

Editorial

“In this refulgent summer,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in July 1838,

it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted with fire and gold in the tint of flowers. The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of the pine, the balm-of-Gilead, and the new hay. Night brings no gloom to the heart with its welcome shade.¹

Things would undoubtedly have been different for Emerson if he’d had to spend his “refulgent summer” in the frenetic task of writing for and editing *Reason Papers*. Try waxing poetic about the grass, the buds, and the meadow from an editor’s desk, watching the summer go by while you’re slogging through the *n*th iteration of the galleys and you’re still not sure they’re error-free.

By the time you read this editorial, of course, *Reason Papers*, Volume 35, Number 1 will at last be online, and we, too, will be back among the living—drawing the breath of life in what remains of the refulgence of summer. What’s striking about this issue, we think, is the way in which, whether implicitly or explicitly, it continues a series of conversations with interlocutors in recent issues of *Reason Papers*. It’s been “well worth the pith,” as Emerson puts it, to put such interlocutors into conversation with one another.

Our Fall 2012 issue featured a symposium on Sari Nusseibeh’s 2011 book *What Is a Palestinian State Worth?* In the book, Nusseibeh proposes a solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict which involves Israel’s annexing the West Bank and Gaza, and according their Palestinian inhabitants civil but not political rights. One implication of Nusseibeh’s proposal is that these Palestinians would (at least temporarily) become second-class citizens of Israel, deprived of the right to vote.

The prospect of depriving a population of the right to vote raises fundamental questions about the *ethics of voting*—among them, questions about the point and value of voting as such. What, exactly, is voting for, and what are the conditions under which the right to vote ought, as an ethical matter, to be exercised? In answer to those questions, we’re pleased in this issue to be featuring a symposium on Jason Brennan’s *The*

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Divinity School Address,” in *Selected Essays, Lectures, and Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. R. E. Spiller (New York: Washington Square Press, 1965), p. 81.

Ethics of Voting, with commentaries by Bryan Caplan, Randall G. Holcombe, Ezequiel Spector, and Nikolai G. Wenzel, and a response by Brennan himself. Though the order of the Nusseibeh and Brennan symposia was coincidental, it turns out to be fortuitous; the two symposia are profitably read in sequence, and shed interesting light on one another. The *Ethics of Voting* symposium was originally a panel discussion at the Association for Private Enterprise Education in April 2012 in Las Vegas, Nevada. We're very grateful to Joshua Hall of Beloit College and Douglas Den Uyl of Liberty Fund for arranging for the publication of the symposium in *Reason Papers*.

The generally libertarian character of the Brennan symposium will be obvious to anyone familiar with libertarian theory, and it dovetails with some important work on libertarianism in the rest of the issue. Much of this, for obvious reasons, focuses on libertarian conceptions of rights and related concepts. In "Hoppe's Derivation of Self-Ownership," Danny Frederick takes issue with Hans-Herman Hoppe's discursive justification of self-ownership, challenging that justification, and leaving us with some valuable lessons about discourse ethics generally.

Meanwhile, David Schmitz responds to Gordon Barnes's critique of Schmitz's defense of the right to private property (*Reason Papers*, 34, vol. 2), and Barnes responds. Here, too, we're left with lessons—or at least questions—about the scope and limits of a certain *kind* of argumentation. Is it (as Schmitz claims) sufficient for defenders of private property to claim that private property solves *an* important problem, so that arguments for it "offer a *supporting* condition for the institution" but no more than that? Or must an argument for private property (as Gordon insists) demonstrate the unique necessity of the institution by contrast with all relevant alternatives, so that arguments for private property fail unless their defenders demonstrate that private property is the *best* of the alternatives? Either answer has important ramifications for libertarian theory; the Schmitz-Barnes debate brings those ramifications sharply into focus.

Finally, two Afterwords by Joseph S. Fulda translate libertarian theory into practice. The first suggests (as against the views expressed by Occupy Wall Street protestors) that "the top 1%" really *do* deserve their pay packages. The second argues for a "thick" conception of libertarianism derived from the libertarian proscription on first uses of force, but extending beyond it. Both pieces suggest that libertarian politics presupposes a distinctive ethical outlook, underscoring the distance between that outlook and conventional American attitudes about politics.

Recent issues of *Reason Papers* have featured work on two self-styled philosophical radicals in the Aristotelian tradition, Alasdair MacIntyre and Ayn Rand. Our Fall 2012 issue featured an important

critique, by Daniel Dahlstrom, of MacIntyre's 1999 book *Dependent Rational Animals*. In this issue, Philip Devine offers a sympathetic but stringent critique of MacIntyre's conception of tradition-constituted rationality. If Devine's critique is right, MacIntyreans must either give action-guiding significance to the MacIntyrean conception of a tradition or risk jeopardizing the very asset that tradition-constituted rationality was intended to secure, namely, determinacy in ethico-political deliberation. We look forward to further engagement with MacIntyre's work in forthcoming issues of the journal.

