

Editor's Note

Iris Murdoch is said to have quipped that “philosophy is often a matter of finding occasions on which to say the obvious.” To most readers, the task of explaining why terrorism is always unjustified is likely an instance of Murdoch’s observation. Nevertheless, the issue is, as with all things in philosophy, not as obvious as we might think. Vicente Medina’s *Terrorism Unjustified: The Use and Misuse of Political Violence* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) examines the concept of terrorism and its complicated history while defending the view that terrorism is never morally justified. In this issue of *Reason Papers*, we are proud to publish papers from an Author-Meets-Critics event on Medina’s book held at Felician University. First, Theresa Fanelli of Felician University raises concerns about how our understanding of mental incapacities could affect the evaluation of acts of terrorism. Irfan Khawaja, also of Felician University and organizer of the event, raises several disagreements with Medina’s account of terrorism. In particular, he crafts an in-depth counter-example to Medina’s view that terrorism is categorically wrong. Like Professor Khawaja, Graham Parsons of the United States Military Academy argues that, while most acts of terrorism are not justifiable, there might be certain delimited cases of reasonable terrorism. Though such cases might not ever be actualized, Parsons suggests that they show that Medina’s categorical rejection of terrorism might be too strong. The symposium ends with Medina’s reply to these criticisms and his continued defense of terrorism as unjustified.

The two articles featured in this issue are papers I doubt one would find in other journals. Since most academic journals require an ever narrower focus, it is rare to read pieces such as these that bring together a wide range of ideas, history, and disciplines to connect and integrate disparate paths of knowledge.

In “The Postmodern Critique of Liberal Education,” Stephen R. C. Hicks of Rockford University integrates centuries of philosophic arguments about the nature and purpose of education. Hicks examines the long history of attacks on liberal education to demonstrate the philosophic roots of both pre- and postmodern criticisms. Hicks then

identifies, clarifies, and challenges the postmodern critique of liberal education. Lastly, he looks to the future of liberal education.

Jason Kuznicki of the Cato Institute looks deep into human history to discover the roots of how we think about politics. Pulling from genetics, anthropology, ancient epic poetry, and the Bible, Kuznicki argues in “Politics as an Extension of the Harem” that gendered oppression, namely the subjugation of women and low-status men, is central to understanding the origins and development of political governance up through the contemporary era. This understanding, along with the increased inclusion of previously excluded groups, provides fuel for Kuznicki’s speculations about the future of political governance.

The issues closes with a review essay of Erin Kelly’s *The Limits of Blame: Rethinking Punishment and Responsibility* (Harvard University Press, 2018). This work takes on the justifications for harsh criminal punishments and mass incarceration. At the core of Kelly’s argument is a challenge to the alignment of legal guilt and moral blameworthiness that she sees as central to retributivist’s justifications. Alexandre Abitbol’s review essay agrees with Kelly’s call for a philosophical and humanistic reform of the criminal justice system. However, it is critical of Kelly’s diagnosis that removes moral blame from the system.

Thanks for reading *Reason Papers*.

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