Editorial

Fall 2024 marks the 50th Anniversary of *Reason Papers*. Ever since its inception in 1974 under the editorship of Tibor Machan, the journal has welcomed philosophically rigorous intellectual jousting and collaboration across disciplines on various important issues in ethics, law, politics, economics, history, and the normative dimensions of epistemology and aesthetics. We are delighted to assemble this special issue that not only offers a retrospective section on the history, significance, and contributions of a half-century of *Reason Papers*, but also features two symposia on recent works in interdisciplinary normative studies.

The retrospective section brings together contributors who have in some way played an important role in the journal's success. Support comes in many forms: serving as editorial board advisors or peer reviewers, taking the helm as editor-in-chief or scouring catalogues for books to review, writing what will become a seminal essay or having your magnum opus become the focus of intense scrutiny in an author-meets-critics symposium, financing an issue or spreading the word on social media.

The authors of the retrospective section pieces have worn so many hats that it is difficult to capture them all here. Fred D. Miller, Jr. has been serving on *Reason Papers*'s Advisory and Editorial Board from the beginning. He also has an article in the journal's first issue in 1974, which was followed by a steady stream of articles, book reviews, and having his own work the object of more than one symposium as well as a special Festschrift issue. Aeon Skoble not only has several articles and book reviews appearing over the course of thirty years, but he also took on the onerous task of serving as Editor-in-Chief of *Reason Papers* from 2001-2010—a whole other level of commitment. Editorial Board member Nicholas Capaldi has penned a few articles for the journal over the years, but he also has the memorable experience of his first one (in 1983) leading to writing a biography of John Stuart Mill that landed him an appearance on C-SPAN. Douglas Rasmussen shares the honor with Miller of having an article in the first issue of *Reason Papers*, but he has been joined more often than not by fellow Editorial Board member Douglas Den Uyl in coauthoring multiple articles and having had a few of their coauthored books the object of symposia. David Kelley has published several articles in the journal

and his work in epistemology has been the object of a few book reviews and discussion notes. Edward Younkins serves on the Editorial Board and two of his books have been reviewed in *Reason Papers*. Editorial Board member Stephen Hicks has offered many helpful, innovative suggestions for content over the years and contributed some articles of his own. Another Editorial Board member, James Stacey Taylor, has with good cheer subjected more than one of his books to critical review in the journal's pages.

The topics of the two symposia in this issue of *Reason Papers* may at first glance seem only loosely related. David Schmidtz's *Living Together*[1] explores whether moral theorizing must precede political theory or whether we "invent moral science" based on what we observe works in social and political practice. He affirms and defends the latter approach. Andrew I. Cohen's *Apologies and Moral Repair*[2] explains how we could see apologies as a form of "corrective justice" as a reparative offer by individuals or groups owed as a duty to those they have wronged in some way. However, their books reflect two sides of the same normative coin: on the one hand, going from shared concerns about specific problems up to the level of theory and, on the other hand, applying theory to address a specific problem. What ties them together more deeply is that although living together peaceably is an important and proper function of political societies, both projects take seriously that people are individuals, context matters, conflicts will occur, and we need to figure out how best to navigate conflict in ways that we can live with moving forward. Schmidtz's and Cohen's work thus reflects and is informed by the diachronic, dynamic, and social nature of human life.

The symposium on Schmidtz's *Living Together: Inventing Moral Science* brings together commentators from multiple disciplines (philosophy, politics, and economics), several of whom follow him in integrating insights across disciplines to grapple with real-world problems. Peter Boettke sets the tone by reviewing Schmidtz's substantial corpus of work at the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics. This allows us to see the place that *Living Together* plays in the evolution and development of his thought as Schmidtz seeks to replace abstract theorizing unmoored from reality with a moral science for real people.

---

[1] David Schmidtz, *Living Together: Inventing Moral Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[2] Andrew I. Cohen, *Apologies and Moral Repair: Rights, Duties, and Corrective Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

While nearly all commentators on *Living Together* are sympathetic to varying degrees with the book's arguments—and especially taken by the central metaphor of "justice as traffic management"—most raise specific concerns with or criticisms of aspects of the project. Neera Badhwar and Jennifer Baker both scrutinize Schmidtz's view that the social and political question "How to live together?" is prior to moral philosophy's question "How to live?" Badhwar holds with the Aristotelian approach that moral philosophy is (and should be) the foundation of law and politics. Baker suggests that Schmidtz, contrary to his explicit claims, seems to place, à la Aristotle, moral philosophy at the helm with what she calls his reliance on "foundational normative individualism."

