on establishing a basis for political judgment of the past in communities riven by deep division about proper standards. She claims that this political judgment must be based on an “enlarged mentality” in which one “thinks in the place of everyone else” (p. 98), by imagining a common problem from various perspectives in society. This requires an effort to establish a critical historical evaluation of the previous regime, and also to persuade one’s fellow citizens to accept new common standards. Transitional justice processes strive to establish new community norms through a process of judgment in a context of deep division.

One claim that emerges from this reinterpretation is that transitional justice institutions should not depoliticize their work, as both the South African TRC and criminal tribunals have done, according to Leebaw. Depoliticization involves treating parties evenhandedly, even when one side is mired in systemic injustice. Depoliticization also involves an effort to hide or mask the political compromises that went into establishing transitional justice institutions and that limit their mandates, as for example the South African amnesty for political crimes. Leebaw argues instead that transitional justice institutions should strive to be overtly critical of the past, and to highlight their partial character.

While there is much to agree with in the author’s argument, I was only partly persuaded that Arendtian political judgment is the right approach to transitional justice. On this model, political judgment requires ongoing contestation among plural perspectives and opinions, which is good for its own sake. “Political judgments,” Leebaw writes, “are not derived from an independent, objective standard of justice” (p. 175). Instead of invoking universal standards, we ought to examine the diverse perspectives that exist in our political community, while gradually persuading others to adopt a new basis for common ground. Unlike Leebaw, however, I cannot see how all of the perspectives that exist in the aftermath of a repressive regime are to be valued. Supporters of the apartheid state have a misguided perspective, not one we should seek to preserve. Of course, we should listen to everyone’s views to see if there is some truth contained in them, but some views may ultimately need to be rejected. So how can we be sure that the right judgment of the political past will emerge out of consideration of these deeply opposed political viewpoints? Perhaps some viewpoints cannot be reconciled into a common political judgment because they are too unjust. In my view, a valid political judgment does in the end presuppose objective standards, and may not simply “bubble up” through a consideration of diverse views. Such objective standards tell us that apartheid was an unjust political system, even when many white South Africans disagree.

At times, Leebaw actually seems to employ a more objective account of political judgment than the one she explicitly endorses. She suggests, for example, that transitional

justice institutions ought to highlight exemplary cases of resistance. Regardless of the multiple perspectives available, then, she thinks that one side was clearly right and the other wrong, and that our political judgments ought to reflect this important fact. With that—and with much else that Leebaw has to say in this fascinating book—I wholeheartedly agree.

Human Rights and Memory. By Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 192p. \$59.95.

Humanitarianism and Modern Culture. By Keith Tester. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 144p. \$60.00.
doi:10.1017/S1537592711005111

— Benjamin Gregg, *University of Texas at Austin*

Debates in political theory often pivot on competing concepts and paradigms. Conceptualizations may be analytic and deductive, or instead descriptive and inductive. The difference is important, yet not because one is intrinsically superior to the other; rather, given different cognitive styles, the discursive goals of each likely differ from those of the other. In one case, the conclusion follows so urgently that it cannot possibly be false if its premises are true. One either accepts the conclusion or rejects its premises. In the other case, conclusions are supported by premises but do not follow from them in any compelling way. While less rigorous logically than the first approach, this one may be more conducive to conceptual richness, without sacrificing analytic acuity.

Keith Tester takes this latter route, as do Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. Both books pose the same urgent question: Against the gruesome backdrop of so much of history—and given the violence, poverty, and other depredations still visited upon so many people across the globe today—how might some communities attempt genuinely altruistic behavior? As each cultivates rather well-tilled ground, Tester’s answer is morally devastating, Levy and Sznaider’s reassuring. Tester uncovers self-deceptive cultural imperialism, indeed one driven by a media that systematically misinforms its frivolous audience, which uncritically consumes misinformation. Levy and Sznaider track redemptive memory: Victims of the present are “redeemed by connecting their experience to an iconographic past of human rights violations” (p. 5). Even as each book pursues the genre of thick conceptual description in ways provocative and unexpected, neither quite realizes the potential of that provocation, not because the books do not prove their assertions—that is not the method of inductive description—but rather because of vague description and weak induction in their argumentation.

Levy and Sznaider proffer a distinctly underdeveloped notion of memory. They deploy it as a kind of universal key for advancing the embrace of human rights, at least

within the West (p. 56). Beyond a single mention of bodily integrity and freedom from cruelty, they define *human rights* with the indeterminate notion of a “universalistic minimum” (p. 7). The definition can hardly do all the work they ask of it. Speaking of the European Union, for example, the authors tell us that human rights have led countries to “relinquish . . . aspects of their sovereignty to supranational bodies” (p. 122) by “challeng[ing] nation-state centered memories” with “cosmopolitan memory tropes” (p. 56). Their largest claim is that collective memories of failures to prevent human-rights abuses generally persuade people to embrace an imagined community of shared norms that transgress national boundaries. They may be right, but they do not show as much.

One also wonders: How, exactly, is this approach supposed to work? Memory shapes how history is written, they say, and features of any given version often affect the addressees’ behavior in ways correspondingly particular. They offer a long litany of descriptions of memory at work, arguing that memory-work “rais[es] the cost of committing [human rights] abuses” (p. 151). And in the decades after the Cold War, it severed the “historically contingent link between statehood and nationhood” to render human rights norms a “prerequisite for maintaining the legitimacy of a state” (p. 101). But they never quite cash out their own suggestive intimations, namely, an explanation of how memory actually does all of this, or how it produced the various Geneva and Hague Conventions (pp. 57–58), the United Nations conventions, as well as human rights norms (p. 79); how it “extend[s] forms of solidarity beyond . . . nationhood” (p. 5) to supplant the “state’s . . . monopoly on shaping collective pasts” with fragmented “memories borne by private, individual, scientific, ethnic, religious, and other mnemonic agents” (p. 12); or how it makes “global concerns become part of local experiences” through “nation-transcending idioms” that “span . . . territorial and national boundaries” (p. 6).

This wide range of putative accomplishments relies on two mechanisms of mnemonic politics. One concerns the fragmentation of memories. For example, minority groups have “ceased to be historical actors and have turned into structural generic players who have become the tokens of modern-day rights politics” (p. 68). The other mechanism involves the decontextualization of memories, “by which memories of concrete (particular) atrocities are transformed into abstract (universal) violations of humanity” (p. 14), “facilitat[ing] the abstraction of concrete historical suffering” (pp. 9–10), indeed as a “prerequisite for the spread of human rights as a universally recognized idiom” (p. 15).

For his part, Tester focuses not on human rights but on “common-sense humanitarianism”: on a “fundamental—and fundamentally—*moral* conception of the world” driven by “sensate emotional responses” of affluent Westerners “who feel an obligation to help but who can only satisfy

that obligation by facilitating the action of agencies or organizations” (p. 9; original emphasis). Altruism of this sort is “uncritically constitutive of moral individuality” (p. 9). What is more, we Westerners practice common-sense humanitarianism “because it reaffirms our moral seriousness without forcing us to ask serious moral questions” (p. 110). By *common sense*, Tester means an uncritical stance (p. 31) that perpetuates itself by blocking the formation of alternative accounts (p. 39), such as those Third World populations targeted for aid (p. 112). It is the “humanitarianism of media audiences who rely on unquestioned myths to make sense of the suffering of others” (p. 34). Information distorted by the media resonates “deeply with modern culture because it hides the cynical darkness at the heart of the metropolitan world cities with their emphasis on money” (p. 112). Tester picks out a very particular phenomenon, that of the media hyping children in the targeted region as persons to be saved who, if they can be saved, thereby redeem the saviors (p. 112). *Salvation* then means a few baby-adopting celebrities who thoughtlessly presume the moral excellence of their actions “regardless of the wishes of those who are to be helped” (p. 113).

Like Levy and Sznajder, Tester pursues inductive description. His definition of “humanitarianism” simply posits the “responsibility of the affluent of the [Western] world toward those who suffer” (p. x). One wonders: Whence this responsibility, what are its features, and to whom does it apply among nearly 1.3 billion Westerners? Tester never says. Instead, he is concerned with distinguishing between “real Africans” and the “land and the people constructed by the West through a long history of imperial intervention—mythical and naturalized categories of the modern western postimperial imaginary” (p. ix). As for the addressees of humanitarianism, Tester declines to distinguish among the one billion people across the 61 territories of Africa—communities of astounding diversity along dimensions of culture, economy, history, language, religion, and others.

The author does offer a brief glimpse of a possible crack in the wall of systematically distorted reportage and popular perceptions of celebrity-driven humanitarianism. By “acting without regard to financial values,” the American pop phenomenon Madonna “revealed the secret of the imaginary and action of common-sense humanitarianism”: She implied that media-constructed Africa “wants for more than money.” In this way, she “pull[ed] away the curtain on common-sense humanitarianism and creat[ed] the space for quite different possibilities in the dealings between the metropolitan center and the peripheries” (p. 109). This argument is something of a non sequitur; its practical implications remain oblique, and Tester can imagine no alternative to the farce he uncovers: “[F]rom within the metropolitan center of the world,” one can hardly “imagine a viable alternative to common-sense humanitarianism” that in fact saves some lives and “does

so in a way able to reproduce concern for 'Africa' over a relatively long term. The achievement is dependent upon a mythical and regressive narration of 'Africa' that denies the possibility of engagements with Africa and the Africans" (pp. 114–15).

