise as well as what I consume. I can certainly be praised or blamed for these choices; if I eat pizza for the third dinner in a row, I am rightfully blamed. By contrast, if I am eating food I thought was better for me (e.g., using margarine instead of butter—as many of us did in the 1980s), I should not be blamed. Nevertheless, in both cases, I have harmed my bodily health.

On the strength of this analogy, we should recognize that *eudaimonia* has components that are up to us and components that are not up to us. I have the choice, for example, to pursue friendships or to isolate myself. Insofar as I understand the positive role that *philia* plays in human well-being, I can be praised or blamed for the actions that I take. And yet, part of the drama of living arises from the fact that the

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[7] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.3.5-10.

good of *philia* can be lost through no fault of our own and our well-being can likewise be harmed.

In this way, when it comes to health and *eudaimonia*, I think the proper distinction a modern Stoic should draw is between (a) acceptance and (b) loving, desiring, liking, and approving. (The Stoic term "preferred" is far too mild for what I am expressing here.) We do, I suggest, have control over what we accept or reject; it is, in Stoic parlance, up to us. However, just because we can change what we like or dislike by means of our changing value judgments, this does not mean that we should so change it. I cannot control the life or death of a loved one, but that does not mean I should reject them as a good.

Moreover, once we recognize the fact that we rightfully think that many things are good even though we cannot directly control them, we have grounds to re-admit many of the emotions rejected by the Stoics as so-called passions. A passion, according to the Stoics, is a movement of the soul contrary to reason.[8] Since I have cited friendship as my example of a reasonable feeling and an external good, I will briefly take up grief as a natural, reasonable emotion in response to the death of a loved one.

In fact, from a naturalistic perspective, grief turns out to be a *rational* coping mechanism for moving from a state of profound horror about someone's death to a state of acceptance.[9] This claim is my answer to Shantideva's question about what use there is in being glum. Using my health analogy, we might rephrase his question as: What use is there in the body being bruised? Quite a lot, actually; bruising is how the body marshals resources to repair an injury. Just as the body forms sensitive bruises as part of its healing process, so too the psyche forms emotional bruises (e.g., grief) as a part of its own healing process. Of course, we should not approve of anyone seeking to be bruised, but we should certainly accept bruising as a normal part of life. Well-being does not mean living in a physical bubble any more than it means living in a spiritual one.

Granted, recovery from an emotional bruise can be challenging precisely because some elements are up to us; therein, we can go awry. In the case of a bodily bruise, we merely need to be extra cautious so

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[8] See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, sec. 65.

[9] By contrast, the Stoics are emphatic that grief is not one of the so-called good emotions (*eupatheia*). See Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 110.

as to allow the body its own resources to recover. It turns out, though, that grief does not necessarily resolve on its own. It does not, as the famous Elisabeth Kubler-Ross model has it, operate in stages (shock, denial, anger, sadness, acceptance).[10] Instead, as the research of William Worden has shown, grieving takes conscious work.[11] It has its own tasks. As Worden sees it, grieving is a process in which we work toward total acceptance. It begins with accepting the reality of the loss itself (which can itself take a long time) and it entails feeling the pain in all of its force. From there, the work moves toward reconfiguring one's life around the absence and ends with moving on while still accepting a connection to the deceased.

Furthermore, when that work is not done, the grief becomes stuck or frozen. It is this latter event which must be avoided rather than avoiding grief itself. Indeed, it is often the avoidance of grief or the denial of grief which freezes it and makes it far more drawn out. Compare this to jogging on a bruised foot. If a jogger refuses to accept that she has been injured, she will continue to run and exacerbate her injury. In the same way, if we refuse to accept our grief, we will continue to behave as normal and exacerbate our emotional pain. Instead, just as the jogger should accept her injury and act accordingly, so we should accept our grief and act accordingly. It is natural, then, that we grieve as part of the process of reaching equanimity about the death of a beloved. Grieving is a part of a *eudaimôn* life.

Here, then, is how I could see being a modern Stoic about external goods as well as about a wide variety of difficult emotions. We modernize Stoicism by taking the courageous way in which the ancient Stoics approached physical pain and apply that courage to the way in which we approach affective pain. When it comes to physical pain, the Stoics are not mad men; they do not hold their hand over a fire just to prove that they can take it. They avoid pain where reasonably possible. However, when pain cannot virtuously and reasonably be avoided, they accept it and even rise to meet it. Compare Hercules and the Nemean lion; he could have avoided that pain by running away. At the same time, as Epictetus points out, Hercules did not "seek to bring a lion into his own country from somewhere or

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[10] Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969).

[11] J. William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 4th ed. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008).

other," for that would have been "folly and madness."[12] Nevertheless, since the lion did exist, Hercules wrestled with the lion; the beast "revealed and exercised our Hercules."[13]

So, too, I suggest, a modern Stoic does not seek emotional pain nor does she flee it when it becomes reasonably inevitable. Likewise, she does not struggle against the prospect of pain by eliminating from her mind a belief in the value of certain externals. With regard to, say, a dying loved one, she does not short-circuit her grief by convincing herself that the loved one is not a good. Rather, a modern Stoic should bravely accept the pain that comes from losing valued externals. For, paradoxically, it is only by courageously accepting the pains of life that we can also experience the abiding *eudaimonia* that life has to offer.

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[12] Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.6.35-36.

[13] Ibid., 1.6.36.

# Stoicism, Friendship, and Grief: A Response to Johnson

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Brian Johnson, in his commentary on my effort to update Stoicism,[1] provides a cogent critique of ancient Stoicism and a reasonable suggestion for my attempt to define modern Stoicism. I do not (much) disagree with him in terms of his conclusions, which he applies to the specific cases of friendship and grief, but which also hold for all of the Stoic "preferred indifferents." I do, however, want to push back on two points: (1) the path he takes to arrive at those conclusions, and (2) the notion that all ancient Stoics would have proposed the same approach to friendship and grief that Epictetus takes.

To begin with, Johnson points out that, for the Stoics, only virtue is good (*agathos*), while everything else is either worthy (*axia*) of choice or to be rejected.[2] Hence the famous Stoic distinction between virtue, on the one hand, and preferred and dispreferred "indifferents" (i.e., everything else), on the other hand. However jarring the word "indifferent" may sound to modern ears, we need to be clear about what it means on the Stoic view. Things like wealth, health, education, friendship, love, and so forth are indifferents in the specific sense that they do not make us morally better or worse persons.

The Stoic project is, fundamentally, one of moral self-improvement. This can be seen, for instance, in Epictetus: "What decides whether a sum of money is good? The money is not going to tell you; it must be the faculty that makes use of such impressions—reason" (*Discourses* I, 1.5). and also: "The following are non-sequiturs: 'I am richer, therefore superior to you'; or 'I am a better

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[1] Brian Johnson, "Can the Modern Stoic Grieve? Comments on Massimo Pigliucci's 'Toward the Fifth Stoa: The Return of Virtue Ethics'," *Reason Papers* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2018), pp. 31-36.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

speaker, therefore a better person, than you'" (*Enchiridion* 44). The fact that one is wealthy, healthy, educated, has friends, is in love, etc. makes absolutely no difference to one's moral character and worth. Indeed, one may lack all of those things and yet be a morally good person. It all depends on how one makes use of those externals. That, in fact, is what virtue is: the propensity to make good use of the indifferents.

Another way of looking at what the Stoics are saying, updated with twenty-first century concepts, is through the lens of "lexicographic preferences" in economics.[3] Contrary to a key assumption of classical economics, people do not regard everything as fungible, that is, valued (and hence potentially traded) according to a standard universal currency. Instead, we put things into different buckets, or sets, and regard things as fungible within but not across buckets. Moreover, the sets are ordered by decreasing importance, with the A-set being the most valuable, the B-set less so, and so forth. For instance, I love my daughter, and she is in my A-bucket. I also happen to like orange Lamborghini sports cars, but they are in my B-bucket. While I would be willing to trade quite a bit of money (also a commodity situated in the B-bucket), if I had it, for a Lamborghini, I would never consider trading my daughter. The point is that, for the Stoics, virtue is in the A-set and indifferents are in the B-set. They also recognized a C-set: things that are not even characterized by axial value, and thus completely neutral, such as one's choice of a flavor of ice cream.

I turn to Johnson's next point, which is that the Stoics risk becoming "ethical sociopaths" by making tranquility the centerpiece of their quest for *eudaimonia*.[4] I will demonstrate below that the Stoics did not aim at a condition of ethical sociopathy, but the first order of business is to dissect the concept of *eudaimonia* itself.

Johnson deploys the standard, Aristotle-friendly, translation of *eudaimonia* as "flourishing." While this is far better than the once common "happiness"—a hopelessly vague and confused concept—it begs the question not just against the Stoics, but also against most other Hellenistic schools outside of the Peripatetics. John-Stewart Gordon provides a helpful classification of the major Greco-Roman schools of

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[3] Amartya K. Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

[4] Johnson, "Can the Modern Stoic Grieve?" p. 32.

ethical philosophy, distinguishing them precisely on the basis of how they implicitly or explicitly regarded *eudaimonia.*[5]

My take is that it is untenable that the Stoics equated *eudaimonia* with flourishing, because otherwise it is difficult to make sense of their famous notion that the Sage is "happy" even on the rack (i.e., while being tortured).[6] If by flourishing we mean anything like Aristotle did—that is, a combination of virtue and externals such as health, wealth, and so forth—then the Sage on the rack cannot possibly be flourishing. But his life may still be worth living, because he is a moral agent who is suffering, presumably, for a good cause. Take, for instance, Nelson Mandela, who was, as it turns out, influenced by Stoic writer Marcus Aurelius.[7] Famously, Mandela spent eighteen years on Robben Island as punishment for speaking out against South Africa's Apartheid government. The story turned out well, in the end, and Mandela's life would probably still count as one of flourishing by Aristotle's standards. But let's imagine a possible world in which Mandela died on Robben Island due to torture and other abuses received in prison. For the Aristotelian, he was not *eudaimon*, but for the Stoic he most certainly was. That, I believe, is the power of Stoic philosophy: a *eudaimonic* life understood as a moral life worth living is within the power of everyone, regardless of external circumstances and no matter how extreme they might be.

Returning to the issue of tranquility and the danger of "ethical sociopathy," it should be pointed out that the goal of a Stoic life is not tranquility (*ataraxia*), nor is it the avoidance of disturbance induced by the "passions" (negative emotions), that is, *apatheia*. Those are only (welcome) byproducts of the actual goal. As Marcus Aurelius explains, to live a virtuous life in the service of the human cosmopolis, "do what is necessary, and whatever the reason of a social animal naturally requires, and as it requires" (*Meditations* IV.24).

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[5] John-Stewart Gordon, "Modern Morality and Ancient Ethics," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed online at: https://www.iep.utm.edu/anci-mod/.

[6] See Rene Brouwer, *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood, and Socrates* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[7] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Beyond Anger," *Aeon*, accessed online at: https://aeon.co/essays/there-s-no-emotion-we-ought-to-think-harder-about-than-anger.

I also reject the common misconception that the Stoic approach is antithetic to emotions. It is not. Rather, the Stoics sought to shift our emotional spectrum away from the negative emotions (the passions, *pathē*) and toward the positive ones (*eupatheiai*), which need to be cultivated. Therefore, much hinges on what counts as a negative or positive emotion.

Johnson focuses on two examples to make his point: a positive feeling, friendship, and a (supposedly) negative emotion, grief. Let us consider, beginning with friendship, how his argument stands against my interpretation of Stoicism.

As Johnson points out, Aristotle says that friendship (*philia*) is necessary for *eudaimonia* (*Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9). If by *eudaimonia* we mean flourishing, that is certainly the case. Perhaps surprisingly, then, it turns out that the Stoics also place a high value on friendship. According to Seneca: "If you consider any man a friend whom you do not trust as you trust yourself, you are mightily mistaken and you do not sufficiently understand what true friendship means" (*Letters* III.2). He also says: "Ponder for a long time whether you shall admit a given person to your friendship; but when you have decided to admit him, welcome him with all your heart and soul. Speak as boldly with him as with yourself" (*Letters* III.2). Here, Seneca uses (positive) emotional language, and also places a high value (axial as it may be) on friendship. However, he also spells out the difference between his view and the Peripatetic position: "The wise man is self-sufficient. Nevertheless, he desires friends, neighbors, and associates, no matter how much he is sufficient unto himself" (*Letters* IX.3). He continues: "In this sense the wise man is self-sufficient, that he can do without friends, not that he desires to do without them. When I say 'can,' I mean this: he endures the loss of a friend with equanimity" (*Letters* IX.5).

Notice the use of three crucial terms here: the wise person *desires* friends, but if she loses them, then she will *endure* the loss with *equanimity*. Seneca sounds very different from Epictetus. While the latter is direct and blunt, Seneca is nuanced and compassionate. This may have reflected differences in temperament, but also philosophical leanings. The ancient Stoics disagreed among themselves, not just with other schools, on a variety of matters. Epictetus was explicitly closer to what I would term the Cynical end of the Stoic spectrum, while Seneca at times shows contempt for the Cynics' emphasis on minimalism. Compare Epictetus's "On the Cynic Calling" (*Discourses* III.22) with Seneca: "Philosophy calls for plain living, but not for penance; and we

may perfectly well be plain and neat at the same time" *(Letters* V.5). Desiring friends, and yet being ready to endure their loss with equanimity, is what I suggest modern Stoics should aim for. As we have just seen, though, this isn't far from what one of the most important Roman Stoics explicitly advocated two millennia ago.

What about "negative" emotions, such as grief? Johnson correctly points out that grief is a natural response to the loss of a loved one. There is plenty of empirical evidence that to suppress or ignore grief is not good for one's emotional health, and therefore not rational—the standard by which the Stoics themselves sorted emotions into *pathē* and *eupatheiai*. However, did they really counsel to suppress grief? It sounds that way, if one reads one of Epictetus's famous passages: "If you kiss your child or your wife, say to yourself that it is a human being that you're kissing; and then, if one of them should die, you won't be upset" (*Enchiridion* 3). There is no denying the harshness of this passage, but another one will help put it into perspective: "What harm is there in your saying beneath your breath as you're kissing your child, 'Tomorrow you'll die'? Or similarly to your friend, 'Tomorrow you'll go abroad, or I will, and we'll never see one another'" (*Discourses* III.24.88).

Here, Epictetus suggests what modern Stoics call a *premeditatio malorum*, an exercise to remind ourselves of the possibility of bad outcomes in order mentally (and emotionally) to prepare ourselves. Setting aside the modern empirical evidence that this sort of negative visualization works,[8] we need to remember that in Epictetus's time that kind of tragedy was the order of the day. Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the most powerful man in the Western world at the time, whose personal physician was Galen, lost the majority of his thirteen children before they reached adulthood. The ancients (and unfortunately a staggering portion of modern humanity) often had to deal with the death of their children or the departure of their friends (e.g., in exile, as happened to both Seneca and Epictetus). It's no wonder that they emphasized blunting the trauma by preemptively reflecting on its likelihood.

Epictetus also wished his students not to be hypocritical, a view with which even modern sensibilities can readily relate: "When somebody's wife or child dies, to a man we all routinely say, 'Well,

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[8] Johanna S. Kaplan and David F. Tolin, "Exposure Therapy for Anxiety Disorders," *Psychiatric Times*, September 6, 2011, accessed online at: www.psychiatrictimes.com/anxiety/exposure-therapy-anxiety-disorders.

that's part of life.' But if one of our own family is involved, then right away it's 'Poor, poor me!' We would do better to remember how we react when a similar loss afflicts others" (*Enchiridion* 26). Nevertheless, we may again be witnessing more an effect of Epictetus's own personality and Cynic leanings than something inherent in Stoic philosophy. The contrast here, again, is with Seneca: "Am I advising you to be hard-hearted, desiring you to keep your countenance unmoved at the very funeral ceremony, and not allowing your soul even to feel the pinch of pain? By no means. That would mean lack of feeling rather than virtue" (*Letters* XCIX.15).

Seneca wrote extensively about grief, particularly in two of his three letters of consolation, to Marcia (who had lost an adult son) and to Polybius (who had lost his brother). He says to Polybius:

> I know, indeed, that there are some men, whose wisdom is of a harsh rather than a brave character, who say that the wise man never would mourn. It seems to me that they never can have been in the position of mourners, for otherwise their misfortune would have shaken all their haughty philosophy out of them, and, however much against their will, would have forced them to confess their sorrow. (*On Consolation* XVIII)

Seneca writes to Marcia not because she is in grief (which he takes to be a natural reaction to her loss), but because her grief has lasted years and is in danger of festering:

> Three years have now passed, and there has been no lessening of that initial shock; your mourning renews and strengthens itself each day; through the passage of time it has established squatter's rights, and has reached the point where it thinks that it would be shameful to stop. Just as every kind of fault becomes deeply embedded unless it is stamped out while it is still growing, so these sad, wretched, self-destructive faults in the end feed on their own bitterness, and the unhappy mind finds a perverse pleasure in grief. (*On Consolation* VII)

> Johnson is right when he says that overcoming grief

> begins with accepting the reality of the loss itself (which can itself take a long time) and it entails feeling the pain in all of its force. From there, the work moves toward reconfiguring

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one's life around the absence and ends with moving on while still accepting a connection to the deceased. Furthermore, when that work is not done, the grief becomes stuck or frozen. It is this latter event which must be avoided rather than avoiding grief itself.[9]

However, I seriously doubt that Seneca would have disagreed, and the letters to Marcia and Polybius lay out precisely this scenario.

Finally, Johnson is on target when he makes the comparison between physical and emotional pain. The Stoics, he observes, were not mad.[10] They didn't seek physical pain, nor did they think that their attitude could magically make it go away. The same goes for emotional pain. The issue is one of rational acceptance of the reality of things and of (virtuous) endurance of that reality when we are exposed to the hardship and tragedies of life. The Senecean approach to Stoicism, I maintain, is in line with Johnson's own suggestion of where modern Stoicism should aim. One should not suppress negative emotions or undervalue positive emotions, but rather, use reason as a guide to manage the former and cultivate the latter.

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[9] Johnson, "Can the Modern Stoic Grieve?" p. 35.