Five items in this issue focus on Rand's Objectivism. A symposium on "Ayn Rand and Punishment" features essays by David Boonin and Irfan Khawaja on that subject. Boonin construes Rand's conception of punishment as a novel defense of a traditional form of retributivism, and subjects it to some astute criticisms. Khawaja, by contrast, offers a revisionist account of Rand's theory according to which punishment is a form of "debt collection." The result, on Khawaja's view, bears a certain surface similarity to what are called "debt-based retributivisms," but ends up being a *sui generis* theory that avoids Boonin's critique. The Rand symposium had its origins in a session of the Ayn Rand Society at the Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (April 2011), organized by Allan Gotthelf (Rutgers University) and chaired by Gregory Salmieri (Boston University). *Reason Papers* extends its thanks to both of them.

It's common belief in philosophy that conceptions of punishment—and by implication moral desert—presuppose claims about moral responsibility, free will, and determinism. Eyal Mozes, a research scientist and independent scholar, offers a distinctively Objectivist critique of Sam Harris's defense of determinism in Harris's 2012 book, *Free Will*. Having subjected Harris's book to eleven pages of withering critique, Mozes concludes that Harris's case consists not "of any scientific evidence or logical arguments, but only of the dogmatic acceptance of certain philosophical premises about the nature of causality." "Harris's defense of determinism," Mozes concludes, "is an emperor who turns out not to be wearing any clothes."²

Mozes returns to the fray in our discussion section, with a vigorous critique of Tara Smith's 2006 book *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics* via criticism of Carrie-Ann Biondi's 2008 review of it here in *Reason Papers*. Though widely celebrated by Objectivists and others as the first academically respectable study of Rand's theory of the virtues, Mozes questions whether the book makes any positive contribution to the

² Eyal Mozes, "Review Essay: Sam Harris's *Free Will*," *Reason Papers* 35, no. 1 (July 2013), p. 169.

literature at all. In response, Biondi and Khawaja offer a defense of two features of Smith's book—its account of the harmony of rational interests and (what they call) its "lifespan criterion of virtue"—and contest the moral judgments that Mozes makes of the motivation behind Smith's work.

Although not strictly speaking a discussion of Objectivism, Owen Goldin's thorough and comprehensive discussion of a pair of books on Aristotle has important bearing on Objectivist normative theory. The first book is Allan Gotthelf's *Teleology, First Principles, and Scientific Method in Aristotle's Biology* (Oxford, 2012); the second is a *festschrift* for Gotthelf, *Being, Nature, and Life: Essays in Honor of Allan Gotthelf* (Cambridge, 2010), edited by James G. Lennox and Robert Bolton. Gotthelf is currently the Anthem Foundation Distinguished Fellow for Teaching and Research at Rutgers University; he is also Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at The College of New Jersey and Adjunct Professor of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Pittsburgh. With James Lennox, he has revolutionized the study of Aristotle (especially Aristotle's biological works), and has probably done more than anyone in the past few decades to bring Objectivism into conversation with academic philosophy.

Gotthelf was inspired, as he tells us in an autobiographical essay in the *Teleology* book, to go into Aristotle studies by Ayn Rand's review of John Herman Randall's *Aristotle* (he was a student of Randall's), and his Aristotle scholarship, though rigorously textual, is obviously influenced by Objectivism. One doesn't have to be a specialist in ancient philosophy to learn something—to learn a lot—from this scholarship. Goldin, our reviewer, is Professor of Philosophy at Marquette University. His area of specialization overlaps almost exactly with Gotthelf's, and though he's not an Objectivist, he certainly knows his way around Objectivism and capitalizes on that knowledge in his review.

Finally, we're pleased to note a revival of serious work on aesthetics and the arts in *Reason Papers*—visual, musical, and literary. Our Fall 2011 issue featured Adrienne Baxter Bell's discussion of Akela Reason's *Thomas Eakins and the Uses of History*. Our June 2012 issue, *Imagining Better*, offered eleven meditations on the philosophical significance of the *Harry Potter* series. Our October 2012 issue featured Roger Scruton's challenging critique of Dmitri Tymoczko's *A Geometry of Music*. The present issue extends the journal's aesthetic reach to film. Gary Jason provides an informed and detailed assessment of Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin's *Movie History: A Survey*, as well as an overview and analysis of the Nazi film industry as depicted in Erwin Leiser's documentary *Germany Awake!* On a happier note, Timothy Sandefur gives us nuanced but affirmative appreciations of Stephen

Spielberg's "profoundly effective" *Lincoln* and Tom Hooper's "superlative" *Les Miserables*. If Sandefur doesn't convince you to watch or revisit these films, nothing can.

Having begun on an Emersonian note, it's tempting to end on one. "Is not indeed every man a student," Emerson asks in "The American Scholar," "and do not all things exist for the student's behoof?"³ One of us isn't a man, and neither of us knows what a "behoof" is, but suffice it to say that this issue of *Reason Papers*, like every other, exists for the perpetual students out there. We hope you learn as much from it as we did.

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³ Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *Selected Essays, Lectures, and Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Spiller, pp. 64-65.