So whereas Levy and Sznajder argue that one form of altruism succeeds, Tester suggests that another form fails. Neither effort defends its core premises persuasively. Levy and Sznajder nowhere support their claim that human rights have effectively transformed the national sovereignty of any number of nation-states today. Nor can they support their claim that "noncompliance with international human rights laws" incurs a "loss of legitimacy" (p. 91), or that the "cosmopolitanization of sovereignty is reflected not only in the high adoption rate of human rights treaties but in different (local) modes of incorporation, as evidenced by the dramatic rise in domestic war crime trials in the past two decades" (pp. 97–98). And they fail to show that the "sanctity of the nation-state is no longer absolute" and that "both individuals and (ethnic) minorities have obtained a stronger legal status under the aegis of transnational jurisdiction" (p. 42); or that "legitimate national interest itself must now be articulated through . . . human rights" (p. 43); or that the embrace of human rights has effectively "decoupled" state from nation, at least in Europe (p. 55).

As for the other book, Tester never shows why, exactly, the rather marginal phenomenon of wealthy entertainers adopting African children somehow captures the neocolonialism of the West. He cannot explain why this thin sliver of "humanitarianism" could possibly function as a synecdoche of Western humanitarianism in general—or a few African children as a synecdoche of an entire continent. Nor does he identify the standards by which he would establish the falsity of media coverage.

Just as Tester's slender empirical subject hardly supports the weight of his morally indignant theory, the amorphous empirical object of Levy and Sznajder's book ill justifies the triumphal optimism of their thesis. According to Tester, communities attempt altruistic behavior out of confused self-seeking; according to Levy and Sznajder, they do so by merely recalling horrific behavior (usually that of others). In Tester, the altruist would save him- or herself morally by "saving" others from poverty; in Levy and Sznajder, he or she would preserve prospects for a better future by recalling the past in a particular way.

Thick description and inductive reasoning articulate and illuminate the key conceptual conceit of each book, even as each forfeits a compelling analysis of humanitarianism. Levy and Sznajder might have explained how, exactly, memories of yesterday's atrocities can motivate a commitment to moral behavior today, rather than, say, motivate revenge or some other plausible response that might undercut the idea of human rights. And Tester might have shown that the putative spiritual emptiness of fabu-

lously wealthy Westerners, and the solace some of them evidently seek in the plight of fabulously unfortunate foreigners, illuminate the large and complex phenomenon of Western humanitarian practice in general.

One can imagine plausible arguments in both cases. Such arguments might have gone a long way toward working the provocative intuition of each book into empirical insights. Absent such arguments, we are left with unfounded hope in Levy and Sznajder (redemptive memory appears to be undefeatable wherever deployed) and tenuous despair in Tester (self-deceptive cultural imperialism ultimately undermining its practitioners and addressees alike). A stronger theory of other-regarding moral behavior on a cosmopolitan scale would not sacrifice analytic acuity for the conceptual richness that each book displays to advantage.

The Arc of War: Origins, Escalation, and Transformation.

By Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011. 280p. \$90.00 cloth.

\$27.00 paper.

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— Tanisha M. Fazal, *Columbia University*

The slimness of this book by Jack Levy and William Thompson belies its topic: a social scientific exploration of the history of warfare as an institution, especially as an institution of interstate relations. In their own (admittedly "immodest") words, the authors seek "to explain the origins, escalation, and transformation of warfare" (p. 1). They do so by identifying six factors—political economy, political organization, military organization, threat environment, military weaponry, and war itself—and placing them within the theoretical framework of coevolution.

The notion of coevolution requires some explanation, especially as it frames the book's central argument. Without arguing for the primacy (in terms of substantive importance or sequencing) of any of the six factors, Levy and Thompson give a series of examples showing how they influence one another to produce changes in warfare. They point to the importance of political economy and in particular, the development of sufficiently dense societies, as a precondition for the origins of war; once large groups of people became attached to specific territories, they developed military organizations and adapted existing technology for military purposes in order to defend their land and people. Later in history, a relatively benign external threat environment led to fragmented political and military organization in ancient Egypt, while a more threatening environment induced rapid improvements in military organization and technology in Ancient Greece and Rome. And warfare itself—as a kind of lagged dependent variable—is identified as a critical ingredient leading to military revolutions or accelerations, and it plays a particularly interesting role in twentieth-century Europe,