[10] Ibid.

**Symposium: William Irwin's *The Free Market Existentialist***

## Mere Prudence? Existentialist Ethics, Moral Anti-Realism, and Freedom

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### 1. Introduction

Libertarianism and existentialism share much in common in the early twenty-first century American intellectual landscape. They both represent counter-cultural rebel streaks, punctuated by themes of individualism and personal responsibility. Though these are perennial concerns within American culture, the chief intellectual influences on both traditions share European roots: France and Germany for most of the existentialists, and expatriates like Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Ayn Rand for libertarians.[1] In this respect, William Irwin's *The Free Market Existentialist*[2] is notable less for what many may see as an unlikely pairing, but more in that this line of argumentation wasn't explored sooner. Irwin's success with this book comes, in no small part, from providing a long overdue service. Although I find fault in some aspects of Irwin's approach, I broadly sympathize with the book's essential arguments, and highly recommend it to others. As it is

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[1] As a point of interest here, it is worth observing that Rand originally considered "existentialism" as the name of her system of thought. She opted for "Objectivism" because "existentialism" was already in use. See Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Meridian, 1991), p. 36.

[2] William Irwin, *The Free Market Existentialist* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015). All parenthetical citations in the text are to *The Free Market Existentialist* unless otherwise specified.

in exploring the limitations of any work that we may better come to appreciate its strengths and how progress can be made with further work, it is my hope that this review will be taken as a friendly, constructive criticism.

In particular, although I endorse Irwin's notion that striking thematic commonalities and compatibility exist between existentialism and libertarianism, I take issue with Irwin's proposed synthesis, as it takes up unnecessary positions that are counter-productive toward that end. In particular, the embrace of moral anti-realism here is made all the stranger. Existentialism itself hardly requires anti-realism, and arguably counsels against it. Indeed, it is not even clear that Irwin has abandoned ethics at all, so much as rebranded the enterprise, as he attempts to reconstruct most of the work of morality in terms of prudence and enlightened self-interest. Does this make Irwin's a case of "Moral Anti-Realism in Name Only"? If so, we have existentialism itself to credit for keeping Irwin from the brink, which is a good thing, because it will also turn out that the libertarianism he endorses, if truly divorced from any basis in ethics, would be unobtainable.

In the space available here, a complete argument against moral anti-realism, merely as such, is not possible. In any case, it would take us into the weeds, inasmuch as Irwin is largely basing his anti-realism on Richard Joyce's *The Myth of Morality*,[3] which would require a separate discussion about Joyce, moral fictionalism, and metaethics generally, rather than about Irwin, existentialism, and libertarianism. Instead, let me state in general terms where I disagree with him as it applies to existentialism and libertarianism. There is a failure of imagination on Irwin's part to see that many of the concepts and ideas he defends contain a normative, and thus, moral, valence. At points, Irwin seems to be aware of this, but he tries to avoid that problem by speaking instead of *non*-moral virtues, like prudence. In so doing, he protests too much, for the concessions Irwin himself supplies to normativity happen to provide the rudiments for meaningful ethical claims. Moreover, existentialism itself embodies robust ethical claims, such as freedom and authenticity as normative values, that would be difficult if not impossible to capture from an anti-realist perspective.[4]

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[3] Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[4] Two book-length treatments of the ethics of Sartrean existentialism worth consulting on this point include Thomas C. Anderon's *Sartre's Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1993), as

The strange conclusion here is that embracing anti-realism is not only unnecessary and counterproductive, but given Irwin's own commitments, it also suggests a departure from existentialism. To the degree that Irwin retains both the existentialist framework and libertarian politics, he will require robust moral commitments.

In what follows, I first discuss Irwin's general case for anti-realism in the context of a libertarian existentialism, finding that his case rests primarily on a false alternative between his preferred anti-realism and a rigid moral realism. This excludes the possibility of the kinds of normative frameworks that the virtue theorists, as well as the existentialists themselves favored, making the appeal to a "non-moral normativity" unnecessary. Next, I discuss Irwin's proposed "non-moral virtue" of prudence, considering its place in Aristotelian virtue theory, and concluding, with Aristotle, that prudence gains its status as a virtue only within the context of a broader moral theory. This suggests that prudence is not viable as a proper "non-moral" virtue, as it is not autonomous from specifically moral virtues. Finally, I consider the relationship between morality and the political and legal foundations of liberalism, with particular attention to classical liberalism. I conclude that both as a theoretical and practical matter, moral anti-realism frustrates and undermines liberal theory, rather than supports it.

## 2. Non-Moral Normativity?

Part of the difficulty here is that Irwin, like Joyce, demands too much of morality. Finding that belief in moral claims can be explained as evolutionary adaptations, he concludes that they cannot therefore be meaningfully true. This is especially pressing for existentialists, as they are committed to the notion of an absurd universe, or at least, as Albert Camus suggests, an absurd relationship between people and the universe (p. 12). Nevertheless, it is Simone de Beauvoir who, after identifying the "spirit of seriousness" as the state of mistaking values for ready-made things in the world, suggesting a rejection of moral realism, who also diagnoses nihilism as a "disappointed [spirit of] seriousness which has turned back upon itself," seeing a rejection of ethics as the other side of the moral realist coin.[5] One question here

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well as David Detmer's *Freedom as a Value: A Critique of the Ethical Theory of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1988).

[5] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1996 [1948]), p. 52.

ought to be: Are moral realism and anti-realism false alternatives, as Beauvoir suggests? Does the rejection of one necessarily entail the truth of the other?

Helpfully enough, Irwin unwittingly leaves an escape clause or two here. First, he insists that existentialists should be more willing to accept the basic findings of evolutionary biology, thus weakening Jean-Paul Sartre's attempt to rule out any essence or nature for human beings. As products of evolution, there are ways in which humans do in fact have a "nature," but we do, nevertheless, retain autonomy over ourselves as individuals.[6] Second, he accepts, as he must, that there are at least some meaningful forms of normativity, albeit of what he insists is a "non-moral" character.[7] I'll analyze these two ideas in turn.

First, the premise that humanity has any kind of nature, whether from evolution or some divine source, can provide a ground for an ethics, but perhaps one more empirical than we typically get from many versions of moral realism. That is, we can meaningfully describe certain behaviors or habits as either "good" (well-suited) or "bad" (ill-suited) to the overall functionality and flourishing of any creature with a particular nature. This would give rise to moral facts, in the form of empirically grounded claims about behavior.

Consider, as one possible framing of the issue, the way that Phillipa Foot describes her understanding of the relationship between fact and value:

> The thesis of this chapter is that the grounding of a moral argument is ultimately in facts about human life—facts of the kind that [Elizabeth] Anscombe mentioned in talking about the good that hangs on the institution of promising, and of the kind

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[6] A helpful distinction to keep in mind here is the difference between what can be said of populations and individuals. Evolutionary biologists emphasize the usefulness of evolutionary explanations for the former, but not the latter. Heritability is ultimately a measure of variation among individuals within a population. See Daniel J. Fairbanks, *Everyone Is African: How Science Explodes the Myth of Race* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2015), p. 115.

[7] Irwin concedes that the "ought" of morality and of prudential self-interest often coincide, but he insists that they do not always do so, and that the latter should be favored in cases of conflict (p. 126). However, ethicists who adhere to variations of ethical egoism and eudaimonistic ethics would challenge that claim, on the basis that the two oughts are indeed one and the same, by definition.

that I spoke of in saying why it was a part of rationality for human beings to take special care each for his or her own future. In my view, therefore, a moral evaluation does not stand over against the statement of a matter of fact, but rather has to do with facts about a particular subject matter, as do evaluations of such things as sight and hearing in animals, and other aspects of their behaviour. Nobody would, I think, take it as other than a plain matter of fact that there is something wrong with the hearing of a gull that cannot distinguish the cry of its own chick, as with the sight of an owl that cannot see in the dark. Similarly, it is obvious that there are objective, factual evaluations of such things as human sight, hearing, memory, and concentration, based on the life form of our own species. Why, then, does it seem so monstrous a suggestion that the evaluation of the human will should be determined by facts about the nature of human beings and the life of our own species? Undoubtedly the resistance has something to do with the thought that the goodness of good action has a special relation to choice. But as I have tried to show, this special relation is not what non-cognitivists think it is, but rather lies in the fact that moral action is rational action, and in the fact that human beings are creatures with the power to recognize reasons for action and to act on them. This in no way precludes recognition of the part played by 'sentiments' such as (negatively) shame and revulsion or (positively) sympathy, self-respect, and pride in motivating human virtue.[8]

Oddly enough, the Darwinian factors and hypotheticals raised by Irwin illustrate this point. There are reasons why animals engage in behaviors that we humans find disgusting and there are reasons why they would seem disgusting to us. Reasons for both have to do with our respective natures and the evolutionary paths that brought us to where we are today.

But if this nature is taken too rigidly as a hard determinism constraint, ethics would still be a dubious undertaking as a project. The other ingredient needed would be some theory of free will: the ability to deliberate and choose and to be held responsible. For that, we needn't be as extreme as the early Sartre, who embraced a (metaphysical) libertarianism so radical so as to exclude the very

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[8] Phillipa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 24.

possibility of a human nature. We can instead endorse a compatibilist perspective, consistent with causal determinism, to respect more fully the facticity of our capacities. If the compatibilist is correct, the facticity of that kind of determinism poses no essential contradiction with the full freedom of the subject.

The idea that there is at least some human essence or nature creates fascinating possibilities as a basis for ethics—but note that this will foreclose others. For example, the orthodox Kantian will want to base ethics on fidelity to the moral law for its own sake and will take precious little of an empirical nature into account when identifying what the moral law is. That won't work here. If there is some fact of the matter about what it is to be human and fulfill that functionality, and normativity is based on that, then it will be a uniquely *human* ethics. For example, if there were such creatures as vampires, where part of their nature includes sucking blood to sustain themselves and to live well, then it couldn't exactly be immoral for them to do so. For vampires, like mosquitoes, would merely be fulfilling their nature. Similarly, if some alien creatures had dominating lesser species like humans as part of their evolutionary make-up, we wouldn't be able to call it unethical for them to choose to do so, even as humans would be within their moral rights to resist.

If what I describe sounds familiar, that's for a reason. In a roundabout way, I have described a virtue-ethicist perspective. All it really requires at this point is to specify (a) some account of *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing), which existentialists would no doubt link with authenticity and freedom, and (b) a fleshing out of the kinds of habits of character that generally constitute or give rise to it in human beings. Rather than categorical imperatives, hypothetical imperatives would ground ethics as moral facts. *If* you want to live well, *then* incorporate these habits into your character. Moral facts would merely be potentially testable empirical claims about general traits and habits as they relate to *eudaimonia*. This, I think, captures well what I think Irwin is trying to get at with an enlightened prudentialism. Rather than being a "fiction," though, morality could be conceived of as a usefully simplified conceptualization, or decision heuristic, guiding us for our own difficult decisions and in terms of evaluating others' character.

It may be that I make too much of Irwin's concession that if evolution supplies an account of a human nature, then this implies a potential basis for normativity. After all, Irwin emphasizes that this is a "non-moral" form of normativity, so let us consider this idea at length.

Irwin uses prudence as an example, but of course, it seems that we're not limited to that. There are, of course, instrumental values and rules that inform much human activity. Speaking as an Uber driver, I can observe that to drive well, there are certain rules one should follow, independent of traffic laws. A "good" Uber driver is courteous to his or her passengers, doesn't take personal calls while driving, and doesn't blare Nine Inch Nails at loud decibels (unless, of course, requested to do so by a passenger). We can recall Sartre's waiter here to qualify these observations, though. It would be inauthentic, or to engage in bad faith, for a person to carry this too far, to do this with an attitude that depersonalizes oneself. I take it that *authenticity*, in this context, would suggest a state of harmony between these kinds of norm-based habits and one's expression of self.

I bring this up to observe that even if we live in an absurd universe, there are nevertheless examples of meaningful sets of operating norms such as this one in great abundance. It is hardly written into the cosmos that Uber drivers ought to behave in a certain way. However, we do nevertheless observe that certain habits and behaviors work well for this activity and others do not. Indeed, with most human activities, there are attitudes, habits, behaviors, and rules, which if followed, make these activities more successful for all involved. Irwin, following Joyce, might insist that there's nothing uniquely *ethical* about all of this, but I suppose that's where this may get a bit semantic. If we consider what traits are fairly consistent across human activity in terms of enhancing their quality, satisfaction, and role in *eudaimonia*, that list would probably include traits like honesty, courage, and generosity. We would consider further that as ingrained habits of character, one is less likely to mistake them for imperatives from on high or follow them as a matter of bad faith. Would these be *non*-moral virtues? It seems not. Although they could be redescribed in terms of how they contribute to norms of prudential self-interest, simple parsimony alone would suggest that it's a lot simpler here to speak of things being good, right, bad, or wrong. This is why Irwin's appeal to the parsimoniousness of concepts, as a reason for moral anti-realism, is strange. It would seem simpler to describe behavior as good and bad, virtuous and vicious, than to invoke the comparatively baroque conceptual framework of *non*-moral virtues and vices.

Irwin concludes his chapter on "Existentialism in a World Without Morality" with a revealing discussion about what kind of moral language it would make sense to keep (p. 128). "Evil" is out, but "good" and "bad" are in, which would have pleased Friedrich

Nietzsche, though not Beauvoir. Interestingly enough, Beauvoir saw no difficulty with retaining "evil" as a concept, explicitly identifying at least one form of it with enslavement.[9] Existentialism certainly suggests a great deal more nuance to normativity. Authenticity is nothing if not a normative concept, perhaps a morally "thick" concept (as Bernard Williams might have called it[10]), and courage and honesty seem constantly emphasized in existentialist literature. I am unsure whether I agree with this characterization, though it is worth recalling that Camus refers to his character Meursault, the eponymous protagonist of *The Stranger*, as a "hero for the truth."[11] The implication here is that truth and honesty are good things in a fully normative, even heroic sense. And of course, there is freedom, as a primary, if not the primary, value. It is worth considering here the reason Sartre rejects the possibility that a sincerely committed Nazi could claim authenticity: understanding and valuing one's own freedom requires recognizing it for others. Indeed, he invokes the role of moral judgment and insists that freedom can be one's goal only to the degree that one wants it for others.[12] Normativity is everywhere in existentialism.

There is normativity—and then there are formal systematic accounts of ethics which would presumably fully account for moral facts. Existentialism certainly has the former, but it lacks the latter. At least two stumbling blocks may account for this. First, to put it mildly, Sartre is reluctant to concede any ground on the question of whether there is a human nature. Second, for existentialists, there remains the possibility that ethics might be doomed from the start as an endeavor conceived in, and practiced as, bad faith. Irwin already takes care of the first here, by suggesting that the empirical facts of evolution be brought into the equation.

As for the second of Irwin's possible escape clauses, the project of ethics could be in bad faith *if* one reasons, as Immanuel Kant

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[9] Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 136.

[10] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

[11] Robert C. Solomon, "*L'Etranger* and the Truth," *Philosophy and Literature* 2, no. 2 (1978), p. 143.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Humanism of Existentialism," in *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin (New York: Citadel Press Books, 1995), pp. 57-58.

does,[13] that one must act a certain way *simply* because the moral law, however autonomously derived, compels us. If it is *only* to the degree that one chooses in such a way that one's acts have moral import, this would suggest that one can only be moral to the degree that one is also acting in bad faith. For if I claim that the moral law compels me to act in a certain way, this renounces my responsibility in choosing to act. However, if morality consists not in duties and moral laws, but rather in virtues, we can accept both the internal transcendence of freedom and facticity that gives rise to normativity. Irwin, after all, argues for a kind of enlightened self-interest informing prudential decision-making. The virtue perspective, especially in its eudaimonistic formulations, offers a similar, if more long-term, motivation. To put it crudely, because virtues represent internalized habits and dispositions, the agent's moral actions can be consistent with authenticity. Yet at the same time, this would not imply that agents are unfree, slaves to their own habits and dispositions. Consider Daniel C. Dennett's example of Martin Luther's stand against Catholicism. Luther is reputed to have said, "Here I stand. I can do no other." We understand by this not that he was denying his own freedom to choose, as an act of bad faith. To the contrary, we understand by this that he was affirming his own freely chosen and internalized values, and taking responsibility for them, making a stand in the name of his own integrity.[14]

### 3. *Phronēsis* as a Virtue, Moral and Otherwise

That brings me to prudence, which Irwin characterizes as a *non*-moral virtue. For Irwin, prudence does a lot of work which looks for all the world like morality, insofar as it provides a unitary basis for action, even if Irwin believes that prudence and morality can depart from each other.

As it happens, Aristotle identifies prudence as one of his virtues, which he calls *phronēsis*, usually translated either as practical wisdom or prudence. Compare the translations from Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (wisdom) with Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins (prudence). *Phronēsis* is characterized as an intellectual, as opposed to

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[13] Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed., trans. James Ellington (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993).

[14] This example is taken from Dennett's discussion of compatibilist free will. See Daniel C. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), p. 133.

moral, virtue in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (I.13, 1103a4-10). However, as Broadie observes in her commentary, this virtue is not autonomous from the moral virtues. Aristotle distinguishes *phronēsis* from *technē* (technical skill) and *sophia* (intellectual accomplishment), and he concludes that *phronēsis* depends on overall character-excellence, or virtue, insofar as virtue helps to ensure that the values one relies on *phronēsis* to obtain are the correct ones.[15]

Would this make prudence a "moral" virtue or a "non-moral," intellectual virtue? As Broadie sees it, Aristotle indeed saw it as an intellectual virtue, as opposed to a moral one, but he was quick to emphasize that it was not separable from the moral virtues that comprise *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, prudence itself requires the character-excellence supplied by the other moral virtues, just as they rely on prudence in their successful exercise. This suggests a sense of directionality: For what ends or whose interests is one acting?

We wouldn't want to say that one acts merely for one's interests, whatever they happened to be. After all, Irwin would not endorse interests or ends that cut against libertarianism or which were enmeshed with consumerism, since he endorses the former and condemns the latter. We want those interests to be in some sense "enlightened" by an awareness of long-term consequences. Irwin initially suggests that something like desire-satisfaction is sufficient as an end or interest, but he later suggests something more like long-term, enlightened self-interest instead (p. 125). Missing from this, however, is an account of what would play the role of Aristotle's character-excellence, to offer an account of what makes interests enlightened, and in virtue of what consequences are understood to be good or bad.

