

Editorial

In a stroke of careful planning and good fortune, arguably two of the ingredients needed for human flourishing, several of the contributions to this issue of *Reason Papers* address the vital topic of happiness. One set of articles comprises a symposium on Christine Vitrano's *The Nature and Value of Happiness*.¹ Touring through and assessing various conceptions of happiness in the history of philosophy, Vitrano defends one that captures the way we use the term now without reducing it to hedonism. Ultimately, she argues that happiness must involve finding satisfaction in one's life circumstances. John Kleinig and Christopher Rice challenge Vitrano's thesis from different directions, with Kleinig taking a eudaimonist angle and Rice a hedonist one.

In a previous issue of *Reason Papers*, Ole Martin Moen examines Ayn Rand's Objectivist view that man's life is the ultimate value.² He concludes that Rand's view can be interpreted as a version of hedonism: (1) since happiness is the purpose of man's life, then (2) happiness must be our ultimate value and (3) one would always be happier by choosing a life that has greater overall pleasure than pain. The current issue sees a Discussion Note response by David Kelley, one of those whom Moen critiques.

Gary Jason reviews an anthology edited by Philip Booth, . . . *and the Pursuit of Happiness: Wellbeing and the Role of Government*. Booth has gathered together original essays by social scientists who are interested in providing empirical studies of happiness as a contrast to the more traditional humanistic approach taken by philosophers. The essays range over how to measure happiness, the size of government, and whether happiness is best secured via governmental or market mechanisms.

Contributors to our second symposium, on emergencies, recognize that in order "to secure . . . rights"—including the right to pursue happiness—"governments are instituted among men."³ To that end, those authors take up thorny issues of security in emergency contexts. Stephen Kershnar examines whether consent can ever justify the killing and destruction of property that occur during war. Thomas May and his colleagues bring an interdisciplinary

¹ The symposium on *The Nature and Value of Happiness* was originally an Author-Meets-Critics session at Felician College (Lodi, NJ) sponsored by the Felician Ethics Institute (November 16, 2013), and organized by Joseph Biehl and Irfan Khawaja. Thanks to Christine Vitrano, John Kleinig, and Chris Rice for permission to publish their work in *Reason Papers*.

² Ole Martin Moen, "Is Life the Ultimate Value? A Reassessment of Ayn Rand's Ethics," *Reason Papers* 34, no. 2 (October 2012), pp. 84-116.

³ U.S. Declaration of Independence.

focus to the question of how best to handle challenges posed during catastrophic disease outbreaks, such as the SARS outbreak of 2002-2003 and the Ebola outbreak of 2014.

Any exploration of securing the conditions needed to pursue happiness places at the forefront the perennially contested ideas of rights and freedom. Some of our authors take up the more theoretical side of this debate, while others tackle specific contextual applications. The theoretical side revisits past discussion at *Reason Papers* on the work of Robert Nozick and Karl Marx. Mark D. Friedman's *Nozick's Libertarian Project: An Elaboration and Defense*, which aims to rehabilitate Nozick's libertarianism, was reviewed in our previous issue by Danny Frederick.⁴ Friedman and Frederick continue their exchange over Nozick's grounding for libertarian rights in the Discussion Notes section of this issue. On the other side of the political spectrum, Dan Swain offers a largely sympathetic review of Paul Blackledge's *Marxism and Ethics*.

How to apply any particular understandings of rights and freedom is just as difficult as wrestling with how to define them. Two of our authors, Stephen Kershner and Clifton Perry, offer arguments in defense of abortion rights and a right to attorney-client confidentiality, respectively.

In the previous issue, we ran a book review of Tom Palmer's edited collection *After the Welfare State* by then-undergraduate student Matt Faherty.⁵ As we said there, "[Faherty's] review here is the first of a series of undergraduate articles and reviews we'd like to run discussing SFL's [Students for Liberty's] activist and outreach materials. We welcome reviews from outside of the libertarian/SFL fold as well as by SFL insiders, and welcome commentary on the movement for our Afterwords department."⁶ Brandon Christensen has taken up our invitation. He offers here his reflections on undergraduate activism for the cause of liberty—this time, for the organization Young Americans for Liberty.

Continuing our practice of including contributions about art and culture, we have two film reviews that engage the issues of egoism and achievement. Robert Begley reviews the 2014 film *Whiplash*, which dramatizes the tension between a young drummer hungry for achievement and his mentor who will do anything to push his charge to the furthest limits of his endurance. Begley highlights the film's exploration of what is involved in the quest for greatness, including the role played by what can be called hero worship. Gary Jason offers the second of a three-part series on the depiction

⁴ Danny Frederick, "Review Essay: Mark D. Friedman's *Nozick's Libertarian Project: An Elaboration and Defense*," *Reason Papers* 36, no. 1 (July 2014), pp. 132-42.

⁵ Matt Faherty, "Tom Palmer's (ed.) *After the Welfare State*," *Reason Papers* 36, no. 1 (July 2014), pp. 208-10.

⁶ Irfan Khawaja and Carrie-Ann Biondi, "Editorial," *Reason Papers* 36, no. 1 (July 2014), p. 14.

of egoists and egoism in classic films. Contrasting with the first, more positive, piece in his series, Jason here analyzes negative portrayals of egoism in cinema.

Other pieces in this issue reflect a range of broadly normative issues. Danny Frederick reviews Robert Audi's *Moral Perception*, which takes us into issues of epistemic justification. Marc Champagne's article re-visits and finds wanting attempts made by rational-choice theory to resolve the famous "Buridan's ass" problem of how to choose between two equally good options. And Adam Walker reviews Gerhard Böwering et al.'s *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, which examines the wide sweep of the relationship between religious ethics, law, and politics in the Islamic tradition.

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