

## Editorial

It's customary to leave expressions of gratitude to the end of an editorial preface, but our first issue as Co-Editors-in-Chief of *Reason Papers* leaves us with debts that deserve to be highlighted from the start. The current issue of *Reason Papers* is the journal's thirty-third in thirty-seven years, the first twenty-six of which were edited by its founder, Tibor Machan (1974-2000). We had the privilege of working as Co-Managing Editors with the journal's second editor, Aeon J. Skoble (2001-2010), for the last five years of his decade as editor. What strikes us on reflection on our predecessors' efforts is the intellectual excitement and interest of the journal they've put in our care. Readers who browse our online archives will, we think, be surprised to discover the now-familiar scholars who got their start at *Reason Papers*, as well as the now-familiar books and ideas first discussed here. Tibor and Aeon have made the "early" *Reason Papers* a tough act to follow. We hope to follow that act well into the journal's next stage, with gratitude for their having taken the journal as far as they have.

We'd also like to thank the small but dedicated group of "tech guys" who have facilitated the journal's transition into the twenty-first century via its website, [www.reasonpapers.com](http://www.reasonpapers.com). Aeon J. Skoble first arranged to get *Reason Papers* its presence on the Internet in 2005, and David Veksler set up the journal's first website and served as webmaster for its first five years (2005-2010). Stephan Kinsella, Editor of *Libertarian Papers*, took time out of his busy schedule to create and manage *Reason Papers*'s PDF archives, spanning several thousand pages of documents. We owe a particularly large debt to Israel Curtis of Somatic Studios for creating our new WordPress-based site this past summer (and again to Kinsella for help in transitioning over to it); we particularly appreciate the tasteful version of Raphael's "The School of Athens" Curtis chose to adorn the site. Thanks also to Jeff Tucker of the Mises Institute for volunteering to host the site from its inception.

As the journal's newest editors, we are tasked both with maintaining *Reason Papers*'s continuity with its past, and with taking it in new directions of our own. Perhaps the best way to explain both the continuity and the venture into new directions is by way of a gloss on the journal's long-standing subtitle: "a journal of interdisciplinary normative studies." As our website blurb puts it, *Reason Papers* publishes work whose "content is normative in the philosophical sense." So construed, the concept of "the normative" refers broadly speaking to conceptual analyses of three kinds: (a) of the norms or standards by which we evaluate human action and its consequences, (b) of the norms or standards by which we evaluate the conditions and products of those actions, and (c) of the prescriptions for action based on such evaluations. On this understanding, "normative in the philosophical sense" refers principally to inquiry in ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law, and aesthetics. It also refers to work in meta-ethics on the nature of reasons and value, and to work in economics, political science, and legal studies that provides the raw

empirical material for conceptual analysis. Work in these disciplines has always been at the core of what we publish, and will continue to be.

We suspect, however, that our understanding of “normative studies” is somewhat broader than that of our predecessors, and extends to sub-disciplines within philosophy beyond the ones just mentioned. The contribution of epistemology is perhaps the most obvious. It’s long been a commonplace in epistemology that epistemic norms bear an affinity to ethical ones (e.g., “justified,” “obligatory,” etc.), and that epistemic inquiry has implications that are as central to the evaluation of our social lives as are inquiries in ethics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of law. Though *Reason Papers* has occasionally published work in epistemology, we hope to increase the proportion of work on epistemology that finds its way into our pages. Beyond this, normative theories of meaning have become current in the philosophy of language,<sup>1</sup> and discussions of normative issues have long been central to work in the philosophy of science (e.g., on the value-free or value-laden nature of science) and the philosophy of religion (e.g., on the problem of evil). *Reason Papers* has published very little on any of these topics, but would welcome the opportunity to publish some more. While metaphysics and the philosophy of mind are not *directly* normative in subject-matter, it’s arguable that many paradigmatically normative concepts involve presuppositions about volition and mind that are of interest to both disciplines. So both metaphysics and the philosophy of mind have important contributions to make to normative studies. Finally, questions about the general relationship between fact and value are well-illuminated by work in those parts of the philosophy of biology that focus on fact-based evaluations of health, fitness, and the like (to say nothing of their relevance to bioethics). Our hope, then, is to open up the journal to these previously underrepresented sub-disciplines of philosophy.

Since the concept of “the normative” is a philosophical one, philosophy has always been at the center of *Reason Papers*’s editorial mission. Both of the journal’s previous editors, and both of its current editors, are professional philosophers. But *Reason Papers* is an interdisciplinary journal, not a journal of philosophy, and to that end, the journal’s mission has always been guided by an epistemological ideal of integration or coherence that extends beyond armchair reflection on normative concepts. Crudely put, the idea is that there is one truth out there, but a variety of complementary (or instructively competing) disciplinary routes to it. No one discipline can track that truth by itself, philosophy included. The task is to marry inquiries in ostensibly unrelated sorts of disciplines, to adjudicate the disputes that inevitably arise from such marriages, and thereby to bring unity to the knowledge we have.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kathrin Gluer and Asa Wikforss, “The Normativity of Meaning and Content,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meaning-normativity/>.