The idea that prudence, whether we want to call it a moral virtue or not, can exclusively ground normativity could be challenged by David Hume's "sensible knave" thought experiment.[16] As the

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[15] See Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 46-48. Also see Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011).

[16] David Hume's discussion of the sensible knave can be found in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, sec. 9, pt. 2. It should be noted that Hume ultimately concludes that this knave is simply odious and not necessarily a major problem for his own ethical view. Although sympathetic to much of Hume's approach here, I would only suggest that the act of identifying this individual as a "knave" suggests that, regardless of whether the knave is in a position to understand and accept the error of his ways, an

experiment postulates, there could be people who are extremely clever and ultimately prudent enough to know how to appear kind, decent, honorable, and trustworthy, but who also know how to victimize them without detection. One can picture here anything on the spectrum from pickpockets and shoplifters, kleptomaniacs, and Bernie Madoff-type fraudsters to sexual predators and murderers. If a person had those kinds of talents, why wouldn't he engage in that kind of behavior, if it would gain him values over and above what he could have by maintaining his integrity? One might recognize money, sex, and other values as one's interest or desire, and if one was prudent about how one went about obtaining them, that could in principle include unscrupulous tactics as normatively recommended, at least for that agent.

Is there a way to argue that, no matter how talented and prudent, knavery and predatory behavior can never be justified on the basis of prudence alone? One tack could be to deny the possibility of a (successful) sensible knave. For example, agents are almost never in a position to know for sure what they could get away with; epistemic limitations all but guarantee that. The Ring of Gyges does not and could never exist. Even if it were true that, in principle, one could become a prudent predator, no human agent is smart enough or well-informed enough to know, with certainty, how to pull it off. Prisons are full of people who thought they were intelligent enough to victimize successfully their fellow human beings without being caught, only to learn otherwise. Habitual and even occasional liars find that they frequently fall into Seinfeldian predicaments: tracking the multiple alternative stories one tells others and keeping them all consistent is a cognitively taxing endeavor. There are simpler, more satisfying ways to go about obtaining our values. In this sense, there is nothing sensible about the tactics of the sensible knave.

But there is another potential diagnosis that suggests itself here of special relevance for the existentialist: bad faith. I suspect that Irwin's temptation here would be to say that the existentialist, whether free market or not, would reject predation, even if it could be justified on purely instrumental, prudential grounds, because this would make one guilty of bad faith. After all, what is bad faith but a lie to oneself and to others, a fundamental misrepresentation of what and who one is? Note, though, that it does mean that a conflict here exists between the agent's interest in authenticity and prudentialism as a guide for

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account of what makes the behavior "knavery" to begin with is necessary.

action. It seems that if the existentialist wishes to settle that conflict in favor of the former, it would be difficult not to see this as a moral claim or priority. Recall Sartre's view that one may not claim freedom for oneself while denying it for others. The existentialist, in essence, would want to be able to say that achieving authenticity is praiseworthy and that bad faith is . . . bad. If this is what responsibility entails, what would this be called if not morality? If Irwin accepts existentialism to this extent, then he may not be offering us a true moral anti-realism.

## 4. Law and Politics Without Morality?

Irwin cites Hans-Georg Moeller for the claim that we don't need morality; Moeller believes that law and love are sufficient. Love, in the Confucian sense, as opposed to the Christian sense, establishes the norms for relationships between family and friends. Law works by stabilizing expectations toward everyone else (pp. 118-19). Of course, Irwin would hardly be alone in that view, since legal positivists like H. L. A. Hart, as well as the legal realist school, all share that law should not be conflated with morality. However, this poses more than a few problems, particularly for libertarians.

Consider that Hart, in distinguishing law and morality as entirely separate domains, also goes on to emphasize that the question of whether to follow an unjust or immoral law is one for ethics to settle.[17] However, moral anti-realism denies the ability to undertake that question in a meaningful way. We would just have law. A stock example used in the literature on the positivism versus natural law debate is the Fugitive Slave Act. Was it the case that pre-Civil War Americans should have obeyed this law? Traditionally, the natural law theorist responds that as the Fugitive Slave Act is unjust, it cannot have the status of binding law; an unjust law is no law at all. Positivists like Hart respond that the Fugitive Slave Act was indeed law, as it was passed according to the rules of recognition, following all proper procedures for legislation. However, they contend that the Fugitive Slave Act's status as legitimate law does not settle the question of whether it ought to have been obeyed; this, they say, is a question for

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[17] "Wicked men will enact wicked rules which others will enforce. . . . [H]owever great the aura of majesty or authority which the official system may have, its demands must in the end be submitted to a moral scrutiny." See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994 [1961]), p. 210.

morality. But what of the moral anti-realist? It seems that the moral anti-realist can only answer that it depends on what one's interests and desires are. We do, after all, have an interest in being or at least appearing to be law-abiding. As no one wants to entertain the possibility that one would not have been wrong to obey this kind of law, legal positivism can only survive to the extent that one has the ability to make those kinds of judgments about justice and morality generally.

Critics of legal positivism, both in and outside of the natural law school, argue that positivism has a problem in providing for or explaining the morality of fidelity to the law. Fortunately, regardless of which school of law one favors, there is one simple way to resolve the question of how one can regard fidelity to the law. The catch, however, is that it requires that we have some notion of morality in play. In considering whether to obey a law, we would need to identify a law as just, unjust, or merely amoral. (An amoral law would be a rule without any particular moral valence, like the question of what side of the road to drive on or what day to pay our taxes on.) If a law is just, we follow it, because it's already entailed by justice itself; hence, appealing to the law is superfluous. If the law is amoral, we generally follow it, out of prudence. The threats of punishment, or traffic accidents, factor into prudence. As for unjust laws, there would be no particular obligation to follow unjust laws and good reason actively to disobey them.

But note that this works only if we have some notion of morality, and justice in particular, to which we can appeal. If we're moral anti-realists, we have only prudence and our interests to guide us. The only possible solution left to the question of why the law should be followed would be something a bit more Hobbesian than libertarians would typically entertain.

Indeed, the question of whether law, merely as such, is sufficient to guide behavior exists not merely for individual citizens, but also for states themselves. The People's Republic of China, for example, has a constitution guaranteeing for its citizens the same basic set of liberties commonly found in liberal democracies, such as the freedom of speech, religion, press, due process, and so forth. The problem is that the Chinese Communist Party rarely actually follows its own constitution on these points, as courts in China do not entertain appeals to constitutionally guaranteed freedoms as valid defenses. As a general problem in Irwin's appeal to love and law, even if it were conceded that citizens need only law to guide their behavior toward strangers, states themselves, which face few practical barriers in the

exercise of their powers, stand in some sense beyond the accountability of law. Beyond love and law, there would have to be some other avenue of appeal for the interests of state actors, if nothing else, to follow their own law.

Beyond law itself, a version of the sensible-knave problem also presents itself for politics. Suppose that an individual is talented at manipulating others without any sense of remorse. We can call this individual Frank Underwood. We could imagine Underwood's politics hardly to be libertarian. Underwood would likely favor a politics rich in demagoguery, relying on cronyism, corruption, and rent-seeking, something closer to a highly interventionist statism than to libertarianism. If he were in a developing country, he might be ambitious enough to pursue dictatorship.

It might be that Underwood is a poor example here, because he's likely a narcissist, if not a sociopath. It would be a fool's errand to attempt to reason morally with such an individual, whether there were moral facts or not. Rather, my concern here is with providing an account as to why this would be a "bad" thing. Regardless of whether Underwood is persuadable or not, on what basis would a classical liberal or libertarian anti-moralist describe this kind of behavior as wrong?

We could say that it's bad in the sense that Underwood's antics would deprive us of freedom and our property: his "good" is our "bad." With moral anti-realism, libertarians would have an impoverished vocabulary at the level of interest-group politics, limited to saying that they didn't like what Underwood was doing, perhaps on an aesthetic level. But why would libertarians' interests matter at least as much as Underwood's or his faction's? If classical liberalism means anything, it would have to mean at a minimum that individuals and their rights matter, which is a normative claim. In this context, we'd at least want the claim that it's *wrong* to deprive people of their rights, independent of the hurly-burly world of interest-group politics. Sartre, a perhaps unwilling conscript to the classical liberal cause, demands that one's own freedom may only come with the recognition of the equal freedom of other individuals.

Irwin emphasizes the role of contracts in protecting freedom. Even without a Hobbesian Sovereign to enforce contracts, we have prudential reasons to live up to our agreements, insofar as others will be unlikely to form agreements with us if it becomes known that we're unreliable trading partners. Any cursory study of the merchants' law of the Middle Ages will show how well professional reputation

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incentivized law-following without formal state-enforcement measures, even across borders of language and nationality.

But consider the political process: contracts can be subverted there. Indeed, the U.S. Constitution's Article I, Section 10's "Contracts Clause" owes its existence to the tendency of state governments, under the Articles of Confederation, to nullify contracts between debtors and borrowers, since the latter are numerous enough to be politically useful as a voting block. As another example, consider eminent domain abuse, in which deeds and contractual relationships can be uprooted to benefit more powerful interests. Contracts alone would be insufficient to protect children and the mentally handicapped, as they are ineligible to sign them. For people in that kind of condition, a moral notion of rights might be useful.

This all suggests that politics is best seen as an outgrowth of ethics, shifting the perspective from the individual (the good person) to the social (the good society). Classical liberalism, as a political ideology, gains much of its intuitive appeal from the idea that the way we interact as individuals with each other ought largely to inform and be consistent with how we interact with the State. If it's true that threatening one's neighbor, stealing from her, violating her privacy, or compelling her to do your bidding is wrong, we can see why it would be wrong for the State to do it and wrong for one to enlist the State to perform these functions on one's behalf.

The existentialist is in a unique position to understand this and to provide a moral language for it. The existentialist, after all, can invoke the primacy of freedom as a value, emphasizing its relationship with responsibility. Just as important, though, is the moral psychology of bad faith, which fits nicely as a description of one who rejects these activities for individuals but supports them when done by the State. In this respect, the existentialist ethos is, if nothing else, congruent with the libertarian ethos of "keep your hands to yourself and mind your own business." Such a rich morality could only be in Irwin's prudential best interest to adopt.

# How to Live a More Authentic Life in Both Markets and Morals

Mark D. White
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William Irwin's *The Free Market Existentialist*[1] serves to correct popular accounts of existentialism that connect it with socialism and paint it as intrinsically opposed to markets and economic liberty. Irwin acknowledges the reasons for this presumption and then gets to the core of existentialist thought to explain how the ideal of authenticity can best be expressed in a context of liberty and markets, resulting in a more humane and mutually satisfying capitalism. This is not the only significant argument in the book, however.

The material on existentialism and its compatibility with free-market capitalism takes up just the first three chapters. The next two chapters are devoted to an argument for moral anti-realism and the last two are devoted to a more political libertarianism, both based on existentialism. At first blush these three points can seem disparate, and the last two topics threaten to dilute the focus on existentialism and markets that the title implies. The first part of the book is the strongest and most appealing; it addresses a common, but not deeply ingrained, misperception. As a result, it reads as a fascinating and ultimately positive contribution to both areas. The last two parts are likely to be more controversial, since neither moral anti-realism nor minimal government has broad acceptance. I'm afraid that not only will they convince fewer people, but they will also turn off a few who would have been convinced by the first part.

This is not to say that the three parts are inconsistent or even disconnected. Irwin could have stressed this more, but the three arguments are related through their mutual derivation from his brand of existentialism, with its emphasis on authenticity and individualism. In

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[1] William Irwin, *The Free Market Existentialist* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015). All parenthetical citations in the text are to *The Free Market Existentialist* unless otherwise specified.

this sense, the first and second parts of the book are more closely linked. The first part emphasizes the responsibility of the individual to resist the pull of consumerism and make her own choices in the marketplace that express her individuality and values. The second part makes the same point with respect to morality; the individual should refuse to accept evolved or community morals without reflection, and instead make an active choice regarding which rules or principles she will follow. The third part, recommending a minimal "watchman" state, serves to enable the maximal range of individual choices Irwin recommends in the first two parts. In this brief comment, I will focus on the first two parts concerning the responsibilities of the individual based on authenticity, leaving discussion of the third part to my fellow commentators.

Irwin does a fine job in Chapter 1 of presenting existentialism in all of its richness and complexity, admirably avoiding the temptation to provide a canonical definition and instead presenting it as a Wittgensteinian "family" of views. Out of this he crafts his own view based on authenticity and individualism that he uses throughout the book. Chapter 2 confronts the common misperception—largely due to Jean-Paul Sartre's later turn to Marxism—that existentialism is more sympathetic to socialism and statism than to capitalism and libertarianism. Chapter 3, however, is of the greatest practical value, presenting an assertive existentialist argument against rampant consumerism and corporate greed as the "ugly faces" of capitalism. Irwin quickly dismisses caricatures of the entrepreneur as an oppressive force motivated solely by profit (pp. 66-67). He spends more time on consumers, suggesting that many of us are inauthentic in our market behavior, chasing trends, status, and the elusive promise of happiness through acquisition of more and better stuff.

Irwin is careful to point out that buying things is not necessarily inauthentic, if consumers have reflected on their desires and confirmed that they want these things for the right reasons—that is, reasons that are not the result of relinquishing one's decision-making autonomy to external sources without adequate reflection and skepticism (pp. 68-70). Irwin prefers a conscious minimalism or "voluntary simplicity" (pp. 71-76), but he recognizes that this is an aesthetic judgment rather than a moral one, stopping short of judging those who indulge in more purchases (pp. 76-78). He has chosen a lifestyle—that of college professor—that suits his values and preferences (and puts him amongst like-minded people, to prevent social contagion effects), while others choose to be stockbrokers based

on different and no less valid ones. What Irwin is critical of are people who do not follow their own inner values, whatever they may be, and instead inauthentically accept the judgments and directions of the crowd. In this way, Irwin argues that an existentialist perspective is not only compatible with free-market capitalism, but it can actually improve it by reorienting the behavior of consumers, workers, and business people closer to their own values and preferences.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Irwin uses existentialism in conjunction with moral anti-realism—the position that ethical rules and values do not have objective existence—to emphasize each person's responsibility to determine her own values and morals. This is consistent with the meaninglessness (and godlessness) of an existentialist worldview and allows Irwin to emphasize the requirements that authenticity places on our moral beliefs in the same way it does in our economic lives. He highlights work in evolutionary morality (pp. 92-99) that explores and explains our ingrained sentiments toward fairness and altruism, but stresses throughout that this is descriptive work only, not normative, much less objective in the sense that moral realists would claim.

While I agree that, ideally, authenticity demands that we take control of our moral codes and behavior as well as our more routine choices, at times Irwin seems to underestimate how difficult this is. He is particularly harsh on moral fictionalism, a particular kind of "suspension of disbelief" by which we act as if there were objective truth to morality while rationally acknowledging there is none (pp. 112-17). I agree that moral fictionalism is an example of inauthentic self-delusion and that, ideally, we should consciously and deliberately endorse moral values rather than rely on our evolved instincts. At the same time, though, we are human beings of limited cognitive capacities, and moral fictionalism may be a convenient evolved heuristic that has not outlived its usefulness (enhancing survival instincts in primitive societies), even if the reason for that usefulness has changed somewhat (to economize on scarce cognitive resources). Authenticity is a goal that many find difficult to achieve, especially in the areas of life in which it is important; maintaining the fiction of moral realism to fall back on can be a useful (and even mutually beneficial) coping mechanism.

This is an argument partially based on weakness of will, and I agree with Irwin that the best response to weakness of will is to strengthen the will. However, we all have limits, and our efforts toward strengthening our will may be better used elsewhere, such as restricting

the pull of consumerism and conformism in less ethical areas of our lives. Curiously, Irwin seems to recognize the value of fictionalism when it comes to free will (pp. 19-21), acknowledging that we have to believe in our own agency even if deep down we realize it's false, but does not see the same threat here as in moral fictionalism (perhaps due to the metaphysical nature of the former).

Irwin also could have paid more attention to autonomously chosen morality—that is, moral rules that people willingly and consciously adopt in an authentic process that affirms the person they want to be, as opposed to the unreflective acceptance of evolved morality that he opposes. He does acknowledge that individuals may reflectively endorse certain aspects of their evolved morality or the rules of their community (pp. 120-22). However, this is in tension with his falling back on prudence or enlightened self-interest to be sufficient for the operation of a civil society without belief in objective morality (pp. 124-27). This may be a rhetorical strategy akin to Adam Smith's market analysis, in which Smith assumes the self-interested behavior in *The Wealth of Nations* that he decries in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to make the point in the former that the market could operate *even if* participants only looked after their self-interest. I don't get the sense that this is Irwin's strategy, though, and I remain unconvinced that enlightened self-interest, acting in consort with love (amorally) and the law (as enforcement), would be enough to take the place of an externally generated and imposed morality. This type of morality evolved, biologically and socially, for a reason; the burden of proof is on those who argue that society can survive without it.

Of course, in the best-case scenario, most of us would accept that our core morality makes sense, regardless of our feelings about its objective existence, and not much would change. I would suggest that this is the world many of us live in, where the opposite of moral fictionalism is more accurate: many of us make lofty claims about objective morality, but in our lives we pick and choose which rules we follow (much like how many of us treat the law, which has objective reality of a social kind). If this description is correct, then many of us are living in Irwin's world of chosen morality right now. The question is whether these people are more moral, prudent, or authentic than those who sincerely hew to objective morality.

Also, it follows that the greater problem with respect to authenticity (or our lack of it) lies in the areas of our lives covered in the first part of the book, which highlights the role that free markets can play in enhancing it. As many insights as there are in the second

and third parts of the book, I think that the first part will stand as Irwin's most important contribution, as much for stressing our responsibility to live our own lives in the face of incredible pressure to conform to herd behavior as for the more academic points he makes about existentialism and capitalism. Had Irwin chosen to go a different way with this book, he could have penned a fine self-help book rooted in existentialism, helping us regain our authenticity as consumers, workers, and moral agents. As it stands, *The Free Market Existentialist* is much more. I only hope that the more controversial claims in the last two parts of the book do not scare readers away from the clear profundity in the first.

