

Fifty Years of Free Thought:  
*Reason Papers* as a Haven for the Homeless Heterodox

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It was a revelation to me that *Reason Papers* is in its fiftieth year. I was finishing graduate school when Tibor Machan founded the journal in 1974. If memory serves, I first became aware of it when the journal published in 1987 a review of my 1986 book *The Evidence of the Senses*.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the journal has been a fixture in my professional life as a philosopher, as I have published eight articles in it prior to this brief piece.

*Reason Papers* has been a welcome alternative for thinkers interested in the pros and cons of Objectivism as well as a much broader range of views across disciplines that are outside the conventional academic mainstream. In my field, philosophy, mainstream journals only welcome articles that fit in with the state of thinking among analytic philosophers. My own work in Objectivist epistemology has not found a place in those journals. *Reason Papers* has thus served as an important venue for wide-ranging thought, discussion, and debate. The editors mean what their home page says: “*Reason Papers* is not edited for conformity with any particular philosophical or ideological perspective.”

I am reminded of something my dear friend and colleague, the late George Walsh, once said. When we founded the Institute for Objectivist Studies (now The Atlas Society) in 1990, George introduced me at our first event: “[Many people] have dropped out of the Objectivist movement because of opposition to or distaste for the policies of the orthodox movement. . . . But they have not found a new home. Tonight marks the first meeting of homeless Objectivists.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Randall R. Dipert, “Review Essay of David Kelley’s *The Evidence of the Senses*,” *Reason Papers* 12 (1987): pp. 57–70.

<sup>2</sup> George Walsh, recorded 1990 lecture available online, “The Founding of The Atlas Society,” *The Atlas Society*, June 24, 2020: <https://www.atlassociety.org/post/the-founding-of-the-atlas-society>.

I think of *Reason Papers* as a home for homeless thinkers. I say that in jest, not in resentment, and of course I exaggerate. Many authors who have published in *Reason Papers* have also published widely in other venues. That includes many of my fellow philosophers—Eric Mack, Stephen Hicks, Aeon J. Skoble, Douglas B. Rasmussen, Douglas J. Den Uyl, Fred D. Miller, Jr., Neera Badhwar, and *Reason Papers* founder Tibor Machan—to mention only a few.

In its openness to new ideas, the journal has not been open to inferior work. From their home page again: “We welcome work in any academic field, as long as it meets the relevant standards of rigor for the fields it discusses.” Judging from my own work with the editors, they are demanding in terms of clarity, relevant citations, organization, and the other requirements of good writing. I commend in particular the current editors, Shawn Klein and Carrie-Ann Biondi, for providing extensive editing feedback. To mention one example of many, in my most recent essay, “Concepts and Natures,”<sup>3</sup> Shawn flagged a paragraph that I “kinda knew” was unclear and he asked for a rewrite. I did so—after thinking more deeply—to the great benefit of the essay.

I have learned from many other *Reason Papers* articles. There’s an embarrassment of riches here, too many for anything near an exhaustive summary. To mention only one, in “Kant at the Masked Ball,” Stephen Hicks revisits a long-standing question of whether Immanuel Kant was “the pro-reason philosopher of the Enlightenment” or “the saboteur of reason and launcher of the Counter-Enlightenment.”<sup>4</sup> This essay is one of the best I have read on the subject—the long-running conflict over interpreting Kant—with a rare combination of erudition and wit.

Since I often cannot read every issue fully, I am all the more grateful that *Reason Papers* has an open-access, online archive to go back to whenever I wish. It is a great resource. Here’s to fifty years of great work by the editors, the editorial board, the authors, and everyone else involved.

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<sup>3</sup> David Kelley, “Concepts and Natures: A Commentary on *The Realist Turn*,” *Reason Papers* 42, no. 1 (2021): pp. 6–22.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Hicks, “Kant at the Masked Ball,” *Reason Papers* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2023): pp. 23, 24.