Put more precisely, we might think of interdisciplinary study by distinguishing two varieties of it: strong and weak. In the strong sense, scholarship is interdisciplinary when it self-consciously involves inquiries from two or more distinct disciplines, and seeks to integrate these inquiries into a single inquiry with a common subject matter.<sup>2</sup> In a weaker sense, work can be interdisciplinary in the sense of operating within a given discipline but being written so as to be self-consciously accessible to scholars in other disciplines, and amenable to confirmation or development by such scholars. There are probably intermediate senses between these, and hybrids as well. In no sense, however, is interdisciplinary study the special province of philosophy. Philosophers can be interdisciplinary in both senses of the term, but so can anyone else.

*Reason Papers* aims to be interdisciplinary in all of the preceding senses. We welcome work of a self-consciously interdisciplinary or “mixed” variety, as long as it meets the relevant standards of rigor for all of the fields it discusses. And we welcome work that is conducted entirely within a given field or even sub-field, as long as it is written so as to be accessible to interested readers from other disciplines, and as long as its normative implications are clear or made explicit. Again, we’d like to broaden the journal’s scope beyond what it’s taken in the past. As remarked above, *Reason Papers* has typically been heavy on work from philosophy, economics, legal theory, and political science. We’re eager to see more work from other fields in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. anthropology, art history, classics, cultural studies, educational theory, history, literary studies, musicology, psychology, religious studies, sociology), as well as from underrepresented parts of well-represented fields (e.g., area studies, comparative politics, and international relations in political science), and from professional studies as well (e.g., business, medicine). We’re also inclined to think that physical scientists and mathematicians have important contributions to make to normative studies, and look forward to publishing some.

It’s easy to overlook the significance of one last part of the subtitle. *Reason Papers* is a *journal* of normative interdisciplinary *studies*. Both “journal” and “studies” connote objective academic scholarship, a connotation we wholeheartedly endorse without excluding journalists or independent scholars. It’s worth stressing, then, that while *Reason Papers* has often published work from an Objectivist or libertarian perspective, *Reason Papers* is not an Objectivist or libertarian journal, or for that matter, a journal edited for conformity with any particular philosophical or ideological perspective.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> For this conception of “mixed” inquiry, see Mortimer J. Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), chap. 1. See also Adler’s *The Four Dimensions of Philosophy: Metaphysical, Moral, Objective, and Categorical* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), Parts One and Three.

<sup>3</sup> We thus disagree with the characterization of the journal offered by Walter E. Block in his “Austro-Libertarian Publishing: A Survey and Critique,” *Reason Papers* 32 (Fall

We think of the journal as a forum for inquiry and debate across a wide spectrum of views rather than as the instrument of any one ideology, party, or camp.

By reverse token, however, it's also worth stressing that we do not take the journal's commitment to objective academic scholarship to be *incompatible* with polemics, advocacy, or a focus on the immediately contemporary. Contemporary academic culture inherits from Max Weber the unfortunate idea that scholarship must, to qualify as genuinely objective, be detached from the scholar's strongly held normative or political commitments about contemporary issues.<sup>4</sup> On this view, scholarly prose must be blandly uncontentious rather than polemical; scholarship must be value-neutral rather than normatively committed; and a commitment to objectivity obliges the scholar to forswear discussion of contemporary issues, since the emotional or normative urgency of such issues unfits them by definition for rational discussion. Polemical advocacy about contemporary issues would thus best be left to the activist, the journalist, the lobbyist, and the politician.

We see no reason to accept this conception of scholarship. By its dictionary definition, "polemical" writing is simply writing that is self-consciously disputatious. "Advocacy" is merely the defense of a definite normative thesis. And the "contemporary" refers to what is taking place in the "here and now" of the recent past. There is no good reason to think that polemical advocacy about contemporary normative issues is doomed to irrationality, and ought to be written by everyone *but* those who study the relevant topics within an academic setting. *Reason Papers* is devoted to the proposition that we can do better than that.

The present volume of the journal is a nice exemplification of some of the foregoing themes. As usual, the central focus of the issue is philosophical. Two items focus on issues in meta-ethics and ethics, offering accounts from very different perspectives of the nature of moral dilemmas. Jakub Wiśniewski defends a rationalist conception of moral reasoning in which dilemmas are ultimately accepted as playing an "integral" and "corrective" role. By contrast, Carrie-Ann Biondi's review of recent scholarship on Aristotelian ethics highlights neo-Aristotelian views that (among other things) attempt to dissolve moral dilemmas altogether. A common theme here is the need for *specification* in ethical reasoning—a theme that, as both pieces make clear, links philosophy in important ways to the study of history and literature. Elsewhere, two articles discuss contentious issues in applied ethics, drawing in interdisciplinary fashion on work from legal studies and the philosophy of language. Stephen Kershnar defends

---

2010), pp. 107-35. See, e.g., p. 130, where the journal is described as "dedicated to libertarianism," and p. 133, where it is described as "mostly libertarian."