# Reply to Walker and White

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One of the main goals I had for my book *The Free Market Existentialist*[1] was to start a conversation. So, I am grateful to Jason Walker and Mark White for accepting the invitation for dialogue about my work.[2]

I am pleased that both Walker and White find that the book is successful in demonstrating the links between existentialism and free-market thinking, as this is the crucial point I sought to make. I appreciate White's overview of the whole book, particularly his highlighting of Chapter 3, in which I show how existentialism can help with issues of consumerism and alienation connected to capitalism.

White points out that the book is somewhat harsh and demanding in its criticism of moral fictionalism and its call for moral anti-realism. I can only agree with him that my view will not appeal to most people. (As a moral anti-realist, though, I have no moral condemnation for anyone who rejects it.) White and Walker both worry that the chances are not good that the world would work well without belief in objective morality. They may be right, but that remains to be seen. Aside from what I have written in the book, all I can say is that a similar worry about the world without belief in God no longer looks so worrisome to many.

I do not argue that all existentialists should embrace the free market, nor do I argue that all free-market advocates should be existentialists. The definite article in the book's title is not meant to

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[1] William Irwin, *The Free Market Existentialist* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

[2] Jason Walker, "Mere Prudence? Existentialist Ethics, Moral Anti-Realism, and Freedom," *Reason Papers* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2018), pp. 44-58; Mark White, "How to Live a More Authentic Life in Both Markets and Morals," *Reason Papers* 40, no. 1 (Summer 2018), pp. 59-63.

suggest that there is only one way to be a free-market existentialist. Far from it. Rather, the title refers to the fact that at the time of writing the book I was the only free-market existentialist I knew. With tongue in cheek, I depicted myself as all alone (though not in the despairing existentialist sense) in the overlapping section of a Venn diagram, with one circle representing existentialists and another circle representing free-market thinkers. I am happy to report that since the book's publication, I have heard from scholars who have joined me in the overlap.

Despite my newfound company, I still find myself alone in the overlap of another Venn diagram, this one consisting of three circles representing not only existentialists and free-market thinkers but also moral anti-realists. Moral anti-realism regards discourse about morality as akin to discourse about Atlantis, and it regards moral theory as akin to Atlantean cartography. As I make clear, I do not think that one needs to be a moral anti-realist if one is an existentialist or if one is a free-market thinker. I simply happen to be all three—the book presents the case that my position is coherent.

Walker finds moral anti-realism repugnant. He attempts to save me from myself by showing that I am unwittingly engaged in moral talk. However, in *The Free Market Existentialist* I make the following request: "I ask the reader to interpret all moral-sounding language in the preceding and subsequent chapters in non-moral terms" (p. 128). The main reason that I make this request is that "[a]s with religious and theological language, moral language is so deeply embedded in culture that it would be silly to think it could be completely and immediately exterminated" (p. 128). Much of the language that I use resonates with morality, but that is only because the English language itself is infused with moral metaphors. We would not, I hope, accuse an atheist of covert religious belief, just because she responds to a sneeze with "God bless you" or reacts to pain with an exclamation of "Jesus Christ!" I beg similar indulgence for my use of *should* and talk of *prudence* and *authenticity*. While these words understandably sound moral to many ears, no such intention stands behind my use.

As I make clear in the book, I take prudence to be a sufficient guide for action under moral anti-realism. Prudence, as I conceive of it, is a non-moral virtue. Walker recognizes that Aristotelian prudence (*phronesis*) is indeed a non-moral virtue, but he is quick to add that on some interpretations of Aristotle, prudence is inextricably linked to the moral virtues. That is fine for Aristotle, but I see no implication of this

view for the moral anti-realist. Unlike Aristotle, who insists on a purpose (*telos*) for the human being and a conception of *eudaimonia* that applies to human beings in general, my existentialism and moral anti-realism allow for a range of individual choice that is not hemmed in by Aristotelian moral virtues. Walker finds it troubling that I would rely on prudence for normative concerns, so he proposes alternatives. As a moral anti-realist, though, I am not concerned with normative values in the way that Walker is. I commend prudence for its ability pragmatically to coordinate actions, not to satisfy norms in the moral sense.

Let me note that I sympathize with Walker's lack of sympathy for moral anti-realism. Arguing for moral anti-realism these days is akin to arguing for atheism two hundred years ago. By saying this, I do not mean to suggest that I am correct and ahead of my time. Indeed, my atheism may turn out to be wrong, as may my moral anti-realism. However, just as atheism has become more mainstream, I hope that moral anti-realism will become more mainstream. I cannot present the case for it here, but I am grateful that *The Free Market Existentialist* has contributed to a conversation about it.[3]

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[3] For discussion of moral anti-realism, see Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value," *Philosophical Studies* 127 (2006), pp. 109-66; Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jonas Olson, *Moral Error Theory: History, Critique, Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Richard Garner, "Abolishing Morality," in Richard Joyce and Simon Kirchin, eds., *A World without Values: Essays on John Mackie's Moral Error Theory* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), pp. 217-33; and Joel Marks, *Ethics without Morals: A Defense of Amorality* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

**Article**

# Memorializing Genocide II: Later Holocaust Documentaries

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## 1. Introduction

In the first of this series[1] (hereafter "Part I"), I reviewed four earlier Holocaust documentaries: two U.S. War department films produced right after the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945, a famous 1955 French documentary (*Night and Fog*), and a 1973 British television documentary (*Genocide: 1941-1945*). I made three points about those films.

First, while the first two documentaries are composed mainly of footage of the actual death camps, the third documentary includes pictures of the remains of the camps at the time of the film's production (ten years after the end of the war). The fourth documentary includes footage of interviews with a number of participants in the events of the time done at the time of the making of the documentary (i.e., the early 1970s). This was intended, I suggested, to underscore the fallibility of memory.

Second, there is a distinction to be made between the Holocaust and the Shoah. The Holocaust, in my usage, refers to the systematic torture and murder of 11 million people targeted because of a variety of identities: ethnicity (Jews, Roma); captured enemy troops (especially Soviet POWs); dissidents (Regime opponents, communists, and so on); religion (Jehovah's Witnesses and Freemasons); lifestyle (gays, prostitutes); and the disabled. The Shoah was the special focus on the eradication of the Jewish population, which constituted 6 million of those 11 million victims, amounting to nearly 2/3 of European Jewry. Virulent anti-Semitism was key to Nazism from the beginning.

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[1] Gary James Jason, "Memorializing Genocide I: Earlier Holocaust Documentaries," *Reason Papers* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2016), pp. 64-88.

Third, the notion of collective guilt is dubious. This view—that all Germans collectively were guilty of the war crimes committed by the Nazi Regime—is pushed in the documentary directed by Billy Wilder. I argued that this view was (and is) indefensible on its face and was likely so alienating to the Germans that Wilder's film saw little use as a tool of denazification by the Allies occupying Germany.

In this article, I want to consider later Holocaust documentaries produced by two filmmakers who have done excellent work: Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen and Claude Lanzmann. I will use these to explore two questions: First, to what extent are these documentaries themselves propaganda, and if so, how deceitful was it? Second, what role does displaying actual footage of the events the documentary is about play in the power of the film?

## 2. Films by Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen

The documentaries *Theresienstadt: Deception and Reality*, *The Liberation of Auschwitz*, and *The Liberation of Majdanek* were researched by Wolfgang Scheffler and produced and directed by Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen.[2] Von Zur Muhlen is an eminent documentary filmmaker, with twenty-six documentaries to her credit.[3]

*Theresienstadt: Deception and Reality* has some exceedingly interesting materials, such as rare footage and interviews with survivors, although it is difficult to follow in places. The film opens with appalling images of the Warsaw ghetto, contrasted with images of the Theresienstadt ghetto where people are seemingly healthy and happy. The announcer lets us know that the latter scenes are from a 1944 Nazi propaganda film aimed at "deceiving public opinion" about how Jews were being treated in the camp system. The goal of the documentary is to inform the viewer how the camp was used as propaganda and how it figured in the Nazi genocide of the Jews.

Theresienstadt was (and is) a town in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). It is an old city with a large fortress on the edge of the town, which in 1941 was turned into a concentration camp to hold

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[2] *Theresienstadt: Deception and Reality*, directed by Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen (Artsmagic Ltd., 2005); *The Liberation of Auschwitz*, directed by Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen (Artsmagic Ltd., 2005); and *The Liberation of Majdanek*, directed by Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen (Artsmagic, Ltd., 2006).

[3] See "Irmgard Von Zur Muhlen," *IMDB.com*, accessed online at: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0903287/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

Czech Jews awaiting transport to the extermination camps. There were about 90,000 Czech Jews; in 1942, the SS decided to relocate all of the Jewish Czech residents to the town, thus turning it into a ghetto. It was thus a fusion of ghetto and holding camp, with the goal of holding Jews until they could be killed. In 1942, the SS had the prisoners lay a railway line directly from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz.

The film shows us the abuse heaped upon the Jews from the moment of their arrival. The viewer discovers what a hell it was through testimonials by survivors as well as through pictures drawn and buried by prisoners at the time. Over its short existence, the camp held about 150,000 prisoners, with 90,000 of them being sent to Auschwitz to be killed and nearly 36,000 dying in the camp. Only about 17,000 survived to be liberated.

What was unique about Theresienstadt was its use for propaganda purposes. Eminent World War II historian Karel Magry, interviewed in the film, instructs us that there were two distinct target audiences for this propaganda. First, it was used to reassure Jews that they were being sent east for benign purposes (purportedly to keep them safe from public attack). Second, it was intended to reassure Europeans that the Jews were not being abused or harmed, that they were instead given meaningful work in humane conditions and allowed a large measure of self-government.

The camp was thus used as an instrument of disinformation from the start. When the camp was turned into a ghetto, the Prague Jewish Committee of Elders was put in charge. This helped cover the lie that the Czech Jews would not be deported from this camp. After the Final Solution was codified at the Wannsee in 1942, when the SS started the deportation of Austrian and German Jews, they presented Theresienstadt as a home for elderly and prominent Jews (e.g., Jews who had fought with distinction for Germany in World War I or conspicuously helped its economy and culture). To be able to go to this supposed retirement resort, Jews were made to sign away their major assets to the SS in exchange for supposedly guaranteed life-long housing, accommodation, and medical care. Elaborate contracts were devised to give a patina of legitimacy to this charade. At the ghetto/camp, however, they were also stripped of even their minor assets and forced to live in horrible conditions. As one survivor put it ruefully, "The elderly died like flies."

Theresienstadt was the locus of even deeper deceptions, however. In 1943, the SS deported all Danish Jews there. Upon arrival, the Danish Jews were greeted by the Jewish leaders of the ghetto and

were fed well, whereupon the SS allowed the newly arrived prisoners to write home to report their good treatment. Only then were they subjected to the evils of the camp.

Despite the postcards, the Danish government started pushing for the right to send a representative and members of the Red Cross to inspect the camp. In late 1943, Adolf Eichmann ordered the camp to be cleaned up and beautified, with the town square opened to the prisoners, the ghetto bank reopened, and a café and children's centers built. To reduce the overcrowding, thousands of inmates were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz.

When this Potemkin village was ready, the SS permitted the Danish government to send a group to inspect it in June 1944. The group, including Maurice Rossel of the International Red Cross, was given a tour (nominally led by a Jewish Elder) that followed a tightly scripted timetable and route. The elderly were instructed to remain indoors.

The result was a great propaganda success for the SS. Rossel and the other officials were completely duped and wrote a report based on the lies they had been told. This Red Cross report, besides having the general ugly consequence of misleading world opinion about the camp system, also had a specific horrible consequence. The SS, before the tour, expected the Red Cross to issue a negative report and demand to see other camps, so they moved 5,000 prisoners from Theresienstadt to live in a "family camp" at Auschwitz. However, because the Red Cross sent no more inspectors, virtually all of the 5,000 sent to Auschwitz were quickly annihilated.

In early 1944, as the camp was being beautified, the SS decided to film a propaganda movie to show the world that the camp system as a whole was benign. The idea did not come from Joseph Goebbels or Heinrich Himmler, as one might have suspected, but from a lowly SS Major, namely, Hans Gunther, chief of the Prague Gestapo section in charge of Jewish affairs.

The film was written and directed by one of the prisoners, a famous Jewish actor and director named Kurt Gerron. Under duress, a Czech production company was ordered to produce the film, with the crew threatened with reprisals against their families for any information leaked. All of the actors were inmates who were told to wear their best clothes. Some volunteered to be in the film, hoping to escape deportation, if only for a time. Others were forced to collaborate. We see scenes of inmates relaxing; well-dressed children being fed bread and butter (Magry notes that the film had to be shot

repeatedly, because the famished children couldn't resist eating the food until the cameras rolled); kids frolicking in the park; children performing an opera; and a well-stocked library, with well-known German-Jewish intellectuals shown reading and delivering lectures.

Two weeks after filming, mass deportations occurred, including most of the participants in the film. Of those, 18,000 were sent to Auschwitz and most were gassed, including, ironically or not (depending upon your point of view), Gerron.

On screen again, Magry notes that the film was only a limited success as a propaganda device. It was shown, in April 1945, to two more Red Cross officials in a camp tour personally guided by Eichmann. They were also duped. By the time the film was finished in March 1945, the war was nearly over and the SS never had time to show it abroad. Also, with the liberation of some of the Eastern camps by the Soviet Army starting in late 1944, the public learned of the truth of the camp system and the film was dismissed as the vile propaganda it was.

*The Liberation of Auschwitz* is quite different from the documentaries we have reviewed so far. It opens with an intertitle informing viewers that it contains *all* of the footage taken by Soviet cameramen when the Soviet Army liberated it on January 27, 1945. Moreover, it is a film with no score, noting, "In the interest of preserving the original character of this material, even the most shocking pictures have been left unedited, and neither sound nor music has been added." (I suspect that the availability of the Soviet footage was enabled by the collapse of the Soviet system.)

After a brief introduction by famed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, the narrator shows us the location of Auschwitz, the biggest of all the camps, and we see a picture of Alexander Vorontsov, the man who took much of the footage we are about to see. He is the only member still alive of the team of Soviet cameramen who filmed the liberation. Vorontsov, who helped put the footage in order, narrates his experiences.

As the Soviet Army approached the camp complex (Auschwitz consisted of several large camps integrated around an industrial center), the SS forced healthier prisoners to march to other camps farther west. Thousands died along the way due to the harsh winter conditions or by being shot.

The first shots the Soviet camera crew took of the camp complex were from the air, showing how vast it was. We see row after row of barracks. The narrator points out that the camps held 100,000 or

more prisoners at a time, with more arriving on a two-week cycle to replace those who would be exterminated when they became too feeble to work. We also see the IG Farben factory complex, which had been moved from Germany to the east to make it safer from Allied bombers.

We then view electric fences, with gaunt and somber prisoners standing by. Vorontsov recounts how a Soviet government delegation arrived at the camp complex two days later to inspect the camp. It took a while for the full nature of the extermination system to be understood, because the SS had destroyed the crematoria, but the camp plans were discovered and disclosed the truth.

The film shows other things discovered by Soviet soldiers, including prisoners freezing to death (the SS had cut the power to the camp when they left). We view piles of suitcases that have been taken from the prisoners; massive heaps of clothes and shoes; mounds of eyeglasses, gold teeth, shaving utensils, and even shoe-horns; and stacks of Jewish prayer shawls.[4] All of this was confiscated from the incoming prisoners. SS records reveal that hundreds of millions of Reich marks had been stolen from the inmates.

The narrator notes that the Jews were "by far" the most numerous of the victims and that "almost without exception" Jewish children had been gassed. This was clear contemporaneous acknowledgement that the main target of the Holocaust was precisely the Jewish people.

Next up is footage of Soviet attorneys recording the testimony of prisoners for later use in war-crime trials. We hear some of that testimony, which includes pictures of children showing numbers tattooed upon them and survivors telling us of what they endured.

The film ends on an interesting note. The narrator states that the Soviet film crew was originally instructed to stage a brief (propaganda) film of the liberation, using now recuperated freed prisoners to recreate the liberation, cheering lustily the Soviet troops. We see scenes of this film. However, the Soviets—not particularly averse to using their own propaganda movies—decided against using this footage, because the images "did not correspond to the bleak reality of January 27th [1945]."

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[4] Historian Götz Aly has argued persuasively that, as a matter of state policy, the Nazi regime paid for much of its war effort by the confiscation of Jewish assets. He argues this in his *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008). For a review of this book, see Gary Jason, "Buying Genocide, Part 2," *Liberty,* August 14, 2017.

*The Liberation of Majdanek* is about the Soviet freeing of Majdanek, the concentration camp near the medieval Polish town of Lublin that was opened by the SS in October 1941. The first batch of prisoners were Soviet POWs. By December of 1941, the SS sent many of Lublin's Jews to the camp. Very quickly the SS introduced gas chambers to the camp. Throughout its three-year existence, the camp housed mainly Polish Jews.

The film shows us footage of Soviet tanks and Polish troops entering Lublin, which was the first Polish city to be liberated by the Soviet Army: "The joy and enthusiasm and the cheers as well were genuine." We see the layout of the camp, including gas chambers and crematoria. The narrator points out that, late in the war, Himmler ordered other camps to destroy all records of the mass killings by exhuming all corpses from mass graves, cremating all bodies, then blowing up the gas chambers and crematoria, and burning the camp records of the killings. The rapid advance of the Soviets, though, led to the capture of the camp intact, allowing humanity to witness the German genocide machinery.

The film cuts to scenes of Soviet POWs who have been captured by the Nazis during the Nazi attack on Russia (June 22, 1941). The narrator notes that "hundreds of thousands of soldiers were taken prisoner by the Germans in the first months of the war." Himmler got permission from the German Army high command to put several hundred thousand POWs to work to help the German war economy in SS factories.

