

ABSTRACTS

WHAT ENERGY IS IT? THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF ENERGY

Juan Ferret

The concept of energy is of fundamental significance for the sciences and is used commonly to express the ultimate constitution or substance of objects. Things are energy, we say. Yet the concept of energy is problematic in that it is composed of an actual part, i.e., the kinetic energy in mechanics, and a possible part, its potential energy. This potential energy exists because of the possible interaction of an object with another one, which may or may not occur. In the Newtonian picture, this meant that an object's energy depended on a possible interaction with another one. For instance, a car falling off a cliff will have a potential energy in relation to the ground. The advent of field theory, and the recognition that most things can be expressed in terms of fields, suggested that the potential energy is recognition of the presence of an active field's influence. The car experiences the effect of the gravitational field and the potential energy acknowledges this interaction. However, like in the Newtonian picture, the car at the edge of the cliff has a potential energy because of the gravitational field, but may still not fall. Its energy, nevertheless, is given by this potential energy, which may never get expended. This reveals that the concept of energy is not a straightforward replacement for objects ontologically, since energy is not proper to the object but it depends on the environment surrounding the object and whether it will exhibit an interaction with such surroundings.

In quantum mechanics the situation becomes even more perplexing. Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle posits that an interaction between two systems entails that there is a Planck scale minimum of the energy, which is correlated to the time of interaction. If you imagine an interaction occurring with a time interval close to zero, the implication is that the energy of the system in interaction becomes ill-defined. That is, there is no energy for a system at an instant or without interaction. There is no system at an instant. Hence, a system (an object, for instance) needs to have a minimum of time to exist and interact for it to be a system. This fits with the lesson of mechanics prior to the quantum revolution in that the energy of the system is not inherent in the system, but depends on its *future* surroundings and interaction.

In sum, if we are to treat the concept of *energy* of a system as ontologically significant (and not doing so would seem to ignore the many fields that do so) then, one is forced to recognize that systems (objects, things, entities) exist in virtue of them having a potential element of interaction with something outside its boundaries in the future. Systems are not just fourth dimensional, but also dependent on the interaction with other systems at the boundary. The energy is the ontological property of a system that takes into account such dynamic relational constitution.



HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATIONS: GENOCIDE, NORMATIVITY, AND THE GAP OF RESPONSIBILITY

Jules Simon

In this paper I address the phenomenon of normativity as it occurs in the attempt to regulate nationally oriented human behavior from the authority of written constitutional documents such as the constitutional documents used to establish the sovereignty of a group of people like the Constitution of the United States or the Parliamentary system of Great Britain. I explore this phenomenon of textual authority by way of recalling how documents such as The Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1776) provided or did not provide guidance and protection for people victimized during events of extreme human encounters such as World War I, World War II, and the Holocaust. Specifically, I focus on the brute fact of their historical failure. Their inherent limitations were recognized because of the subsequent establishment of new international organizations based on new international concordances and documents such as the United Nations and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) that were meant to specifically address the weaknesses of the previous texts in an international context of competing sovereignties. The problem that I address is the relatively *normative* issue of the extent to which textual documents, as such, are able to effectively guide human ethical relations in the context of modern international politics.



CONVICTION AND CRITIQUE IN RICOEUR: A REPLY TO WOLIN

Dan R. Stiver

Richard Wolin wrote a memorial to Paul Ricoeur in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that praised him as one whose death brought “an exemplary 20th-century philosophical life to a close.” In the process, however, he raised a severe judgment upon Ricoeur’s pre-World War II views that he then intimated as condemnation of any kind of hermeneutical philosophy like Ricoeur’s, indicated in the subtitle to the article, “How a Great Philosopher Wrestled with His Younger Self.” Ricoeur was a pacifist before WWII and thus was against going to war against Germany. Such lack of discernment on Ricoeur’s part to the evil of Hitler, as Wolin sees it, bespeaks a fatal flaw in hermeneutical philosophy in general where it is so conscious of the “conflict of interpretations,” to use Ricoeur’s language, that it lacks critique and perhaps also conviction.

What I wish to point out in this response to Wolin is not just that this seems to be a careless, *ad hominem* criticism of Ricoeur, but, more importantly, that it reflects a critical misunderstanding of hermeneutical philosophy per se, particularly at points that Ricoeur himself developed. I wish to show how he misses the mark on Ricoeur in particular and about hermeneutical philosophy in general. I first indicate the questionable nature of Wolin’s criticism of Ricoeur and connect it with his Heidegger critique before turning to the larger implications for hermeneutical philosophy.