<sup>4</sup> See Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004).

“extremely harsh treatment” as a form of justified criminal punishment; Mazen Guirguis rejects the legitimacy (not of same-sex civil unions but) of same-sex *marriage*.

Nine pieces explore issues in political philosophy variously related to libertarianism. The issue begins with a symposium on “Rand and Hayek on Cognition and Trade,” featuring contributions by David Kelley and J. A. Baker.<sup>5</sup> Kelley offers a “descriptive and explanatory” account of the fundamental differences between Ayn Rand’s and Friedrich Hayek’s conceptions of cognition and mind, arguing from an Objectivist perspective that Hayek’s conception “undermines individualism by eliminating the basis for a coherent conception of the human individual.” Baker’s view is friendlier to Hayek and more critical of Rand, suggesting from a Hayekian perspective that Rand’s conception of “socially objective value” is at odds with the best insights of the Austrian economic tradition.

Our Discussion Notes section continues with three debates on kindred subjects. Dennis C. Rasmussen defends his interpretation of Adam Smith’s conception of economic happiness against the criticisms leveled against it by Douglas Den Uyl and Douglas Rasmussen in *Reason Papers* 32; Den Uyl and Rasmussen respond. Claudia R. Williamson offers a friendly amendment to Daniel Klein and Michael Clark’s account of “direct and indirect liberty” from *Reason Papers* 32, while Walter Block offers a frontal attack on it. Klein and Clark will respond to both commentaries in our 2012 issue. Stephen Kershner offers a critique of the anarchist arguments of Aeon J. Skoble’s recent *Deleting the State: An Argument about Government*. We hope to run a response by Skoble in our 2012 issue. Finally, two book reviews draw attention to important recent defenses of libertarian politics. Edward Feser reviews Tom G. Palmer’s admirably interdisciplinary *Realizing Freedom: Libertarian Theory, History, and Practice*, and Scott Gerber reviews David E. Bernstein’s justly celebrated *Rehabilitating Lochner: Defending Individual Rights against Progressive Reform*.

Four items reflect in very different ways on the legacy of 9/11 a decade after the fact, three of them on the intellectual legacy of Islamist ideology. Elizabeth Barre’s review of Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman’s *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought* brings much-needed precision to our understanding of “Islamism” and related concepts. Irfan Khawaja’s review of books by Paul Berman and Tariq Ramadan raises pointed moral questions about “Western” intellectuals’ responsibility to engage with and pass judgment on the theorizing of “Westernized” Islamist ideologues. David Kelley’s discussion of Islam and the Reformation calls into question a popular historical analogy. And Sadek al-Azm’s commentary on

---

<sup>5</sup> Our symposium began life as one called “Hayek and Rand on the Role of Reason,” at the annual conference of the Association for Private Enterprise Education (April 10, 2010, Las Vegas, Nevada) organized by Stephen Hicks of Rockford College. We thank Professor Hicks for his cooperation and help in publishing some of this material.

the Arab Spring gives voice to the author's four decades of militantly secular struggle against obscurantism and tyranny in the Islamic Near East. It's appropriate that in locating the roots of the Arab Spring in the Damascus Spring of 2000—more than a year before the 9/11 attacks—al-Azm confirms his own long-held views about the ultimate impotence of Islamist terrorism. From this perspective, the real struggle for justice in the Arab Near East began over a decade ago in Damascus, boiling over last December in Tunis, and spreading from there to the rest of the Arab world. Osama bin Laden and 9/11 were but a regrettable footnote to this potentially revolutionary moral-political project.

Writing on art history and aesthetics has been an underrepresented but still significant presence at *Reason Papers* since the journal's inception. Adrienne Baxter Bell's masterful treatment of Akela Reason's *Thomas Eakins and the Uses of History* makes a contribution to both fields while also enriching our understanding of American and regional history. Though Bell's review is the only art-related item in this issue, it connects nicely with recent work in *Reason Papers* by Brenda Molife on art history (*Reason Papers*, vol. 28, Spring 2006) and by David E. W. Fenner and Jason Holt on aesthetics (*Reason Papers*, vol. 32, Fall 2010).

At 229 pages, our 2011 issue ought to last readers the year or so it takes to produce a new issue of *Reason Papers*. Our 2012 issue promises to be even bigger. In the meantime, feel free to bookmark our page, keep up with upcoming symposia and calls for papers and reviews at our website (under "News"), and spread the word.

Irfan Khawaja  
Felician College  
Lodi, NJ

Carrie-Ann Biondi  
Marymount Manhattan College  
New York, NY

[www.reasonpapers.com](http://www.reasonpapers.com)