We next see a still of famous Soviet director Roman Karmen and Polish cameraman Adolf Forbert. He shot the film of the liberation of the camp, including the 480 Soviet POWs and 180 Polish political prisoners who remained in the camp after the SS removed the other prisoners in advance of the camp's liberation by the Soviets. The narrator points out that Majdanek was primarily a forced labor camp, but it repeatedly sent out large numbers of prisoners to the extermination camps.

The film cuts to a group of high Soviet Army officers being given a tour of the camp. The narrator points out that General Nicolai ordered his troops "to visit the camp before going to the front in order that they might see with their own eyes the scale and the horror of the extermination camp."[5]

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[5] See "Nicolai Bulganin," Wikipedia, accessed online at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Bulganin.

The film shifts to footage from a rare SS training film showing an SS round-up, as the narrator sarcastically notes that it doesn't show the SS shooting victims. Especially telling is the testimony from the highest SS officer captured there, who identifies the gas used as Zyklon. When asked, "Do you think that you as an SS who worked here in the camp are responsible for these mass murders?" he curtly replies, "No." To the question whether he knew that French, Belgians, and Poles were exterminated, he replies, "Yes, Jews, I know, I have heard this." To the question, "So do all Germans disregard all the rules of warfare in this camp?" he surreally responds, "The people were mostly Jews, not prisoners of war. . . . I am not a sadist . . . . I never beat anyone . . . . I am far too well educated for that!"

We now see scenes of the Soviet committee set up to investigate the crimes at Majdanek, including those of Polish and Soviet doctors and professors. The head of the committee tells the journalists that two million people were killed at the camp during its existence. One of the committee members adds that a field of fifty acres was fertilized with human ashes.

The film ends with a trial. Six defendants are led to the courthouse, with Polish troops holding back the angry crowd to keep the war criminals from being lynched. The men—four SS men and two Kapos—are on display as the trial opens. The narrator notes that those chiefly responsible had at first escaped, but they were later caught and executed. We see the charges read and hear the testimony of the witnesses about the brutalities committed in the camp. One of the witnesses summarizes the methods of Majdanek murder: beating, hanging, shooting, drowning, gassing, starvation, and lethal injection. The prosecutors sum up, with one striking a note of German collective guilt when he argues that at least half a million Germans "were all harnessed to the monolithic machinery of extermination." The other prosecutor urges, "In the name of peace and happiness, purchased with the blood of millions of victims, I demand the death penalty for them all!" The judge sentences five of them to death by hanging, adding another note of collective guilt: "This punishment is directed at the entire German people."

The narrator notes that this was only the first Majdanek trial. Of the thousands of SS guards and Kapos who served at the camp, only 107 were put on trial by the Polish and 8 by the Allied courts. One generation later, a second Majdanek trial took place in 1975: "It took six years to pass sentences on 8 SS guards."

**3. Claude Lanzmann's Masterful Work**

In the 1980s, after seeing an American television series on the Holocaust become a surprise hit in Germany,[6] writer and filmmaker Claude Lanzmann set out to do his own documentary. He was born in 1925 to an émigré Jewish family in France and joined the Resistance at age 17. Lanzmann chose to interview surviving witnesses in depth. The result is the superb documentary *Shoah* and several spinoff documentaries.[7]

*Shoah* was highly regarded, though not universally so, when it was released. Roger Ebert says that it was "one of noblest films ever made," adding that it was in a class by itself: "It is not a documentary, not journalism, not propaganda, not political. It is an act of witness." It won the 1985 New York Film Critics Circle award for Best Documentary and a Special Award from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. However, Pauline Kael dismissed it as "exhausting."[8] In retrospect, there is little doubt as to the excellence of *Shoah*. The British Film Institute rates it the second greatest documentary ever made and, according to Wikipedia, it is "broadly considered to be the foremost film on the subject."[9]

*Shoah* differs from all of the other documentaries discussed in this article in that it contains *no* archival footage whatsoever. It contains contemporaneous footage of the remains of the concentration camps along with extended interviews of those who were victims of or otherwise involved in the concentration camp system. Lanzmann also includes a notable interview with Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg, who discusses the key role that propaganda played in intensifying hatred of the Jews.

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[6] The *Holocaust* miniseries first appeared in the United States in 1978.

[7] *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (Criterion Collection, 1985); *A Visitor from the Living*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (Criterion Collection, 1997); *Sobibor: 14 October, 1943 4pm*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (Criterion Collection, 2001); *The Karski Report*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (Criterion Collection, 2010); *The Last of the Unjust*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (Criterion Collection, 2013).

[8] "Shoah," Wikipedia, accessed online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoah_(film).

[9] "Claude Lanzmann," Wikipedia, accessed online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Lanzmann.

*Shoah* runs at nine-and-a-half hours, with its footage taken from over 350 hours of interviews spread over fourteen countries. *Shoah* focuses on four subjects: Chelmo, a killing camp that was the first to use mobile gas vans to commit the murders; the death camp Treblinka; the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau; and the Warsaw ghetto.

Lanzmann, who wrote and directed the film, personally conducted the interviews. For Lanzmann, oral history takes primacy over written history. His method is to ask for details of what the interviewee saw or did, letting the viewer decide for himself the truth. He faced a number of difficulties in making the film. It took over eleven years to make and experienced financial problems, in part from locating so many participants and traveling to so many countries. Some of the German interviewees who were participants in the Nazi regime's activities refused to be filmed, so Lanzmann's crew used hidden cameras and remote filming to get that footage.

Testimony on Chelmo is provided by two survivors, Simon Srebnik and Mordechai Podchlebnik. Srebnik survived by singing military songs for the Germans. Lanzmann also secretly filmed a German security guard, who describes how the camp functioned, as well as a former Nazi railroad traffic engineer, who feigns ignorance about just what his trains were transporting.

Testimony on Treblinka is given by Abraham Bomba, who survived because he was a barber. In a moving scene, he recounts how another camp barber saw Bomba's wife and sister in the anteroom to the gas chamber. Testimony is also recorded from another survivor, Richard Glazer, along with SS officer Franz Suchomel, who details how the gas chambers were designed. Also interviewed is Henryk Gawkowski, a Pole who drove one of the transport trains while blunting his feelings with vodka.

Testimony on Auschwitz is given by Rudolf Vrba and Filip Muller. Vrba was one of the few to escape the camp. Muller was given the task of pulling the stiffened bodies out of the gas chambers and putting them in the crematoria.

Finally, testimony on the Warsaw Ghetto is given primarily by Jan Karski and Franz Grassler. Karski (about whom more below) was a Polish Catholic resistance fighter who went to the Ghetto and then Auschwitz to see for himself the evils therein. Grassler was one of the Nazi administrators who coordinated with the Jewish Elders allegedly in charge of the Ghetto.

Lanzmann was quite open about one theme that recurs in many of the scenes in the film. He told one French magazine that he intended his documentary to be an indictment of Poland's complicity in the Holocaust. This comes across especially clearly in one scene, where he interviews a group of older Poles about their feelings at seeing trainloads of Jews pass through the town and never return. One of the older women asserts that people who deny the divinity of Christ will face bad ends. (I will return below to this point.)

Years after releasing *Shoah*, Lanzmann used his extensive footage to produce four other documentaries: *A Visitor from the Living*, *Sobibor*, *The Karski Report*, and *The Last of the Unjust.* Each of these subsequent documentaries is focused on the interview of one person.

*A Visitor from the Living* shows Lanzmann's methodical interview style to its best effect. The interviewee here was Maurice Rossel, none other than the Swiss inspector sent by the International Committee of the Red Cross, who visited the "Potemkin camp" Theresienstadt in 1944. Rossel subsequently gave the camp a glowing review, which the Nazis then used for propaganda purposes. This interview examines the character of the man and finds it wanting.

Lanzmann opens the film by telling us about Theresienstadt and he thanks Rossel for permitting them to use the twenty-year-old footage. In his permission letter, Rossel, at that point quite elderly, says, "Be lenient, don't make me look too ridiculous." Lanzmann cagily replies, "I did not try to." Lanzmann didn't have to make Rossel appear ridiculous, since Rossel did it to himself.

What Lanzmann's polite but probing questions reveal is not so much an evil man but an insensitive man—or perhaps an intentionally blind one. Rossel tells us about the cozy atmosphere he found as a young man in Berlin during the war. He also says that in an earlier visit he made to Auschwitz, where the Nazis refused to show him the crematoria, he saw the inmates walking around with dazed gazes. Any aware person would have more than suspected that the inmates were terrified into sheer shock and that the Nazis were covering up mass murder.

While discussing his visit to Theresienstadt, Rossel describes the inmates as being privileged enough to get special treatment by the Nazis. He also says that he found the inmates unpleasant in their "passivity" or, as he put it, "that servility I couldn't stomach." It never occurred to him that the prisoners were frightened and with good reason, for 5,000 of them had been sent to their deaths just before Rossel's "inspection" so that the camp would appear uncrowded. That

he could speak this way many years *after* the truth of the Holocaust and the role Theresienstadt played in it reveals him to be a complete fool.

*Sobibor: 14 October, 1943 4pm* is devoted to the most successful escape attempt during the Holocaust. This film is quite different from all of the others in that it testifies to a successful uprising by the inmates of one of the concentration camps.

Lanzmann reconstructs the events through the recollections of a survivor, Yehuda Lerner. Lerner had escaped from some other camps. After being recaptured, he arrived at Sobibor with an influx of other new prisoners. The camp commandant had chosen sixty physically fit prisoners to build out the camp. Among them was a former Soviet officer, Alexander Petchersky. Thus, unlike the other camps, this one had a cadre of men physically and mentally able to resist.

The prisoners planned their escape utilizing the German guards' tendency to stick to routine. At exactly 4:00 p.m. on October 14, 1943, some of the SS guards were lured to the storehouses, killed by the prisoners armed with knives and hatchets, and their weapons seized. The prisoners killed most of the guards and the entire camp of 600 prisoners fled. The camp's machine guns and surrounding mine fields killed half of the prisoners, but the rest made it to the woods. Of these, most were killed or recaptured. Only fifty survived to the end of the war. After the uprising, the Germans plowed under the camp. No trace was left of the camp which killed about 167,000 between May 1942 and October 1943.[10]

*The Karski Report* contains Lanzmann's interview with a Polish resistance fighter, Jan Karski (the *nom de guerre* of Jan Kozielewski). Karski's dignified, even regal interview was one of the best. At the time of the interview (1985), Karski was a professor at Georgetown University, where he taught for forty years. He emigrated to America after World War II, becoming a naturalized citizen in 1954. The U.S. posthumously awarded Karski the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

During the war, Karski—at great risk to his life—investigated the horrible conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto and the Belzec death

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[10] See "Sobibor," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed online at: https://www.ushmm.org/research/the-center-for-advanced-holocaust-studies/miles-lerman-center-for-the-study-of-jewish-resistance/medals-of-resistance-award/sobibor-uprising.

camp. In 1942, he wrote a report, entitled "The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland," which he smuggled out of Poland on microfilm. In 1943, Karski reported his findings first in Britain to the Polish Prime Minister in exile, the leaders of Britain's major parties, its Foreign Secretary, and eminent intellectual Arthur Koestler. Nothing resulted. Karski then travelled to the U.S., where he met with Felix Frankfurter, Cordell Hull, OSS Chief William Donovan, Rabbi Stephen Wise, leaders of the major media, the Catholic Church, the Hollywood film industry, and even Franklin Roosevelt. Again, nothing came of it. At least Lanzmann's documentary finally honors Karski's work.

The most recent Lanzmann production is *The Last of the Unjust*. The footage is from Lanzmann's extended interview in 1975 with Rabbi Benjamin Murmelstein, who was interviewed for *Shoah* but wasn't included in that documentary.

The focus of this film is the use by the Nazis of Theresienstadt as the "model ghetto" for propaganda. As we saw earlier with Von Zur Muhlen's film, to help the deception succeed (domestically and later for foreign consumption), the Nazis—in particular, Eichmann—set up a Jewish Council as titular government of the Theresienstadt ghetto/concentration camp. The Jewish Council was headed by a president called "Elder of the Jews." The Council had three Elders, of which Murmelstein was the last (the first two were killed by the Nazis during the war). For about seven years (from 1938 until the end of the Nazi Regime in 1945), Murmelstein played a kind of chess game with Eichmann, with the spoils being the lives of Jews. The documentary rightly focuses not so much on Theresienstadt as on the two competing players. The framing issue of the film is whether Murmelstein was an opportunistic collaborator—as some Jews accused him of being[11]—or a wily foe who succeeded in saving some (if not many) Jewish lives—as he clearly believes.

Regarding Eichmann, the portrait that emerges from this film is far from a case of "banal evil," as Hannah Arendt put it.[12]

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[11] Murmelstein was arrested in Czechoslovakia after the war for collaboration with the Nazis, but he was acquitted of all charges. Many Jews considered him a collaborator, yet he was never called to testify in the trial of Eichmann in Israel, even though he was uniquely close to Eichmann.

[12] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

Murmelstein's testimony makes it clear that Eichmann was completely aware of and engaged in the ongoing total war with the Jewish people. In fact, he was a vicious, clever psychopath who delighted in tormenting, deceiving, and killing Jews. He was Satan incarnate—indeed, the word Murmelstein chose for Eichmann was "a demon." To apply the term "banal" to Satan is surely a category error if ever there was one.

Also intriguing is the portrait of Murmelstein himself. He first worked with Eichmann in Vienna as a rabbi who helped expedite the emigration of 120,000 Jews (albeit with their assets stripped along the way). Ironically, he taught Eichmann about Jewish culture and religion. Lanzmann's interview focuses mostly on Murmelstein's role as the last of the three Jewish Elders at Theresienstadt. His job was to organize camp life, which was a tough job, considering the role of the camp was to appear as a model camp when it in fact served the goal of exterminating the Jews. Murmelstein says the prisoners didn't know about the gas chambers at Auschwitz, where most of them wound up. He attributes his personal survival and that of at least some of the prisoners to his ability to keep telling the story of Theresienstadt as a haven for Jews.

Murmelstein says, "An Elder of the Jews can be condemned. But he can't be judged, because one cannot take his place."[13] This may on the surface sound compelling, but in reality this is glib. Of course, Murmelstein can be judged. He worked closely with Eichmann from 1938 until the end of the war, willingly helping Eichmann resettle Jews, knowing that most would be stripped of their assets and many killed. Whether he deliberately did this surreptitiously to save Jewish lives or was just intrigued by the thrill of dealing with Eichmann on a personal basis, cannot be known with certainty. The way you answer that question determines your judgment of Murmelstein.

## 4. Are These Films Deceptive Propaganda?

An accusation occasionally made is that these documentaries are in fact themselves propaganda movies. Making them is at worst on a par with the propaganda movies produced by the Nazis themselves. Are these documentaries propaganda, in the pejorative sense of being deceptive? Much of the answer depends on how you define the term. I

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[13] Godfrey Cheshire, "The Last of the Unjust," Roger Ebert.com, accessed online at: https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-last-of-the-unjust-2013.

will extend an analysis that I developed in an earlier article.[14] I suggest that there are six criteria by which we judge whether a case of marketing or propaganda falls on the scale from reasonable to deceptive: transparency of intention, message based upon evidence (as opposed to mere repetition of the message), rationality of audience, logicality of appeal (including especially avoidance of irrelevant emotional manipulation), truthfulness of message; and the absence of coercion.

Nazi propaganda movies typically egregiously violated one or more of these criteria. They were often presented as pure entertainment, but in fact contained elements of Nazi ideology. They were often targeted at children, with the intention of getting them to feel loyalty to the Nazi Party at an early age. They used illogical devices, such as false analogies (e.g., implicitly comparing British internment camps in the Boer War with Nazi concentration camps) or had irrelevant emotional appeals (e.g., arousing nationalistic identity to sell imperialistic wars). They routinely contained messages that were false or outright lies (e.g., the claim that Germany didn't lose World War I on the battlefield, but because it was betrayed by Jews). They also involved coercion (e.g., short films shown at theaters reminded viewers of the harsh punishment for possessing radios capable of receiving Allied programming).

However, most of the documentaries described above are free of these flaws. They are all presented as documentaries about the Holocaust, that is, films visually and orally documenting the mass murders of prisoners in the Nazi concentration camp system or the use of that camp system to commit the near total genocide of European Jewry. They are intended for adult audiences, since most come with disclaimers warning the viewer of the disturbing images contained therein. They are mainly free of logical fallacies, such as hasty generalization, by presenting extensive samples of the torture and mass murder rampant in that system. Von Zur Muhlen's documentary on Auschwitz even contains *all* extant footage taken by the liberators. Regarding the truthfulness of the message, despite the groundless claims of Holocaust deniers, I would argue that these films' footage document the claim that the Nazis committed genocide of the Jews and committed other targeted mass murders.

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[14] Gary James Jason, "Film and Propaganda I: The Lessons of the Nazi Film Industry," *Reason Papers* 35, no. 1 (July 2013), pp. 203-19; see esp. pp. 217-19.

Moreover, all are free of irrelevant emotional manipulation, though this might seem disputable. Are the graphic scenes, which surely arouse horror, pity, and anger, truly relevant? I would reply that the issue at hand is twofold: Did the Nazis commit targeted mass murder and genocide using this camp system? Did the Nazis inflict deliberate cruelty? Presenting actual footage showing in detail what was done to the victims is obviously relevant for answering such questions. In other words, an accurate and effective documentary of horrific events may well have horrific scenes, without such inclusion being irrelevant or manipulative.

Generally speaking, it would be mistaken to call these documentaries "propaganda films." However, three of them are not so easy to dismiss as being deceptively propagandistic.

First, the Wilder documentary is open for criticism on this count. For that film pushes the notion of collective guilt, which seems to me to be manifestly false (as I argue above). The fact that the SS and the Nazi regime generally (especially using Theresienstadt) tried to deceive its own as well as European citizens that the camps were benign, is yet another reason to doubt the notion that the German people were collectively guilty for the Holocaust. In that regard, *but only in that regard*, the film is not truthfully based. For this reason, I think it is fair to categorize the Wilder film as to some degree deceptive propaganda.

