

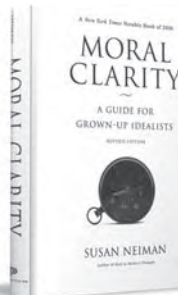
of the literary for literature students and scholars. Jones's edition under review reminds this reviewer of Auden's lines: 'The gaunt and great, the famed for conversation / Blushed in the stare of evening as they spoke / And felt their centre of volition shifted' (W H Auden, 'The Garden' in *The Quest*).

The 'gaunt and great[s]' among self-appointed literary gatekeepers may be forced to shift 'their centre of volition' to literature since Jones's work performs the *act* of literature so urgently needed. That is, only if the gaunt academic greats take the trouble to deeply read Jones's edition of *An Essay on Man* within their busy seminar-schedules. For Pope's *An Essay on Man* sees into the heart of dystopias:

But still this world (so fitted for the knave)  
 Contents us not. A better shall we have?  
 A kingdom of the just then let it be:  
 But first consider how those just agree.  
 The good must merit God's peculiar care:  
 But who, but God, can tell us who they are?  
 One thinks on Calvin Heaven's own spirit fell;  
 Another deems him instrument of hell;  
 If Calvin feel Heaven's blessing, or its rod.  
 This cries there is, and that, there is no God.  
 What shocks one part will edify the rest,  
 Nor with one system can they all be blest.  
 The very best will variously incline,  
 And what rewards your virtue, punish mine.  
 Whatever is, is right. This world, 'tis true,  
 Was made for Cæsar—but for Titus too:  
 And which more blest? who chained his  
 country, say,  
 Or he whose virtue sighed to lose a day? (84–5)

Pope, as is seen from the quotation, indeed rereads the Bible, the Reformation, *vide* Calvin above, and closes Early Modernism. What began in pre-Talmudic times ends with the Enlightenment within the Western history of ideas. This world 'so fitted for the knave' will march into a 'retreating world' prophesied by Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) in his poem *Strange Meeting* (1918) if one ignores Jones's scholarship, Pope's satires, and especially, his *An Essay on Man*.

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**Moral Clarity:  
 A Guide For  
 Grown-Up Idealists**

Susan Neiman

Princeton University Press: 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540-5237, USA. [www.press.princeton.edu](http://www.press.princeton.edu). 2009. \$37.50. 480 pp. PB. ISBN 9780691143897.

Kant argued that happiness isn't a matter of wishful thinking, but a matter of reason's rights. Many Enlightenment thinkers held Christianity responsible for systematically decreasing our expectations of happiness, but Socrates wasn't much better. Kant saw that the problem was older than Christian asceticism; it goes as deep as metaphysics ever does. Because we long to believe that, appearances to the contrary, the world is the way that it should be, we use one or another trick to fool ourselves that it is. A disconnect between happiness and virtue? Just an illusion, said many Greek and Roman philosophers. When you look closer, they turn out not only in harmony, but identical. Epicureans thought virtue was happiness. Kant thought both views were attempts to escape the double pain of disconnection: We are neither as good nor as happy as we ought to be (174).

In the face of insurmountable evil in the form of the Shoah (For an understanding of Shoah, see Shmuel Trigano, *The Democratic Ideal and the Shoah: The Unthought in Political Modernity* (New York: State University of New York, 2009)), Susan Neiman asserts the need for clear thinking about what Aristotle termed 'eudaimonia'. (For an understanding of 'eudaimonia', see Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986), 334–5). Neiman is not the first philosopher trying to search for meaning qua happiness in life; this search for happiness has been the concern of thinkers in the last century as well as in this century.

It is strange that Neiman has been seen mostly in relationship with Hannah Arendt (1906–75).

For instance, Bernard G Prusak is incorrect in reading both Neiman and Arendt, while he reads Neiman on Arendt in his essay 'Arendt and the "Banality" of Evil: A Note on Neiman' (See <<https://expositions.journals.villanova.edu/article/view/87>> accessed 01 September 2017). What Prusak fails to understand is that Arendt was a brilliant structuralist while Neiman is a brilliant phenomenologist and is the most receptive reader of Arendt today. Like Prusak, many have failed to see the genius of Neiman since she, as Prusak points out in his derogatory essay, chooses to put Arendt forward in her works. The humility inherent in Neiman's work misguides many. A parallel can be drawn between John Milton (1608–74) and Alexander Pope (1688–1744). A cursory reading of Pope, who is read extensively by Neiman in her book under review here—for instance, see the index entry on Pope in page 466 of this book—makes one feel that Pope is lashing out at Milton; but deeper contemplation of Pope shows that he is aware and respectful of the contribution of John Milton to the cause of freedom and rebellion in a world choking under the pressures of Puritan excesses in the England of Milton's times. We will return to Neiman's phenomenological antecedents in a moment.

Neiman excels at abstract thinking in contrast to Arendt, which quality is not to be found in any other neo-Kantian writing today. We will have the chance to assess why it is important to see Neiman as a theologian, even though in her entire corpus she never sees herself as a theologian. In fact, in the book under review she is sceptical of God-talk and sees herself as an heir to the European Enlightenment, which was the first sustained attack on God in Europe; during the European Renaissance religious discourses were scrutinised and not God per se.

In this book she repeatedly stresses the uselessness of seeking certainties in life, in seeing the world in black and white, thereby shifting from Kant's stress on the categorical imperatives to a more phenomenological understanding of our zeitgeist. Yet as will be shown, she is in the continuum of thinkers beginning with Edith Stein (1891–1942) in the last century to Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926) and Johann Baptist Metz (b. 1928) on the one hand and

to Eleanor Maccoby (b. 1917), Janet Taylor Spence (1923–2015), and Elizabeth Loftus (b. 1944) on the other hand. The interaction of Maccoby, Spence, and Loftus with the thought of Neiman is beyond the scope of this review. Later we will passingly show the need for Loftus's work in understanding Neiman. It is not hard to see her relationship to Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995), Eliezer Wiesel (1928–2016), Victor Frankl (1905–97), and Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947), and recently to another neo-Kantian, Bettina Stangneth (b. 1966).

