Reflecting on My Relationship with *Reason Papers*

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In 1968, Lanny Friedlander started issuing mimeographed editions of a magazine he called *Reason.* In 1970, Tibor Machan collaborated with Manuel Klausner and Robert Poole to make *Reason* into a regular monthly magazine. Its early contributors included Ralph Nader, Thomas Sowell, Milton Friedman, and other well-known figures. In contrast to opinion magazines such as *The Nation* or *National Review*, which offered familiar left- and right-wing opinion, *Reason* offered a libertarian or classical liberal perspective that was generally neglected in mainstream opinion journalism.[1] In 1974, Machan decided the time was right to start a new scholarly journal that might showcase marginalized voices from academia. He called it *Reason Papers*, signaling that it might be a scholarly cousin to its journalistic counterpart.

The subtitle he selected was "an interdisciplinary journal of normative studies." This meant, first, that it was not limited to philosophers, but would also accept work from other disciplines, such as economics, political science, sociology, and so on, and work that crossed disciplines. Second, it meant that the journal would focus on the normative—ethics and political theory—more than on metaphysics and epistemology. Early contributors to *Reason Papers* comprise a veritable all-star team of classical liberal thinkers, including Israel Kirzner, Eric Mack, James Buchanan, Lester Hunt, Don Lavoie, Jeff Hummel, Antony Flew, Ellen Paul, Jeff Paul, John Hospers, Nick Capaldi, Jan Narveson, Fred Miller, Randy Barnett, Loren Lomasky, Douglas Den Uyl, Douglas Rasmussen, occasionally Machan himself, and many others.[2]

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[1] For more on the history of *Reason Magazine*, see its fiftieth-anniversary issue, accessed online at: https://reason.com/issue/december-2018/.

[2] Ellen Paul, Jeff Paul, and Fred Miller would themselves launch in

As a philosophy graduate student in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and as someone who was in the process of studying classical liberal political thought, it was exciting to discover issues of *Reason Papers*. One thing that struck me as different about seeing these arguments in a journal was that it made it seem as though I was seeing scholarly dialogue in action. It is difficult to articulate why I would have seen this any differently from reading books, but that's how it seemed to me as a novice philosopher. Perhaps one source of this might be that *Reason Papers* would often print "discussion notes" that responded to an article that appeared in a previous issue. These sorts of things definitely represent dialogue; reading them was an invaluable complement to reading books.

In 1992, I met Machan for the first time at a conference. A few weeks later, the phone rang. We did not have caller ID back then; one had to answer the phone to find out who was calling. When I answered, the caller said, "This is Tibor Machan." We chatted a bit and then he got to the point. He wanted me to write something for *Reason Papers*, something in the discussion notes that he thought needed discussing. That was thrilling on several levels. One, I was still ABD (that is, "all but dissertation") and did not have a lot on my CV at the time, so it was nice to get an opportunity to add something. Two, it was flattering that Machan would think to invite me to do this—or anything at all. Three, it would be in a journal that regularly featured (and was edited by) scholars whom I took very seriously, which made it even more meaningful. Over the next few years, I contributed a few book reviews and collaborated with Machan on a textbook in political philosophy.[3] Then, in 2001, Machan told me that he was stepping down as editor of *Reason Papers* and that he wanted me to be the new editor. This, too, I perceived as a tremendous honor.

I served as editor from volume 26 (which finally came out in 2003) through volume 32, which came out in 2010, at which point I, too, decided to step down. Editing the journal for nearly a decade was a great experience. I learned how to how to get good book reviewers, how to solicit referee reports, how to interpret them, how to work with authors, and how to say "No." I did not learn as much as I might have

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1983 the journal *Social Philosophy & Policy*; see https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-philosophy-and-policy/information/about-this-journal.

[3] Aeon Skoble and Tibor Machan, eds., *Political Philosophy: Essential Selections* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999).

about the business end of running a journal. The original website I created for *Reason Papers* was underwhelming and I was never very good at fund-raising, but even those less successful experiences were worthwhile. But the scholarly part of editing a journal was a truly invaluable experience. I am happy and honored to have done it. And of course, I am delighted to see *Reason Papers* continuing in the digital age, in very capable hands, and am proud to continue contributing to it.[4]

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[4] The complete archive of *Reason Papers* is available online at: at https://reasonpapers.com/archives/.