Second, Von Zur Muhlen's documentary *The Liberation of Majdanek* clearly draws footage of the event from Soviet director and cameraman Roman Karmen. The film doesn't say exactly where this footage is from or how it was obtained. In particular, we do not know whether it is footage from the Russian archives or selected portions of Karmen's own 1946 documentary about the Nuremberg trials, *Judgment of the Peoples*. Karmen was a committed Soviet propaganda filmmaker. He has been called "the USSR's equivalent to Leni Riefenstahl."[15] There seem to me several elements of propaganda present in the film.

To begin with, this film features footage of General Nikolai Bulganin showing his outrage at the work of the SS. However, the film does not mention that Bulganin, a life-long member of the Soviet government, got his start in the Cheka (serving from 1918 to 1922). The Cheka was the state secret political police, the Soviet equivalent of

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[15] See "Roman Karmen," Wikipedia, accessed online at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Karmen.

the Gestapo, and a likely model for it. This would suggest that the outrage he expresses may be feigned. Moreover, like Wilder's film, the end of the film pushes collective guilt, which is expressed overtly in the lines of the closing prosecutor and the judge.

Most troublesome is the theme presented throughout the film (which I am sure is Karmen's, not Von Zur Muhlen's, presentation) that the independent Polish forces worked alongside the Soviet army to liberate not just the Majdanek concentration camp, but rather, all of Poland. This is a profound lie. The Soviet intention was not the liberation of Poland, but the transfer of its sovereignty from Nazi to Soviet control. Several historical events show this. Consider first the Molotov-Von Ribbentrop Pact.[16] This treaty (concluded in 1939), divided Poland between the Nazi and Soviet regimes. This allowed the Nazis to turn their attention to Western Europe. Next consider the Katyn Forest massacre.[17] The Soviets mass murdered nearly 22,000 captured Polish officers, so that they could not mount any resistance to the Soviet inclusion of Poland in its empire after the Nazi defeat. While this film on Majdanek truly documents the crimes of the Nazis there, it unfortunately blends in elements of Soviet propaganda.

Third, and very troubling, is Lanzmann's message in *Shoah* that the Poles were generally supportive of the Nazi effort to annihilate the Jewish people. Nobody denies that many Poles had some degree of anti-Semitism, but so did many other Europeans (and many Americans) for that matter. When the film was released in Poland, it caused a firestorm of protest. The Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland viewed the film as political provocation and Polish intellectuals almost uniformly rejected the film.[18] For example, Foreign Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski—himself an Auschwitz survivor and an honorary citizen of Israel—was angry that the film ignored the many (non-Jewish) Poles who aided the Jews. Jan Karski (discussed

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[16] See "German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact," *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, accessed online at: https://www.britannica.com/event/German-Soviet-Nonaggression-Pact.

[17] Benjamin Fischer, "The Katyn Controversy: Stalin's Killing Field," U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, accessed online at: https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art6.html.

[18] See "Shoah," Wikipedia, accessed online at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoah_(film).

above), who was non-Jewish but risked his life to bring reliable information on the mass murder to the major Allied leaders, also condemned the film as tendentious. Another Polish intellectual, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, a dissident against the then-ruling Communist government, asked: "Did the Poles live in peace, quietly plowing farmers' fields with their backs turned on the long fuming chimneys of death-camp crematoria? Or, were they exterminated along with the Jews as subhuman?" He reminds us that Nazi ideology characterized all Slavs as inferior, fit only to be slaves, and many Christian Poles were killed.

It should be noted here that Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, has a page listing the Righteous Among the Nations, that is, non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from the killing camps. This included hiding Jews on one's property, providing false papers and identities, and assisting Jews to escape. On the page listing the number of people honored by country, the country with the most such individuals is Poland, with 6,706 Poles listed as being among the Righteous, 20% higher than the next highest country (the Netherlands, at 5,595). As the site notes, in helping Jews, a person risked severe punishment, which was harsher for Eastern than Western Europeans: not just their own deaths, but those of their families as well.[19]

## 5. The Tools of Documentary Film and How They Are Employed

I will conclude by briefly addressing how the makers of the best Holocaust/Shoah documentaries had four tools at their disposal, which they used in different measures. The first tool is using archival footage, that is, the actual film footage of the concentration camps right after their liberation by the Americans and Soviets. There have been other genocides (i.e., mass killings targeting groups of some identity or other) throughout human history, but that perpetrated by the Nazis was arguably the most heinous and is the first for which we have extensive actual footage. I suspect that the reason the Russians have been able to deny the mass killings that Russia inflicted on Ukraine in the early 1930s and the Turks have been able to deny the mass killings Turkey inflicted on the Armenians in 1914-1923, is that there is little photographic evidence of the events to document those atrocities. It is

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[19] See "About the Righteous," Yad Vashem, accessed online at: http://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-righteous.

likely that one reason the Karski report was disbelieved is that he had no film to accompany it.

The second tool is the use of retrospective testimony by participants in the events, including prisoners, guards, bureaucrats, resistance fighters, and so on. As I noted in Part I, a guard being interrogated at the time a camp is liberated doesn't have the same grasp of what he participated in as he likely does decades later. This raises an even bigger problem with using participant testimony—especially with films such as Wilder's and Lanzmann's—to generalize about events. The problem is that such testimony lends itself to the fallacy of hasty generalization: generalizing about a large group based on a sample either too small or biased in some way. Finding a few Poles who still exhibit overt anti-Semitism hardly suffices to support the claim that Polish anti-Semitism facilitated the Nazi atrocities. Similarly, finding some Germans who exhibit callousness regarding German atrocities hardly supports the notion of general guilt, much less of collective guilt.

The third tool is the use of contemporary footage of old sites along with narrator commentary. This increases the power of the film. In Part I, I pointed in this regard to the Resnais film. Here, I would point to Lanzmann's brilliant work.

The fourth tool is what I called "narrative focus," meaning clarity and consistency about the message of the film. I will expand on this last point. There are various messages that these films aim to convey; the types of tool used are tied to that message. I will comment briefly on the documentaries under analysis in this article as well as my earlier "Memorializing Genocide I" in relation to narrative focus.

The Steven's film, using footage taken by the (American) Army Signal Corps, had one task, but it was a vital one: to show the existence and extent of the death camp system and the Holocaust it committed. This was vital, because in World War I, British and American propaganda falsely accused the Germans of war crimes. This was a coherent message and the footage proved it beyond rational doubt, so the first and fourth tools were effectively employed. By contrast, the Wilder film didn't have narrative focus. It didn't just want to establish the existence, nature, and extent of German atrocities. It also wanted to push the message of collective German guilt. It is difficult to imagine, though, what kind of footage could show *collective* guilt.

Turning now to the Thames Television's documentary on the genocide of the Jews, the footage shows the existence of mass killing.

It also shows clips from Nazi racial propaganda films to show that the chief target was the Jews and that this was a key feature of Nazi ideology.

Now let's consider Von Zur Muhlen's later two movies. Taken as once again establishing the depth of the Holocaust atrocities, they perform well. She used *all* extant Soviet film footage, which is an immense evidential addition to the American footage. Considering the existence of neo-Nazism and Holocaust denial, this is vitally important. However, to the extent she propagates the Soviet suggestion of collective German guilt, the footage doesn't work to support that claim.

The Resnais and Lanzmann documentaries show the power of the second and third tools to make it not only clear that the Holocaust happened, but also make us feel more deeply the emotional impact. Moreover, the four most recent Lanzmann documentaries, precisely because they show no archival footage, challenge us to use our minds to judge various participants. This is what all of us have to do if we sit on a jury: ascertain whether a witness is truthful. For that, we need to see him or her under questioning.

The films we have reviewed are not merely fascinating as cinema or as exemplars of how documentary films should be made. They have played and continue to play a crucial geopolitical role: they form bulwarks against the resurrection of fascism. Recent elections in Europe and elsewhere show the continuing allure of fascist ideology, with extreme nationalist parties gaining ground. But all of these parties take care not overtly to employ explicitly anti-Semitic rhetoric or to engage in Holocaust denialism. This is left to the alt-right fringe who dwell on the dark web.

The communist death camps were never filmed during their existence or after liberation, which makes it far easier to deny the communists' mass killing. If we had documentaries of the quality of the Holocaust documentaries showing the Soviet extermination of six million "kulaks" and the murders in the Gulag camps in China and the Soviet Union, there might be far fewer people professing Marxism today than there are.

## Book Reviews

Binswanger, Harry. *How We Know: Epistemology on an Objectivist Foundation*. New York: TOF Publications, 2014.

### 1. Introduction

Harry Binswanger's *How We Know* addresses a topic of immense importance to philosophy as a whole and for developing the implications of Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism. Epistemology forms the bedrock of Objectivism; it is the only subject about which Rand wrote a philosophical treatise.[1] Her new epistemology pervades her thinking and the remainder of her philosophical claims about metaphysics, ethics, politics, and art. Yet she only partially developed her epistemology, offering promising guiding lights for the remainder, but leaving substantial questions for others to address.

In *How We Know*, Binswanger summarizes Rand's epistemology, including her theory of concepts, and discusses two important epistemological issues that she didn't develop: (1) propositions and (2) proof and certainty. Unfortunately, the book only partially lives up to its title and ambitions. Binswanger's reviews of and elaborations on the questions that Rand covered are informative. However, in his attempt to go beyond Rand's work in epistemology, he fails to address some of the most important questions involved. He also misses a number of opportunities to connect his work with ongoing developments in epistemology, psychology, and science.

I will begin with the strongest part of the book: Binswanger's review of the foundation of Objectivist epistemology as well as its theories of perception and concept-formation. Then, I will focus especially on Chapter 5: "Propositions" and Chapter 8: "Proof and Certainty." While his chapters on logic, principles, and free will are important components of epistemology, they are mostly elaborations of the good work of Rand and others on these subjects. Due to space constraints, I shall leave those aside almost entirely in this review.[2]

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[1] Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (New York: New American Library, 1979).

[2] This entire book has been reviewed at great length elsewhere by Robert Campbell; see his, "What Do We Need to Know?" *The Journal of Ayn Rand*

## 2. Foundations, Perception, and Concept-Formation

One of the strengths of *How We Know* is the frequent reminder that our consciousness and epistemology operate as biological processes and serve biological functions. This begins in Chapter 1: "Foundations," with connections made between consciousness and the needs of survival of humans and other organisms. Binswanger begins by presenting the first of Rand's axioms, namely, existence, or the fact that a mind-independent world exists. He then focuses more of the chapter on the axiom of consciousness, the idea that we are aware of existents in the world and can learn about them. It is here that he connects consciousness to survival. In describing the operation and properties of consciousness, he explains that it is embedded in an organism with biological functions, needs, and goals. Consciousness allows organisms that have it to identify and act toward goals in unique ways. Specifically, he identifies three functions that require consciousness—cognition, evaluation, and the initiation of bodily action—all of which conscious animals can do but plants cannot do (p. 39). This perspective has two advantages. First, it treats consciousness like all other biological processes in organisms and judges it on the same standard: its contribution to survival. Second, it directly connects cognition and action, forecasting the is-ought connection in Rand's ethics.[3] Binswanger reminds us that "biologically, seeing is for moving, ideas are for doing, theory is for practice" (p. 41).

After laying down the groundwork with a discussion of axioms, Binswanger moves on to the strongest chapter of the book: Chapter 2: "Perception." In this chapter, he brings perception to life and offers a vivid elaboration of how it operates. He shows that, unlike sensation, which is "the response to energy impinging on receptors" (p. 60), perception in a "three-dimensional array . . . provides the co-presence of all the entities that the animal can act on or be affected by. We see in one spread the entire scene of entities" (pp. 61-62). He isolates four features of perception: (a) it is "awareness of entities";

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*Studies* 18, no. 1 (2018), pp. 118-63. I agree with Campbell in his assessments of the sections of the book that were left out of my review as well as his overall take on the book (although not with every point he makes).

[3] Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: New American Library, 1964).

(b) it presents a "world of entities *arrayed in space*"; (c) we are at the center of our perceptual space; and (d) it is not static, but "a continuous process over time" (pp. 60-63).

Relying in large part on the work of psychologist J. J. Gibson, Binswanger shows how motion is essential to the perception of entities, especially in the case of visual perception (pp. 62-64 and 68-71). As we move in a field, we observe entities moving relative to ourselves, each in a different way depending on where it is in the visual field. The differences in their relative motion contribute to our ability to distinguish them from one another. The studies he discusses help support his claim that "[c]onsciousness is a difference-detector" (p. 68) and show us that perception is radically different from mere sensation—not only in its output, but also in its manner of operation.

For all of its strengths, even Chapter 2 has substantial drawbacks. Binswanger largely ignores the prior work done on perception by other Objectivists. Most notably, in 1986, David Kelley published a book-length treatment of this subject, *The Evidence of the Senses*, covering essentially all of the issues Binswanger covers as well as several others.[4] Binswanger proceeds as if the book does not exist, yet he makes essentially the same claims as those in Kelley's book. For example, in defending the validity of perception, Binswanger distinguishes the *object* that is perceived from the *form* in which it is perceived (pp. 78-84). Kelley proposes this distinction in his book, using both "appearance" and "form" where Binswanger uses only "form."[5] Perhaps Binswanger sees a distinction between his understanding and that of Kelley, but that would have been useful to bring up and explain. Also, Kelley preceded Binswanger in drawing on the work of J. J. Gibson, yet no mention or credit is given. It is unacceptable to ignore Kelley's work, of which Binswanger must be aware, when its relevance is so striking.

Binswanger then turns—in Chapter 3: "Concept-Formation" and Chapter 4: "Higher-Level Concepts"—to a thorough description of the Objectivist theory of concepts. He sharpens his description by contrasting it with both Realist and Nominalist theories of concepts. Binswanger explains that in the Objectivist theory, a concept is derived through the *integration* of entities and of attributes that vary in quantity

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[4] David Kelley, *The Evidence of the Senses: A Realist Theory of Perception* (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1986).

[5] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

along a particular dimension (p. 116).  He also offers a refreshing array of examples, rather than relying just on the canonical examples used in Objectivist writings.

When Binswanger goes beyond Rand in an attempt to address the cognitive content of concepts, his proposal is unconvincing.  In distinguishing the Objectivist theory from the Realist one, he exaggerates their differences and fails to see any similarities.  He explains that on the Moderate Realist theory, concept-formation is in some sense a *subtractive* process; one subtracts the unique features of each particular while maintaining the non-specific essential features (p. 103).  On the Objectivist theory, by contrast, the process is additive: "On the Objectivist theory, concepts are formed by contrast and comparison among concretes—i.e., by the conceptualizer adopting a *wider* focus, not a narrower one.  It is not a subtractive process, but an additive (integrative) one" (pp. 117-18).  This is only partly right. It is true that one widens one's focus to all referents; however, one also narrows one's focus to the "Conceptual Common Denominator" (CCD)[6] and omits the relevant measurements.  Take the common example of forming the concept 'table' from observing tables. It is true that one widens one's focus to all tables within one's field of focus. However, one also focuses narrowly on the features that these table have in common that differentiate them from their surroundings, such as their common shape and purpose.  In this narrow sense, the Objectivist approach is similar to the Moderate Realist approach. Their difference lies in the fact that the Objectivist theory recognizes that they have no features *exactly* in common and their similar features are united, instead, by measurement-omission.

Binswanger carries the same error further in Chapter 4: "[C]oncept-formation is integrative, which means that the wider concept contains more cognitive content than any of the narrower ones from which it is formed" (p. 141).  He goes on to explain that furniture has more cognitive content than table, because it includes all tables as well as other entities such as chairs and beds.  It is true that furniture has more *referents*, but it also has more omitted measurements, and so has fewer features in common.  One can see the trouble with this by looking at a more abstract example.  The concept *existence* is the broadest concept, so by Binswanger's argument, it should have the most cognitive content of any concept.  However, there is little that can be said about existence as such, because all measurements have been

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[6] Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* p. 15.

omitted; there is nothing remaining that is universal to all existents other than the fact that they exist. In this way, this concept has *little* cognitive content. In the same way, although 'furniture' has more referents than 'table', it does not necessarily have more cognitive content, for there may be fewer features that are universal to all furniture than are universal to all tables. The question of what constitutes the cognitive content of a concept in the Objectivist theory is a valuable one, but one that Binswanger attempts to answer too hastily.

**3. Propositions**

Binswanger moves further into new territory in his chapter on propositions. He provides a number of observations about how propositions operate and their cognitive utility, explaining how some commonly held beliefs about propositions are erroneous. Here, he makes the most innovative claim of the book, namely, that propositions operate by a type of *measurement-inclusion*, as opposed to the *measurement-omission* involved in concept-formation (p. 174). Specifically, the claim is that a proposition has the form "S is P," where S is the subject and P is the predicate. The identification involved in a proposition is that the measurements of S fall within the measurements of P. Thus, when one says, "This dog is an animal," one recognizes that the measurements of dog fit within the broader measurements of animal. The proposition then allows one to apply all of the knowledge contained in the concept "animal" to "this dog."

Within this context, Binswanger then separates propositions into two types: classificatory and descriptive. Classificatory propositions, he says, classify entities (e.g., a car is a vehicle). Descriptive propositions describe a feature of an entity. The examples he gives are "Tom ran," "Tom is tall," and "Tom is in the kitchen" (p. 175). Here, what one is describing are Tom's action, height, and location, respectively, rather than classifying the entirety of Tom. Despite his emphasis on this distinction, however, it's not clear that it involves a meaningful difference. Descriptive propositions do classify features. When one says that "Tom is tall," one is classifying Tom's height within the range of measurements contained in the concept "tall." Binswanger equivocates on this point. On the one hand, he recognizes that "in a descriptive proposition, there is indeed a classification made" (p. 176). Yet on the other hand, he adds, "we should not attempt to reduce description to a kind of classification" (p.

177), and then, "description is not a disguised classification" (p. 178). This point could use more clarification.