If Wolin is correct in his assumption that interpretation undermines serious moral claims, what if one cannot avoid interpretation which is the conclusion of numerous

contemporary philosophers? Does this not leave us in the nihilistic and relativist nightmare so feared by Wolin? If Ricoeur and others are correct, that even ideology critique is a tradition, then we need a way to show that serious moral claims and convictions are nevertheless possible, a project that Ricoeur as much as anyone else has labored to fulfill. In fact, Wolin seems to assume that the Enlightenment tradition provides a rational foundation that can be proved, which is unlikely. Apart from such proof, it is a tradition, as Ricoeur pointed out. Without the means to deal with tradition and interpretation in a critical way, even Wolin is left helpless before it. Ricoeur does not believe that one can do without practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, against Wolin, but, unlike Heidegger, he does not despair that one can arrive at rational imperatives and justified convictions. Drawing on Aristotle and the Greek play *Antigone*, Ricoeur sees that we cannot avoid the conflicts that challenge settled morality as evinced in tragedy, yet the imperative to “deliberate well” can be met by practical wisdom.

The irony, then, is that Wolin may need Ricoeur in the end to have the moral standpoint that he desperately desires, one which he only assumes but does not substantiate. Ricoeur, in fact, has provided such substantiation, but Wolin seems wholly unaware of it.



CASUISTRY AND INTUITIONISM: OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

Jack Weir

In this paper, I outline and reject canonical interpretations of the history of moral casuistry. Taking issue with widely accepted accounts, I propose and defend two theses: (a) Old Casuistry and Old Intuitionism were philosophical friends, and (b) Old Casuistry survived along with Old Intuitionism until the end of the 1800s. In addition, I argue that, culminating in contemporary pluralistic casuistry, three new traits distinguish New Casuistry and New Intuitionism from their parents: (a) a pluralism of *prima facie* duties, (b) an epistemology of non-inferential intuitive judgments of the good, the right, and the actual, and (c) a pluralistic explanation of disagreement among attentive minds.



CONTRIBUTORS

Vishwa Adluri is Assistant Adjunct Professor at Hunter College, New York. His interests include ancient Greek and Indian philosophy, Nietzsche, and 20th century Continental philosophy. His book *Return from Transcendence: Parmenides, Plato, and Mortal Philosophy* is forthcoming from Continuum Publishing.

Justin Bell studies the contribution of American Pragmatism to political philosophy and ethics. He is currently a graduate student in philosophy working toward his PhD at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

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Juan Ferret received his PhD in philosophy of science at the University of Oregon after getting bachelor degrees in philosophy, mathematics, and physics from Gonzaga University. He now works on the problem of time and motion in metaphysics informed by the advances in quantum field theory and quantum gravity studies. Juan also researches the metaphysics of time from the classical Mayan perspective.

Lynne Fulmer did her graduate work at Rice University. She has recently retired from Texas State University where she pursued her interests in ethics, critical thinking, Wittgenstein, Whitehead, and linguistic philosophy.

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Dan Stiver is the Cook-Derrick Professor of Theology at Logsdon School of Theology, Hardin-Simmons University, in Abilene, Texas. He has written *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story*, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, and *Life Together in the Way of Jesus Christ: An Introduction to Christian Theology*.

John Symons is associate professor of philosophy at UTEP. He works mainly in Philosophy of Science and Metaphysics.

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Morgan Wallhagen has taught at the University of Pennsylvania and at Bryn Mawr College. His main areas of research are philosophy of mind and cognitive science. He has a paper on the functions of consciousness forthcoming in the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*.

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Ron Wilburn is Assistant Professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His research interests include skepticism, moral realism, and ecophenomenology.

NEW MEXICO-WEST TEXAS PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
57th Annual Meeting

Las Cruces Hilton, Las Cruces, New Mexico
April 7-8, 2006

Friday, April 7

- Session 1A: Timothy Cleveland** (New Mexico State University), Moderator
2:00-2:50 **J-P Vessel** (New Mexico State University), Defending a Possibilist
Insight in Consequentialist Thought
Commentator: **John Symons** (The University of Texas at El Paso)
3:00-3:50 **Jack Weir** (Morehead State University), Casuistry and Intuitionism:
Old and New Friends
Commentator: **Paul Sagal** (New Mexico State University)
4:00-4:50 **John Symons** (The University of Texas at El Paso), Intuitive
Content: Kripke and Common Sense
Commentator: **J-P Vessel** (New Mexico State University)
5:00-5:50 **Gilbert Fulmer** (Texas State University), Ratsch, Design and the
Supernatural
Commentator: **Danny Scoccia** (New Mexico State University)

Session 1B:

- 2:00-2:50 **Jules Simon** (The University of Texas at El Paso), Human Rights,
Genocide, Normativity, and the Gap of Responsibility
Commentator: **Michael Linville** (Hardin-Simmons University)
3:00-3:50 **John Haddox** (The University of Texas at El Paso), Augustin Basave
and Anthroposophic Interalism
Commentator: Dan Stiver (Hardin-Simmons University)
4:00-4:40 **Michael Linville** (Hardin-Simmons University), The Metroethical: A
Critique of John Roberts' Ethics of Narcissus
Commentator: **Jules Simon** (The University of Texas at El Paso)

7:00-10:00 **Registration and Reception**

Saturday, April 8

Session 1A:

- 8:30-9:20 **Lori Keleher** (University of Maryland), Influence of Socrates'
Daimonion
Commentator: **Joel Martinez** (University of Arizona)
9:30-10:20 **Mayra Valadez** (New Mexico State University), Is Stoic Virtue
Theory Egoistic?
Commentator: **Joel Martinez** (University of Arizona)

Coffee Break 10:30-11:00

- 11:00-11:50 **Vishwa Adluri**, The Socratic Labyrinth: The Ritual of Platonic
Dialogue
Commentator: **Harald Thorsrud** (New Mexico State University)

Session 1B:

- 8:30-9:20 **Matt Sanderson** (Southern Illinois University), Schopenhauer on Sublimity and the Feeling of Immortality
Commentator: **Charles Harriman** (College of Santa Fe)
- 9:30-10:20 **Michael Stawser** (University of Central Florida), Onto-Theology and the Practice of Love
Commentator: **Peter Hutcheson** (Texas State University)

Coffee Break 10:30-11:00

- 11:00-11:50 **Dan Stiver** (Hardin-Simmons University), Conviction and Critique in Ricoeur: A Reply to Wolin
Commentator: **Matt Sanderson** (Southern Illinois University)

Noon Recess 12:00-1:00

Session 2A:

- 1:00-1:50 **Lee Stauffer** (New Mexico Highlands University), Ethics in Light of Evolution
Commentator: **Dan Flores** (New Mexico State University)
- 2:00-2:50 **C. Lynne Fulmer** (Texas State University), Resuscitating Hobbesian Men: From Antisocial Egoists to Utopian Cooperation
Commentator: **Jack Weir** (Morehead State University)

Coffee Break 3:00-3:30

- 3:30-4:20 **Christina Gould** (Southern Illinois University), Punishment and the Objectification of Persons
Commentator: **Lee Stauffer** (New Mexico Highlands University)

Session 2B:

- 1:00-1:50 **Juan Ferret** (The University of Texas at El Paso), What Energy Is It?
Commentator: **Don Merrell** (Arkansas State University)
- 2:00-2:50 **Cliff Hill** (The University of Texas at El Paso), A Failed Definition of Mechanism
Commentator: **Juan Ferret** (The University of Texas at El Paso)

Coffee Break 3:00-3:30

- 3:30-4:20 **Don Merrell** (Arkansas State University), Believing with All Your Might: A Closer Look at Doxastic Degrees
Commentator: Glenn Joy (Texas State University)



Business Meeting: 5:00-6:00 pm
Danny Scoccia (New Mexico State University) **President**
Tim Cleveland (New Mexico State University) **Vice-President**
Gary Cesarz (Southeast Missouri State University), **Secretary/Treasurer**



6:30 pm
New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society
Banquet
&
Presidential Address
Anti-abortion Violence, Pacifism, and Democracy
Danny Scoccia (New Mexico State University)



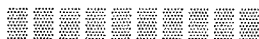
Sunday, April 7

Session 1A:

- 9:00-9:50 **Morgan Wallhagen** (University of Pennsylvania), On Carruthers' Argument for Higher-order Representation
Commentator: Jennifer Noonan (New Mexico State University)
- 10:10-10:50 **Dan Flores** (New Mexico State University), Are Beliefs Memes? On the Relevance of the Repetition of Patterns and Information
Commentator: **Tim Cleveland** (New Mexico State University)
- 11:00-11:50 **Ron Wilburn** (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), From Contextualism to Skepticism
Commentator: **Jennifer Noonan** (New Mexico State University)

Session 1B:

- 9:00-9:50 **Kelly Booth** (Southern Illinois University), The Liveliness of Nature: Clues in the Early Ionians
Commentator: **Harald Thorsrud** (New Mexico State University)
- 10:00-10:50 **Michael Morales** (New Mexico State University), Sexism in Marxian Theory
Commentator: **Lori Keleher** (University of Maryland)
- 11:00-11:50 **Justin Bell** (Southern Illinois University), A Deweyan Analysis of Fundamentalism: Rigid Habits Versus the Religious
Commentator: **Kelly Booth** (Southern Illinois University)



End of Conference

Special Thanks to Our Host Institution:
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico

