

Preface

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The purpose of this Preface is to explain how our title, “Human Ends and the Ends of Politics,” reflects the research which is presented in the papers that follow.

In the first place, our title points to the inevitable distance between the ends or aspirations and purposes of individual women and men, on the one hand, and the ends or purposes of politics or the community, on the other. Only in a perfect utopia would there be no such distance, and its existence raises such fundamental questions as that of the relation between an individual’s identity and the identity of the community to which she or he belongs.

On a deeper level, our title reflects the paradox of seeking knowledge about political affairs. It would probably be agreed that we aspire to attain genuine or rigorous knowledge. Such knowledge would be in some sense universal or in principle intelligible to any person regardless of their particular identity, time, or place. For this reason traditional philosophy held that simply to gain knowledge for its own sake was itself one of the highest human ends. Yet it seems undeniable that every human being belongs in some way to a particular community or palimpsest of communities, and it seems inevitable that all of us are formed in many ways important and unimportant by our attachment to these communities and their various ends. The tension between human or individual and the political or collective ends in this sense raises many questions. For example, isn’t research into political affairs motivated by controversies over issues of political significance? If so, how can our research claim to be devoted to genuine knowledge and not to the rationalization of particular political views? Alternatively, what would the point be of an objective science that ignored the particular grounds for involvement in political or communal life? If research is not motivated by a commitment to certain political goals, can it claim practical legitimacy and support?

We do not suggest that the tensions alluded to are merely problems that ought to be resolved, even if that were possible. Rather, they constitute the dual responsibilities we have as researchers, both to the authentic experience which makes us the people we are, and to the scholarly or scientific aspiration to genuine knowledge in principle accessible to

anyone by virtue of their human gifts. In fact, we might suggest, it is the attempt to be true to both responsibilities that produces the most interesting and profound research into human affairs.

Since the papers collected below were developed during our tenure in the Junior Visiting Fellow program at the IWM, it is fitting for us to illustrate this suggestion by reference to the paradox inherent in the very designation *die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*, a paradox not apparent in the idiomatic English expression “the humanities,” but preserved in the title “the human sciences.” This paradox is that between the particular and temporal sources of our humanity and the universally intelligible, apparently atemporal and non-partial, nature of scientific knowledge. One side of the paradox is that it would seem that scholarship which sought to be scientific or purely objective would inevitably abstract from the principles, interests, desires, and in general the perspective of those actively engaged in human or political affairs. On the other side, if scholarship merely represented the character of those engaged in human affairs, without an attempt to transcend the particular horizon of that affairs, then it would be open to the charge of being more ideology and rationalization rather than a scientific pursuit. As an example of a successful attempt to do justice to both sides of this dilemma, we may adduce the international conference brought together in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the IWM during our tenure as Junior Fellows. The distinctive success of this conference was due in no little part to the exchange impressive array of diverse points of view, goals, and methods of the various speakers and discussants, on the one hand, and their commitment to shared intelligibility or dialogue, on the other.

Whether our suggestion about one of the sources for the distinctive intellectual atmosphere of the IWM is correct, we would like to suggest further that a part of the interest in the essays that follow is their diverse attempts to meet both of the responsibilities mentioned at once.

Parveen Akhtar’s paper, “Transience Participation: the politics of first generation Pakistani migrants in the UK (post-1945),” provides a concrete elucidation of the potential tension between individual aspiration and the ends of the broader community. She explores the complexities of the political participation of Pakistani immigrants prior to and in the process of coming to terms with their permanent residency in the UK. Her paper is enriched by the prolific references to the realities of their lives, which help develop its persuasive argument.

Margherita Angelini’s paper, “Writing contemporary history in Italy between Fascism and Democracy,” gives a very well-documented account of the understanding of Italian historians of fascism, concentrating in particular upon the period encompassing the 1940’s to the 1960’s. The article opens with a powerful expression for the urgency of our historical understanding of the transition from authoritarian to democratic government, and it concludes by suggesting the author’s new line of research that will challenge further the notion that specific fields of study ought to develop along national lines.

Martin Black's paper, "Is there a Crisis of Modernity?" focuses upon the core of the "crisis of west" diagnosed by Husserl and Nietzsche as an inability of science or reason to guide human life or values. It suggests that this crisis may best be understood as a result of the re-orientation of our paradigms of theory and practice by early modern philosophers such as Descartes and Bacon.

Stanislaw Burdziej's paper, "Civil Religion and the Sources of Legitimacy," endeavors to re-frame the investigation of the cleavage between Europe and the United States in their use of religious rhetoric. The essay's considerable ambition is underpinned by the empirical evidence designed to show that all political legitimization rests on transcendent sources, which would mean that civil religion cannot be criticized on this point. The essay advances the strong and interesting claim that democracy itself has pre-democratic sources. The essay concludes that, despite the possibility for its misuse, civil religion may provide the proper standards by which political communities criticize and improve themselves.

Kirsten McKillop's paper "The Philosopher's Peace: Lasting or Final? Kant and Democratic Peace Theory" starts out from that the paradox that modern political philosophy, orientated by the notion of a social contract, usually considers peace to be the highest end of political action, yet understands it only in contrast with war. The essay shows that despite Kant's claim that peace is a moral duty and historically inevitable he makes no advance upon the contract theorists because his position also rests on the notion that individual ideas of goodness and happiness are not political. The essay suggests that his understanding of peace is theoretically circular and practically dangerous.

Astrid Peterle's paper "Thinking Through Subversion in the Time of its Impossibility" shows a rare degree of reflexivity. The author illuminates her own encounter with the difficulty of capturing the meaning of subversion, in tandem with an examination of practices, particularly artistic practices, that show the difficulty of applying such a term with an awareness of its full complexity. That difficulty is most acute in our time wherein it seems to some that subversion is rendered impossible by its incorporation into the dominant culture. The essay concludes with a more balanced view, expressed through a thoughtful assessment of the elements of subversion in the work of the artist Richard Dedomenici.

Irena Risti's "Hell Is Other People': Kinships among the Yugoslav Nations" provides a very forthright and vigorous account of the tendency of national "elites" of the former nations of Yugoslavia to construct a national identity by finding fault with others and ignoring inconvenient aspects of their own past. The essay concludes by arguing that the selective construction of individual identity may have some legitimacy, but that science must subject national identities to a scrutiny that comprehends both a nation's positive and negative characteristics. It argues forcefully that we have a duty of responsibility to be self-reflective at this level in order to avoid repeating the errors of the past.

All of the papers contained in this collection were developed during our tenure in the Junior Visiting Fellow program at the IWM, where we enjoyed such excellent conditions for carrying out our work. On behalf of all the authors, the editors would like to thank the fellows and the staff of the IWM for all of their hospitality and assistance.

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