Binswanger next discusses the cognitive role of propositions as well as the differences between propositions and concepts. Here, he makes a number of statements that are difficult to integrate with one another. He claims that propositions cannot be open-ended in the way that concepts are (p. 185). A concept is open-ended both extensively (it refers to all of its units), and intensively (it subsumes all of their characteristics). He allows that some propositions are open-ended extensively, for example, "Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius" is true of all units of water. However, he denies that propositions can be open-ended intensively: "even general propositions are not open-ended intensively: one does not add new information to them over time, with the growth of knowledge" (p. 185). This is a point he makes elsewhere as well: "a proposition says what it says, nothing more. A proposition does *imply* more than it says, but such implications are not necessarily recognized by the person asserting the proposition" (p. 184). This closed-endedness is a significant claim to make with little justification; it also seems inconsistent with claims he makes elsewhere. He states repeatedly that propositions classify or describe an existent, and therefore allow one to apply *all* aspects of the predicate to that existent: "The effect of classificatory propositions is to realize: 'all that which is true of the Ps is true of this S'" (p. 176). (He adds a similar statement for descriptive propositions.) However, "All that which is true of the Ps" includes more than the proposition says and more than the speaker recognizes at the time.

An example may make this point clearer. Binswanger offers the example "Lassie is a dog," saying that this example "identifies Lassie's possession of those canine characteristics that are universal to dogs" (p. 177). However, the "characteristics that are universal to dogs" include all features that are known and unknown. This implies an intensive open-endedness. If one discovers a new property of dogs that one adds to the concept 'dog', then that property must apply to Lassie as well. Indeed, he acknowledges this later, when he says that this same proposition "enables us to apply to Lassie all the knowledge of dogs stored in the 'dog' file" (p. 187). But isn't that knowledge open-ended? If it is closed-ended, and only some features of dog apply to Lassie, which features apply and which don't?

Taking this one step further in the chapter, Binswanger claims that propositions cannot be loci of integration over time, that a proposition "says what it says, nothing more" (p. 184). This claim flies in the face

of a substantial number of scientific and philosophical examples to the contrary. Take these examples:

(1) "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction."[7]
(2) "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."[8]
(3) "Man's mind is his basic means of survival."[9]

Each of these is a proposition or a combination of propositions, and each has been a locus of substantial study. New knowledge has been added to each of these propositions over time; in fact, there are individuals who have dedicated portions of their careers to studying one of these propositions.

Binswanger discusses a number of such complex propositions in Chapter 9: "Principles," where he describes the importance of a wide variety of principles, including "A is A," and "Honesty is a Virtue," among others. He does not quite mention that each of these is a proposition, and his discussion is at odds with some of his claims about propositions being closed-ended and not loci of integration. For example, he says that the "principle of identity (A is A) underlies and explains the rules of valid deduction, valid induction, proper definition" (p. 307). That sounds intensively open-ended to me.

Thus, there are inconsistencies in this chapter that leave one without a clear sense of how far propositions extend in their content. There are further essential questions about propositions that are left unaddressed or underexplored, such as: What is it about a proposition that allows it to be a complete thought? How do more complex propositions, such as examples (1), (2), and (3) above, operate?

## 4. Defective Propositions

Binswanger continues his discussion of propositions in a section entitled "logic and propositions" in Chapter 7: "Logic:

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[7] Isaac Newton's Third Law of Motion.

[8] United States Declaration of Independence.

[9] Ayn Rand, "What Is Capitalism?" in Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 16.

Practice." Most of this section is dedicated to discussing what constitutes a valid versus a defective proposition (pp. 241-51). This is an important topic that Objectivists have not yet addressed sufficiently, but his discussion is disappointing. A valid proposition, on his view, (a) must be composed of valid concepts and (b) must involve a proper combination of those concepts (p. 241). So far, so good. However, his discussion of criterion (b), which takes up most of this section, is poor, for it does not quite answer the question he sets out to answer, and it is riddled with unhelpful examples. He proposes three requirements for a proper combination of concepts: (1) grammaticality, (2) consistency, and (3) referentiality (p. 243). Let's take each of these in turn.

At the outset, grammaticality as such is a strange criterion to attach to valid propositions, for it varies from language to language. Does he have in mind a set of grammatical requirements that are universal among languages? Who knows, for he offers no explanation for what he means. He only goes as far as saying, "philosophical grammar concerns the right use of the metaphysical categories—entity, attribute, action, relationship, etc." (p. 244). Perhaps, but what is the right use of these categories? No answer. Most of this section is filled with examples of defective propositions, yet some of these examples are defective for reasons other than grammar. One such example comes from Martin Heidegger: "The Nothing nothings" (p. 245). Arguably, the defect in this proposition is not its grammar, for it has a subject and a predicate. The defect is in its referentiality, the fact that it doesn't refer to anything. Far more intelligible statements also fail to meet his grammaticality requirement, such as Henri Bergson's claim that "philosophers agree in making a deep distinction between two ways of knowing a thing. The first implies going all around it, the second entering into it" (p. 244). Binswanger goes on to explain the inadequacy of this statement: it is too metaphorical to explain how knowing actually occurs. Most of us would agree. That might make the statement false or insufficiently specified, but ungrammatical? Each of the two propositions fits into proper English grammar, with a subject and a predicate composed of valid concepts.

Binswanger's consistency requirement is just as troublesome. Once again, he provides a long list of examples in lieu of a description of the requirement (p. 247). The trouble with these examples is that all of them are false rather than invalid. An invalid proposition must be one that is not meaningful and therefore cannot be judged as true or false. Here are some of his examples: "That circle is square," "Logic is a Western prejudice," and "The laws of logic are arbitrary." All three

of these are perfectly intelligible.  The first is false because an entity can be a circle or a square but not both (and he says as much later on [p. 253]).  The latter two commit the "fallacy of the stolen concept," which Binswanger correctly identifies, calling it a "contradiction" (p. 247).  Yet, a contradiction renders a proposition *false,* not *defective.*

The third criterion—referentiality—is more meaningfully discussed.  This criterion is that a proposition "must succeed in designating a subject" (p. 248).  Binswanger provides some useful examples of propositions that do and do not designate a subject.  Yet the discussion is incomplete, for it still leaves open a number of central questions.  Is designating a subject sufficient, since a proposition is more than a subject?  Must a proposition designate a predicate as well?  What about the relationship between subject and predicate? The statement "Saturday is in bed" designates both a subject and a predicate, yet it does not make an intelligible statement.  Thus we are left, after Binswanger's discussion, with a number of unhelpful statements and not much guidance regarding what makes a proposition valid.

**5. Proof and Certainty**

Binswanger then turns his attention to a chapter on proof and certainty, which is the weakest in the book, failing to answer most of the important questions about these issues.  He reviews some of the previous work done on this topic by Rand, Leonard Peikoff, and others, primarily on the hierarchy of knowledge and on the need to reduce complex knowledge to its basis in the directly perceivable.  He brings up a number of other facts about knowledge that are well established in Objectivism, including its interconnected structure and the fact that new knowledge, properly conceived, cannot contradict old knowledge.  He also explains that certainty is contextual and requires conclusive evidence. What is missing, though, is a rigorous characterization of what constitutes proof and certainty—the very purpose of the chapter.

Based on the one example in the entire chapter that Binswanger discusses in some depth—that of determining which animal made a given set of foot prints in soil—I gather that he has the following steps in mind for proving and for reaching certainty of a claim.  One must first (a) have sufficient general knowledge of the context of the claim in order to (b) develop a reasonable and sufficient set of hypotheses that would explain the observed phenomenon.  He says, "A presupposition of attaining certainty on a given topic is that

one knows enough to make a rational delimitation of the hypotheses, so that one knows that the true hypothesis is within that delimited set" (p. 273). One then (c) evaluates these hypotheses against evidence so as (d) to reach the conclusion that only one of the hypotheses is consistent with all of the available evidence (p. 275).

This series of steps might have been a start, had Binswanger stated them at the outset, but they are not new and they leave open too many questions. For example: What constitutes a sufficient general knowledge of the context of a claim? How does one know whether one has developed a sufficient number and variety of hypotheses? How much evidence must be considered before being certain of a hypothesis? Binswanger doesn't even pose these questions, let alone answer them. Instead, he spends the bulk of this chapter discussing the need for some evidence before a claim can count as a hypothesis. His point, succinctly put as "hypotheses require evidence" (p. 277), is well taken, valid, and true, but this does not serve as a substitute for characterizing the process of proof.

Furthermore, as part of Binswanger's discussion of hypotheses with no evidence, he dedicates eight pages to what can only be described as a rant against arbitrary assertions (pp. 278-85). To be sure, arbitrary assertions—understood as claims without any evidence—are invalid and a discussion of them is relevant in this chapter. A well-considered discussion, which takes account of modern scholarship, might have been a valuable contribution to epistemology, but this is not what he offers. Additionally, in his rant, he makes a number of claims about arbitrary assertions that cannot all be true. According to Binswanger, arbitrary claims are:

- claims made with no evidence (p. 278);
- "ignorance taken as epistemological license" (p. 279);
- such that "logic cannot be used to guide what one does with" them (p. 280);
- such that they can never "turn out to have been true" (p. 282);
- "actually fantasy" (p. 282); and
- "not propositions at all, but pseudo-propositions: words with the linguistic form of a proposition, but without cognitive meaning" (p. 284).

If a "claim" is not a proposition at all, then how can it be a claim that's made with no evidence? Two examples he gives of arbitrary assertions

are: "My three of clubs is now a king of clubs" (p. 280) and "It is raining now" (p. 283). Both of these are arbitrary in the context in which Binswanger presents them, yet are they not propositions at all? Can logic not be used to guide what one does with them? Can it not be true that "It is raining now"? Binswanger seems not to have made up his mind about the properties of arbitrary assertions.

## 6. Treatment of other Philosophers

A few points are worth making here about Binswanger's treatment of other philosophers and philosophical systems. A few major historical figures are brought up—primarily Aristotle, but also John Locke, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Plato, and John Stuart Mill. Binswanger draws distinctions between his view and theirs, yet their views aren't treated in any depth. No modern adherents of any of these philosophers makes a presence, nor are any current philosophical approaches and their similarities to or differences from Objectivism discussed. This is an enormous missed opportunity to connect with other thinkers or to illustrate the advantages of Binswanger's or Objectivism's approach over those of others.

There are a few places in the book where an entire philosophical school or problem is dismissed in just a few sentences. For example, Binswanger says, without any prior introduction to Pragmatism and its main claims, "Principles are, of course, exactly what Pragmatism rejects. Pragmatism opposes principles on principle" (p. 41). This claim, while it may be true, is left without support. At a later point, he brings up Russell's paradox and Godel's theorem, offering an invalidation of the former and a critique of the latter in just a few sentences (pp. 250-51). Neither of these complex issues is explained and given a fair hearing before it is dismissed. This is another enormous missed opportunity, for if Objectivism truly could offer insights on these problems, that would be of great interest and value to philosophy in general.

## 7. Conclusion

Overall, *How We Know* has strong and poor chapters. The presentation of material that was already developed by Rand is clear and Binswanger's use of examples helps illustrate those claims. His occasional elaboration of claims based on scientific findings, especially regarding perception, is also valuable. Other strong chapters, such as those on principles and free will, that space did not permit me to address, are well worth reading.

For all of these strong points, Binswanger's novel claims as well as his attempts to advance Objectivist epistemology into new areas are relatively weak. His main innovation is the observation that propositions are formed, in part, through measurement-inclusion. The remainder of his discussions about propositions, defective propositions, and proof and certainty, do not advance the state of knowledge, and his novel claim about the cognitive content of concepts is unconvincing. Furthermore, both the strong and weak chapters suffer from a lack of engagement with other thinkers and philosophers. Binswanger says in his introduction to the book that it is aimed at the "intelligent layman" (p. 17). An intelligent layman, with no prior introduction to Objectivism and little prior knowledge of epistemology, would need more comparisons and contrasts with other philosophies in order to grasp and appreciate Rand's Objectivist epistemology.

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Klein, Shawn E. (ed.), *Defining Sport: Conceptions and Borderlines*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.

Arriving at definitions in philosophy is as time-honored as it is controversial. In the fourth century B.C.E., for instance, in a dialogue entitled *Meno*, Plato has the character of Socrates attempt to define excellence or virtue (*aretê*) universally or across all categories, regardless of whether the virtue in question is specific to age cohort, gender, or free person status.[1] Writing a generation later, Aristotle rejects the goal that Socrates seeks. Instead, Aristotle claims that the excellence of a woman is different from the excellence of a man. He holds that it is more correct to enumerate for different classes of individuals different definitions of virtue rather than arriving at one single definition across all classes.[2] As students of twentieth-century philosophers Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein can attest, such fundamental disagreements about the nature and value of definition within philosophy have hardly been resolved in the millennia since Plato's time.

Although learned reflection in the West about sport goes back at least to the time of ancient Greece, the sub-discipline of the philosophy of sport emerged in the world of Anglophone analytic philosophy in the 1970s. Cultural scholars such as Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois had analyzed the human phenomenon of play[3] in the first half of the twentieth century and university researchers within the departments of physical education and kinesiology had examined topics such as sportsmanship. However, philosophy of sport as such can be traced to Paul Weiss's 1969 *Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry*, the first volume of its kind.[4] For the most part, Weiss wrote about

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[1] Plato, *Meno*, 73a-c.

[2] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.13.1260a20-29.

[3] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949); Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (New York: The Free Press, 1961).

[4] Paul Weiss, *Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969).

metaphysics in the grand tradition of Immanuel Kant or Alfred North Whitehead and apparently lacked either experience playing sports or academic training in physical education. As a philosopher interested in the lived experience of humanity, though, he turned to the philosophical analysis of the phenomenon of sport. He even chastised other philosophers for neglecting such inquiry, neglect which he suspected stemmed from academic disdain for an activity of the body, one prone to the popularity of the crowd. In 1971, the peer-reviewed academic *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* was established; in 1972, the Philosophic Society for the Study of Sport (renamed in 1999 as the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport) was created. A half-century later, additional journals, academic societies, book series, anthologies, and even academic handbooks or companions devoted to the philosophy of sport have emerged, proof of a growing sub-field within philosophy.

Shawn Klein's edited volume, *Defining Sport: Conceptions and Borderlines*, is both the fruit of and a valuable contribution to such an emerging field. Indeed, it is the first book-length study of its topic within philosophy of sport. Although Huizinga had sought to define the phenomenon of play very broadly,[5] investigation of the overlapping questions "What is sport?" "What is a game?" and "What is play?" were central to the sub-discipline at its inception. Foundational was the work of Bernard Suits, whose *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia*[6] sought to refute Wittgenstein's claim that the notion of game was indefinable. In order to refute Wittgenstein, Suits sought to establish the necessary and sufficient conditions for the concepts "game" and "sport."

Klein organizes his edited volume in two parts. Part One's six chapters explore whether necessary and sufficient conditions exist to define sport and, if so, what they might be. Part Two's seven chapters take up the problem of borderline cases. If, for instance, one claims that a necessary condition of sport is that it includes physical exertion, then does one subsequently deny that, for example, E-sports (e.g., first-person shooter computer games *Call of Duty* or *Halo* [pp. 210 and 216-17]), are instances of sport, even though they are supported by international contests and followed by sports media?

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[5] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.

[6] Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

In Chapter 1, Chad Carlson, in his "A Three-Pointer: Revisiting Three Crucial Issues in the 'Tricky Triad' of Play, Games, and Sport," ably reviews Suits's attempt to identify the defining properties of sport and to distinguish it from game and play. However, as Francisco Javier López Frías's Chapter 2 ("Broad Internalism and Interpretation: A Plurality of Interpretivist Approaches") shows, philosophers like Suits who sought to define sport often presupposed a hermeneutical stance—subsequently called "formalism"—which somewhat naively assumed that one could identify a concept solely by reference to its formal structure. In the case of a sport such as professional basketball, its formal structure is usually its explicit rules, that is, whatever is contained (and only what is contained) in the Official Rules of the National Basketball Association. Alongside such formalism, though, there emerged two additional interpretive positions in the philosophy of sport. Some philosophers of sport embraced a position—subsequently called "conventionalism"—which included in the definition of a sport those informal rules which emerge over time through conventions between players, referees, and spectators, even if those rules are not incorporated into the formal rules of the game. Other philosophers of sport embraced a position—subsequently called "internalism"—which characterizes a sport not only by means of its explicit rules and implicit conventions, but also (and more importantly) on the basis of internal or implicit principles of the sport.

To flesh out these various positions, consider the case of strategic fouling in basketball, that is, when one team member tries to stop the clock or force a turn-over (after missed foul shots) by making physical contact with an opponent that violates the explicit rules of the game. Is strategic fouling "part" of the sport of basketball? To the formalist, such an act violates the formal rules of basketball and thus is not a part of the sport of basketball. To the conventionalist, though, strategic fouling has emerged over time as a part of the sport of basketball, even if it violates the formal rules of the game. By contrast, the proponent of internalism asks the question whether strategic fouling is consistent with the underlying (but not necessarily explicit) principles which are internal to basketball as a sport.[7]

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[7] Readers familiar with the late-twentieth-century debate between Ronald Dworkin and H. L. A. Hart about the definition of law in jurisprudence, which took place at roughly the same time as the debates in philosophy of sport about the definition of sport, are correct to hear echoes here; see, e.g., H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), and Ronald Dworkin, "The Model of Rules," *University of Chicago Law Review*

The remaining four chapters of Part One of the volume work around the edges of the problems raised in the first two chapters. Kevin Schieman's "Hopscotch Dreams: Coming to Terms with the Cultural Significance of Sport" and Heather Reid's "Defining Olympic Sport" explore the intersections between defining sport more generally and the nature of ethical norms. Schieman, for instance, criticizes Suits's definition of sport by arguing instead for a functional definition of sport, namely, one which is oriented by not just any game, but rather what is a good (or well-functioning) game. Reid shows how ideas of human excellence, justice, and peace define a subcategory of sport, namely, Olympic sport. By contrast, John McClelland (in "Early Modern Athletic Contests: Sport and Not Sport?") and Keith Strudler (in "The Impact of Mass Media on the Definition of Sport") take up the historicity of the concept of sport. McClelland argues against the claim that the characteristics of sport in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are fundamentally different from those of the early modern period. Strudler, I think unpersuasively, argues that modern media constitutes how we define sport today. Although modern media and modern sports are clearly intertwined in many important ways, I found myself unconvinced of his claim, for example, that ESPN's broadcast of the Scripps Spelling Bee might lead us, perhaps, to think of spellers as athletes and spelling as a competitive sport (pp. 106-7). Although clearly spelling bees are competitive events that aim at an "athlon" or prize, they lack any of the physical exertions, endurance, or skills which are usually taken to be necessary characteristics of those games that we call "sports." Media coverage may help create the public following and regulatory institutions which some philosophers think are necessary conditions of a sport; however, unless one has an especially broad notion of "sport," it seems difficult to see how media coverage can transform a non-physical activity into a sport.