Mark Pennington, for his part, deeply appreciates Schmidtz's social-science moorings, but he also raises the worry that this could lead to an idolization of "social-scientific expertise." Such over-reliance on often incomplete and changing data could have deleterious problems involving socialism, redistribution, and climate change policy in ways that threaten the individual-rights-respecting market society Schmidtz defends. Similar to Baker, Billy Christmas wonders whether Schmidtz's project requires "a prior normative commitment to liberalism" that makes autonomous individual choosers play a central role in how his argument unfolds. Christmas also wonders whether the insights of *Living Together* could be used to move illiberal political societies in the direction of greater liberalization.

Peter de Marneffe distinguishes "interpersonal justice" from "social justice" to make sense of Schmidtz's various claims about justice. Once he does so, de Marneffe then raises a series of questions about why Schmidtz seemingly rejects social justice, when doing so could undermine the possibility of offering (especially poorly off) people the "real opportunities" for living with dignity that Schmidtz supports. Andrew Jason Cohen raises a different concern about Schmidtz's view of justice, which he approaches from the direction of the debate over ideal versus nonideal theory. Cohen suggests that Schmidtz sets aside ideal theory too quickly, for ideal theory could at the very least allow us to assess the institutions we have and guide us toward realistically better solutions so as to avoid the "pits" of injustice and misery. This last point echoes Christmas's thought that *Living Together* might offer guideposts from worse to better ways of living together. How else to do that but by looking to some ideal? Harrison Frye presses Schmidtz to consider how his framework might handle the pressing problem of alienation that many experience as a result of

living in a commercial society they suspect is unfair. Failure to address the alienation problem could lead to destabilization and perhaps destroy the long-term prospects of "justice as traffic management."

These thoughtful and thought-provoking commentators provided Schmidtz with much food for thought. His extensive, nuanced response reflects the seriousness with which he considers their points, the magnitude of his ongoing project, and his willingness to make good on his promise of seeing his book as part of an ongoing conversation to flesh out and develop a work in progress.

The second symposium focuses on Cohen's book *Apologies and Moral Repair: Rights, Duties, and Corrective Justice*. All commentators here agree that Cohen has provided a novel, rich account of apology as an important moral phenomenon in the complex terrain inhabited by individuals and various groups (such as corporations and states). Bill Wringe probes, though, whether (and how) corporate apologies require emotions for their apologies to be sincere and meaningful. If so, then he further wonders how that fits with Cohen's commitment to "noneliminative individualism." In addition, Wringe puzzles over how third-party entities have standing to apologize on behalf of non-agential groups.

For their part, Cindy Holder and Mark LeBar each offer Cohen suggestions for "friendly amendments" to bolster his promising account of apology. Holder thinks that Cohen's view of apology could be strengthened in two ways: by integrating a more social view of communication and by shedding an unnecessary commitment to seeing states as "authoritative agents." Doing so would allow apologies to retain their value as necessary preconditions for repair without expecting them necessarily to be reparative. LeBar holds that Cohen's account could benefit by incorporating some Aristotelian insights about our nature as rational agents. This includes grasping that we are "bearers of normative interests" as, say, friends or siblings, which would make apologies for violating these interests a matter of "respectful recognition" of our moral agency.

Daniel Butt closely examines apologies for historic injustice, placing Cohen's account in the broader conceptual landscape of attempts to come to terms with historic injustice and reparations. These issues become especially thorny when attributing rights of and duties toward the dead. Butt invites Cohen to delve more deeply into this thicket. Cohen graciously accepts this invitation as well as Holder's and LeBar's friendly amendments and grapples with Wringe's pointed questions. His response is another example of an author's openness to

rethinking his ideas and incorporating helpful suggestions in a non-defensive way.

In these two symposia, commentators and book authors alike exemplify scholarship at its best, showing how even pointed disagreement can be softened by grace, good humor, and honesty. They have embraced the opportunity to see one another as interlocutors rather than adversaries. In so doing, they further conversations about meaningful issues that matter to the lives of all.

We look forward to seeing what the next fifty years brings! Thank you for reading *Reason Papers*.

Carrie-Ann Biondi, Guest Editor
Independent Scholar

Shawn E. Klein, Editor-in-Chief
Arizona State University, Tempe

www.reasonpapers.com