Nussbaum is not concerned per se with theodicy as Neiman is, but she rereads Aristotle. Bettina Stangneth is more in the line of Hannah Arendt. The difference between Neiman on the one hand and Arendt and Stangneth is best proven through analogy: while the former is a pure mathematician, the latter two are applied mathematicians, as it were. The present book, in a very Husserlian sense, problematises morality and critiques Kant's imperatives in a comprehensible language. While Husserl is often indecipherable; Neiman is eminently readable without being reductionist.

In this book and elsewhere, Neiman is the true heir to a very specific domain within psychology and philosophy; the problem, or the lack, of empathy. Lack of empathy and what we can do about it is what the book under review is all about. This is because moral clarity is well-nigh impossible in a world where genocides are the norm and the Hitler-event has enacted a total amnesia on thinkers post-Shoah. It is interesting to note that many survivors of the Shoah became psychoanalysts and thus tried to reconstruct their experiences in the concentration camps (See H M Reijzer, *A Dangerous Legacy: Judaism and the Psychoanalytic Movement* (London: Karnac, 2011)).

Neiman too tries to see evil or the lack of innocence in this book but like all others before and after her, she is rendered speechless by Hitler, she does not speak of the Shoah explicitly: 'Rousseau is quite clear: the savage may be noble, but he isn't yet free. Rousseau's vision of happiness was not of a man who turned his back on civilization, but one who longed to improve it. ... Perhaps there was a sort of garden, Kant said, where humankind had wanted for nothing, and had no knowledge of evil. But if each of us had lost in leaving that state,

the species as a whole has gained. However you may yearn for the womb's shelter, you don't really want to return to it. The loss of innocence was the price of reason, and the Enlightenment had no doubt that reason was worth it' (179).

Notice that Neiman is using textual registers that clearly demand a more nuanced reading of this text than has been done so far. She suffers an anxiety, to speak in classical psychoanalytic terms, with her past; and resists the need for the safety of the womb. Therefore, we can safely say that she like Hans Jonas (1903–93) is involved in a struggle with the symbolic past: a past which she has inherited and thus memory studies come into the forefront, vide Sigmund Freud and Elizabeth Lof-tus, a past which is so horrific that she has to speak up for reason; yet always struggling to articulate the need for uncertainty throughout this book. For instance, she quotes John Dewey in page 216 of this book to prove her point that there is little value in our infantile craving for absolutes.

The European Enlightenment that is eventually the precursor to structuralism and modernism is so important to Neiman precisely because she wants to scrutinise the Shoah and understand the psyches of those who calmly carried on the pogroms of the Jews. There is no true poststructuralist object of critical enquiry; in fact structuralist movements too within the humanities and the social sciences are just long shadows of the Enlightenment. This is the psychoanalytic resistance/rejection to/of a return to the womb effected by genocide studies' scholars globally. Neiman resists the urge to stereotype unlike Daniel Goldhagen (b. 1959), who thinks all Germans are demonic or that Hitler and his cronies were demons.

When people face evil in its purest form, they naturally try to explain it. This effort to understand evil makes Neiman a theologian since only a theologian speaks of theodicy and evil. Therefore, Neiman's connection to Edith Stein is easy to understand. We have to see Neiman not merely as she sees herself: an heir to Hannah Arendt; a liberal moral philosopher who is schooled in John Rawls (1921–2002), and critiques social injustice through her readings of Immanuel Kant. The term moral philosopher comes up repeatedly when we search her on the Internet. In fact, in her

persistence in reading the Bible and repeatedly mentioning God, she is in the line of the great theologians of our day and before us. She may be an avowed neo-Kantian, but in the final analysis she is of the school of Moltmann, Metz, and even Gustavo Gutiérrez (b. 1928). It may be unfair to see her work within a continuum of Christian thinkers but in her engagement with suffering in this book and throughout her corpus, we see that she is informed by hesed, unlike Julia Kristeva whom this reviewer has also reviewed in this issue of this journal.

Also keeping in mind that Hitler and his conspicuous attendant lords were mostly men and contemptuous of women, it is startling that those systematically unmasking the Nazi-event are now mostly women. Neiman is therefore to be seen alongside Janet Taylor Spence and Eleanor Mac-coby. The book under review is therapeutic in so far as good philosophising is not very different from good talk-therapy. This reviewer is sceptical of any attempt to call Neiman only a moral philosopher. This reviewer has steered clear of all that is to be found on Neiman even in the dark web. Reading online makes Neiman out to be an anxiety-ridden marginal Jew and a philosopher who is too bothered with the Shoah, yet someone who is critical of our collective obsession with Hitler. But reading this book as against surfing online is an eye-opener: her work is just too complex to be slotted into meaningless categories.

Neiman's corpus resists what is known as commodity-fetish and leads us from the anxiety-ridden restless economy of the Pharaoh to the restful economy of the God of the Shema (See Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014)). Brueggemann (b. 1933) has articulated this restless economy of the Pharaoh in his corpus. Susan Neiman's book under review and her entire corpus is an effort to resist the Pharaoh's life negating economy. Neiman's intellect leads us to Yahweh's peace or *Sabbath/Shabbat/shavat*. It is refreshing to find her successfully resisting the cultural logic of late capitalism and reinstating the truths of Stein and Jonas mentioned above. The neo-Nazis at Charlottesville would do well to study Neiman.

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