Part Two of *Defining Sport* is composed of case studies that, more or less persuasively, provide detail-rich accounts of important contemporary "sport-like" activities and then adjudicate whether those activities are accurately categorized as sports. In many cases, one is looking at emerging institutions currently undergoing growth in popularity or institutional support, the results of which could lead one to characterize that activity as a sport. Pam Sailors, Sarah Teetzel, and

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35, no. 1 (1967), pp. 14-46. I think that Frías mistakenly attributes those echoes primarily to the hermeneutical philosophies of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alasdair MacIntyre (pp. 27-33) rather than to those of Hart and Dworkin.

Charlene Weaving (in "Borderline Cases: CrossFit, Tough Mudder, and Spartan Race"); Chrysostomos Giannoulakis and Lindsay Krol Pursglove (in "Evolution of the Action Sports Setting"); Brody Ruihley, Andrew Billings, and Coral Rae (in "The Mainstreaming of Fantasy Sports: Redefining Sport"); and Joey Gawrysiak ("E-sport: Video Games as Sport") each make their case for whether the activities they examine should be thought of as sports. According to my score card, these scholars argue that: Tough Mudder is a fitness activity, not a sport; Spartan Race and CrossFit are not yet, but are perhaps becoming, sports; with the exception of BMX racing and snowboarding, most "action sports" (e.g., surfing and skateboarding) are insufficiently regulated to be considered sports; fantasy sports (i.e., games in which participants establish and put to the test their "fantasy football" teams) are not sports; and video gaming, with further governance, is becoming a sport. The chapter by Sailors et al. on the fitness activities is especially detailed and persuasive. The chapters by Ruihley et al. and Gawrysiak seem especially dependent upon the claim (as noted above in the case of Strudler's chapter) that "if x has a broad media following, then x should be considered a sport." As anyone who has covered Title IX proceedings for gender equity in intercollegiate athletics knows, the institutional or sociological aspects of an activity (Does it have a league with competitive championships? Does it have a governing body? Does it have a standardized rule-book?), are very important in determining whether that activity is a sport. However, I doubt that strong media following is either a necessary or sufficient condition of an activity being characterized as a sport.

The remaining three chapters are more concerned with boundary-lines than boundary-cases. Brian Glenney (in "Skateboarding, Sport, and Spontaneity: Toward a Subversive Definition of Sport") argues that we should think of skateboarding as a sport precisely because the activity's spontaneity and "subversive moments" transcend rule-grounded domains and capture an essential moment of sport as a human activity (p. 151). Such an argument seems to me like moving the goal-posts. No doubt, spontaneity is an important part of sports, but I think Glenney is wrong to make it a sufficient condition of sport. Teresa González Aja (in "Bullfighting: The Mirror and Reflection of Spanish Society") and Joan Grassbaugh Forry (in "Why Some Animal Sports are Not Sports") import ethical norms about the treatment of non-human animals into their conceptions of what constitutes a sport. Although I share their sympathies about the

inhumane treatment of non-human animals, once again, this seems like goal-post moving. Rather than defining sport, their chapters (like Reid's) raise questions about presumably a sub-category of sport, namely, sports which are ethically permissible. Gladiator competitions in Rome were barbaric and inhumane, but I do not see that the fact that those competitions involved lethal force against human animals invalidates the claim that those competitions are sport (even if blood sport). Rather, gladiator competitions are best thought of as an example of an inhumane or ethically wrong sport. Whether gladiator competitions (or, that favorite of dystopian science-fiction, the "hunger games") should be thought of as "good games" (as per Schieman's chapter), alas, is a question which none of the contributors seems to consider. In fairness to Schieman, though, he does characterize professional football as a bad game with a major following, in light of the emerging evidence about chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) among professional football players (pp. 59-60).

On the whole, I think this volume will be useful especially to faculty teaching philosophy of sport to undergraduates. It does not seem to me that any of the chapters breaks fundamentally new ground or profoundly challenges or reshapes the debates within the field. Indeed, there seems to me some significance in Carlson's observation that "questions related to the definitions and definability of sport have not been asked in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* since Wertz's 1995 article" (p. 14).[8] Although Suits's investigation of the definition of sport was present at the inception of the discipline, it seems unclear to Carlson (and me) whether the question of defining sport remains an open or even central question within the discipline at present. Perhaps this new edited volume as a whole will challenge scholars within the field to reengage the subject of defining sport, but I don't think any of the individual chapters in Part One will accomplish that. However, I think that some of the chapters in Part Two of the volume, the ones devoted to boundary cases, would serve as excellent case studies to challenge undergraduates to think through both the adequacy of their definitions of sport and the applicability of those definitions to the changing world of sport.

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[8] Spencer K. Wertz, "Is Sport Unique? A Question of Definability," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 22 (1995), pp. 83-93.

Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall.
*Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 4th ed. Cambridge, UK:
Polity Press, 2016.

The twenty-first century has no shortage of conflict. While violence has declined relative to earlier periods in human history,[1] recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and the Ukraine raise concerns about world order and the endurance of protracted civil war. Deep-rooted tensions in Asia over history and territory as well as North Korea's nuclear proliferation create the possibility for major conflict this century. Internally, many countries grapple with an insurgency of Islamist terrorism from the Middle East and Africa to Europe and Southeast Asia; the death toll continues to rise.

Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall's fourth edition of *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* is a compendium of such conflicts. The book surveys conflict-resolution theory and practice from the First Generation (1918-1945) to the present with an emphasis on case studies since the end of the Cold War. It provides an analysis of conflict resolution from multiple theoretical perspectives, but it does not shy away from declaring its own allegiance to the cosmopolitan framework. This makes the work refreshing in its combination of both descriptive and normative analysis, uncommon in textbooks of this sort, which typically sneak in an author's ideological sympathies rather than declaring them forthright with argument and substance.

The book is divided into two parts: The first part deals with conflict resolution broadly, introducing its history, classical ideas, models, and relevance to existing conflict around the globe. The second part is an exploration of cosmopolitan conflict resolution with an emphasis on its theory and application; this part grapples with criticism from the realist camp generally found on the political right as well as the critical theory and post-structuralist camps generally found on the political left. The authors also wrestle with alternate viewpoints deriving from non-Western theorists. Dividing the book into these two parts makes it more accessible for newcomers to the topic. It provides a

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[1] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011).

foundational perspective that immerses one in the subject's prominent ideas and follows up with a rich exploration and debate of those ideas.

Chapters 1-4 present the theoretical foundations of conflict resolution, including positions, interests and needs, third-party interventions, and symmetric versus asymmetric conflicts. These are concepts that anyone in the field—from family mediation to international diplomacy—would be familiar with. The authors navigate the history of the field by dividing it into four stages of inter-generational development. The first generation (1918-1945) emerged from the failure of "peace, socialist, and liberal internationalist movements to prevent the outbreak of the First World War," leading many intellectuals to pursue what they described at the time as the "science of peace" (p. 39). The interdisciplinary nature of conflict resolution develops in this period from fields such as psychology, politics, and international studies.

The second generation (1945-1965) is marked by further institutional development as a result of the catastrophes of World War II and the start of the Cold War's nuclear-arms race. In this period, a pressing debate emerges between European structuralists and American pragmatists that is similar to the debate in liberal politics between Isaiah Berlin's "positive" and "negative" liberty.[2] For the pragmatists, peace is negative, that is, the absence of war; in particular, it is the absence of nuclear war. For the structuralists, "negative" peace does not go far enough, since it does not engage critically with issues of social justice or structural and cultural violence (p. 47). Something "positive" would need to be done to create peace. Disagreements over the distinction between negative and positive peace caused a fault line in the field that exists to this day. Also worth noting is the theoretical division between theorists who view conflict as a pathology in need of a cure and those who view it as an intrinsic part of human relationships that needs to be managed indefinitely. These assumptions about human nature led thinkers down varied political paths during the twentieth century, from liberal incrementalism to Marxist utopianism.

The third generation (1965-1985) combined aspects of the prior generations by focusing on three "great projects": avoiding nuclear war, removing glaring inequalities and injustices in the global system, and achieving ecological balance and control (p. 53). These three projects required three levels of analysis: interstate politics,

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[2] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-72.

domestic politics, and "deep-rooted" conflicts. For the authors, "deep-rooted conflicts" was the most significant development of this period, as it elided the distinction between international, domestic, and applied problem-solving approaches to real-world scenarios (p. 53). The practice of interest-based negotiation derives from this analysis and has revolutionized the field across many levels.

The fourth generation (1985-2005) took place at the end of the Cold War and provided a more integrative way of dealing with conflict than existed in previous decades. This change came from a context where inter-group conflict had regional and global impacts due to new technologies, mass immigration, and economic interdependence. This period also had more sophisticated qualitative and quantitative methodologies for conflict analysis, such as measurements for peace, state fragility, and conflict distribution. While indicators for negative peace have shown a decline over time—à la Steven Pinker's thesis in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*—the authors advise that it is difficult to quantify positive peace (p. 78), thus placing some restraint on our optimism. These early chapters outline different ways that conflict and peace are calculated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, and the Human Security Report.

Chapters 5-10 deal with the specifics of preventing violent conflict from peacekeeping and peacemaking to postwar reconstruction and reconciliation. Conflict-resolution theory is ineffective if it cannot be applied practically to prevent the outbreak of violence, maintain peace, negotiate settlements, and bring about a transformation in the relations between parties in dispute. These chapters present numerous case studies for analysis on these points, such as conflicts in the Ukraine, Mali, Somalia, South Africa, and the attempts at resolutions such as the Oslo Accords and the El Salvador gangland truce, among others. In order to prevent conflict, one must have a strong understanding of its emergence. The authors go into the practical reasons for conflict, such as the pursuit of incompatible positions, ideology, economic grievance, and political or group exclusion (p. 150). They offer a solution by outlining the importance of communication between parties as well as a political system that gives incentives to cooperate on common values: "[T]he first element of the capacity to prevent conflict is the degree to which goals are coordinated or, at least have a capacity to complement the goals of others" (p. 146). The theory of liberal peace is explored as a mechanism of conflict prevention via common trade, democracy, and

the international participation of countries which have integrated in this way (p. 154).

A significant portion of Chapters 5-10 go on to survey the generational development of U.N. peacekeeping, the theoretical debate in peace operations, and the debate over third-party intervention. Much of these debates in the field can be summed up this way: "From one direction came criticism of the ineffectiveness of impartial and non-forcible intervention in war zones . . . from the other direction came the criticism of the inappropriateness of what were seen to be attempts to impose western interests and western values on non-western countries" (p. 181). These two perspectives, between which the authors attempt to negotiate, can broadly be defined as realist and post-structuralist. Many important actors have taken a "neo-realist" position in their foreign policy that is entirely dismissive of international organizations. The neo-realist position holds state power and interests as the driving forces in resolving disputes and setting boundaries. It is skeptical or dismissive of international cooperation outside of a limited framework of balance of power, and it places states with significant military capabilities as the arbiters of intervention. The adoption of this position is prominent but not always consistent; countries may diverge from this position when it is politically expedient to do so. The United States, in particular, does this; it has a tradition of swaying under different administrations between more realist considerations and more liberal internationalist considerations. In the latter, universal humanitarian values outweigh state sovereignty.

Peacekeeping is also broken down by generations. It is in the fourth generation where cosmopolitanism has become the guiding basis for peace operations, as put forward by theorists such as Richard Falk, David Held, and Mary Kaldor (p. 192). This cosmopolitan framework, which relies upon universal principles and international norms in synergy with a U.N.-based process, also faces criticism from post-structuralists and critical theorists. Their criticism, unlike those raised by neo-realists, does not rely on the importance of sovereignty and the ineffectiveness of the U.N. They criticize, instead, universalism itself by holding that impartiality is a liberal fantasy. This post-structuralist critique, however, lacks concrete suggestions for improvement. Objections raised by critical theorists, similar to those of twentieth-century utopianism, are based on faith in a radical political agenda. That is to say, this perspective views conflict itself as a result of the current global political system rather than being an intrinsic feature of human interactions. A disheartening aspect of both criticisms

is their dismissive view of mediation. The benefits of neutral third-party intervention are evident; for example, two-thirds of post-Cold War international crises have been mediated (p. 212). Third parties are "essential in contributing to issue transformations" (p. 213), because they put parties in contact, help build trust, keep parties on track, and clarify issues with diplomatic tact. Mediation is sometimes unsuccessful, but the fact that it is ever successful is worth pursuing.

Chapter 9 deserves special mention, for it surveys a distinction in the theory of peacebuilding between top-down versus bottom-up liberal peacebuilding (p. 266). Bottom-up peacebuilding relies upon civil society and privileges the local above the international. The main criticism of the top-down approach is its lack of legitimacy and nuance. Top-down intervention does not often consult broadly with local stakeholders and is built on lofty and low-resolution assumptions that do not take into consideration the social, economic, and political complexities of a given society. This can lead to a short-term rather than long-lasting peace—or even end in failure. Moreover, there are different conceptions of liberal peace which may focus on order over democratic reform or vice versa (p. 272). Alternatively, the main criticism of a bottom-up approach is that it may never come: civil society, due to a variety of factors, may be impotent at ending conflict or negotiating settlement. The bottom-up process is often imagined to be a more "natural" process than the alternative; however, this can result in one party dominating the other to the point of genocide. While bottom-up solutions are often deeply rooted, and therefore, more long-lasting, civil society is not guaranteed to be successful at ending a conflict; by consequence, conflict may continue for much longer periods of time, leading to more death and destruction. Rarely are situations of peace and war neatly categorized into one approach or the other. They typically involve the need for both domestic transformation and international intervention.

Part II of the book concentrates the focus of the analysis on cosmopolitanism itself. Chapter 11 begins by defining the term and examining it across multiple levels, including international law, institutions, and responding to international terrorism. The authors claim that "[c]osmopolitan conflict resolution transcends jurisdiction. It applies to global, regional, state, identity, and individual nexuses of conflict. It actively promotes a global agenda based on certain values. It has an overarching strategy" (p. 314). They go out of their way to emphasize that it is not a "covert name for imposing hegemonic interests under a subterfuge of unexamined 'universal values'," but

rather, it is a "genuine and inclusive local-global effort" (p. 314). Cosmopolitanism is framed as an intermediary between traditional power and security issues and reforming international institutions along emancipatory lines (p. 316). It tries to straddle between the realist and post-structuralist camps by offering recognition of the need for common-sense power calculations, while also emphasizing international inclusion and reform of existing processes. Cosmopolitanism embraces Enlightenment values and rejects realist and Marxist determinism. It attempts to integrate new spaces and new actors into the international peace process. The authors' starting point is "the observation that the international collectivity is not a homogeneous entity" (p. 317). However, many of the phrases used to define cosmopolitanism, such as "international justice," "cultural pluralism," and "global governance," remain ambiguously defined. All three of these rely upon a foundation of values, such as democracy, liberalism, and human rights, which are associated with the West. In order to digest criticism from post-structuralists and non-Western thinkers, the authors argue in favor of cosmopolitan liberalism, while at times steering clear of terminology that they clearly support, but that would otherwise alienate these critics.

Chapters 12-18 apply conflict resolution to a number of specific problems concerning the environment, gender, religion, art and popular culture, media and communications, and linguistics. They demonstrate the innumerable ways in which conflict resolution can be theorized and used to solve real-world problems. For instance, the empowerment of women in peace processes around the world is transforming the ways in which societies and governments facilitate their peace efforts, national conflicts of interest over climate change represent new tensions that will continue to emerge over the coming decades and require wide engagement from the international community, and the new reality of cyber warfare is changing the definition of state conflict.

The changing geopolitical order serves as a backdrop to the entire book, which is part of what makes the fourth edition unique from its predecessors. The first edition marked the transition at the end of the Cold War from a bipolar world; the second edition captured the United States' unipolar moment; the third edition highlighted the rapid movement into a multipolar world; the fourth edition grapples with a "highly complex and shifting balance of forces" (p. 492). In particular, the latest edition deals with the relative decline of the United States, the rise of China, an aggressive Russia, and a fractured, war-torn

Middle-East—all phenomena that have emerged or accelerated after 2010. The shift of power away from the United States in terms of both the capacity to control events and the will to intervene opens the way for a complex mix of regional, sub-state, and trans-state actors to play significant roles (p. 66). From a realist perspective, such a dramatic shift in power is accompanied by interstate war; many governments are imagining that possibility between the United States and China. The world has also seen an increased risk in confrontation between Russia and NATO due to Russian expansionist operations in states near her. The case study of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is emblematic of this geopolitical transformation (p. 301). It involves the actions of a municipal actor forcing the hand of the Japanese government to nationalize the Senkaku Islands, thus stoking the flames of deep-rooted tensions between China and Japan that have not been conciliated since World War II. The rapid growth of China as a regional economic and military power has led it to be more aggressive in the East and South China seas. The relative decline of the United States has led the Japanese slowly to engage in ways to counterbalance China's rise. The economic interconnection of globalization means that those who control the sea lanes hold huge leverage over the surrounding countries whose economies rely upon the free flow of goods. This combination of factors demonstrates the complexity of modern conflict, which contains a combination of historical tensions, new technologies, non-state or sub-state actors, and economic global interconnectedness.

*Contemporary Conflict Resolution*'s breadth of knowledge across different time periods, issues, and case studies is its blessing and curse. For a scholar, it is a wonderful conglomeration of interdisciplinary theory and practice. It should be on the shelf of every student of global politics. However, the density of the book can make it daunting. In fact, given the numerous theories and issues discussed in the book, I found it difficult to provide a more focused review. The book also serves as a tremendous reference guide to thinkers in the field; as noted throughout the review, it offers rich and interesting debates. The unique value of the book is that it engages in theoretical explanation and debate, while continually testing theory through feedback from real-world examples in an ever-evolving world.

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