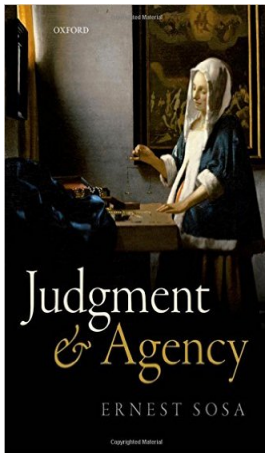


BOOK REVIEWS: Ernest Sosa, *Judgement & Agency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 224 p.; Jean Godefroy Bidima, Victorien Lavou Zoungbo (eds.). *Réalités et représentations de la violence en postcolonies*. Perpignan : Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2015, 399p.



Ernest Sosa, *Judgement & Agency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 224 p. ISBN 978019871969-4

Maximiliano Korstanje, University of Palermo, Argentina

Senior philosopher Ernest Sosa, who does not need previous presentation, brings to us in this occasion a new valuable book, *Judgement and Agency*, where he explores not only the account of human knowledge, but also its intersection with ethics. Starting from the premise that action, perception and knowledge correspond with manifestations of competence, he adds, individual performance should be framed as intentionally aimed to accomplish a set of preexisting (imagined) goals. This feature differentiates humans from animals.

As this backdrop, Sosa's project is formed in fourth independent parts, which are finely-ingrained to inquiry how knowledge is produced and negotiated by agency. The first and second introductory chapters

review the theory of Davidson and Grice, alerting not always judge is apt since it may very well derive from randomness. Any action as well as the performance of subjects produce effects in daily life which escape to what they planned, while prefixed goals may be involuntarily achieved. Then, Sosa questions the role played by causality which is enrooted in rationality, through modern epistemology (deviant causation), when he writes,

*“the problem is posed by deviant causation, wayward causation that give rise to counter-examples, whether the analysis targets action, perception or knowledge. Time after time, a kind of luck or mere coincidence derive from deviant character of the causation, incompatibility with appropriate success and relevantly creditable perception, action or knowledge (p 14).*

Of course, Sosa understands that the cognitive perception involves a teleological goal, which is established by a much deeper cultural system, where sometimes the full-fledged intentions of subjects are ignored. At some extent, current epistemologists and the specialized literature misunderstand the real roots of knowledge. In this respect, Sosa cites some examples that validate the idea that two types of knowledges coexist, *judgmental and functional*. While the former is based on an individual or collective affirmation which is aimed at undermining dissonance, the latter escapes to human desire. It is interesting to discuss the core of this book, which consists in discussing to what extent, we can give credibility to an event thinking it represents the only truth, while in other occasions, we need to doubt from truth even when we are sited on it. Since performing with full aptness asks for knowing what one is accomplishing, such a knowledge used to guide performance should be considered apt. However, not all acts that sounds apt, philosophically speaking, come from perception. This is the main dilemma, produced in modern epistemology, Sosa intends to unpuzzle.

The part II contains chapters 3-4-5 where author develops a theory of competence, which means the notion of fully apt performance. This theory of competence, as it was formulated by Sosa, aptness sometimes goes beyond human will, in which case, we have to distinguish *apt belief from fully apt belief*. The Part III, formed by 6-7-8-9 chapters dissect the

roots of human knowledge discerning the type of knowledge in means-and-end actions from the Aristotelian conceptualization of virtue. Part IV, gives an explanation of Pyrrhonian epistemology discussing matters already touched in the books as the human credibility, reliability, agency, aptness and action. Sosa holds the thesis that not only knowledge but action are co-determined by factors that sometimes eludes causality and reasonability. The concatenation of events, as well as our belief on our possibilities to interpret them, does depend on interpretation.

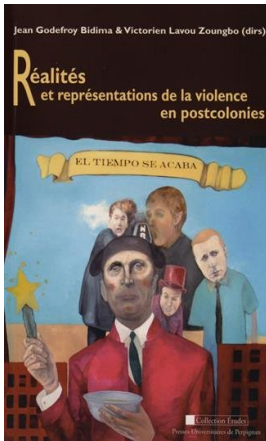
As one of the supporters of Virtue Epistemology, which is a philosophical platform that focuses on the significance of intellectual virtues where the interpretation of events are not given by properties of event, but rather they depend on the internal virtues of persons. This is the reason behind, Sosa confirms that each person develops a proper structure of ethic. This reviewed book represents a recent attempt to improve his argument in view of all criticism he received over recent years (an apt belief associates to what is true because competent, in which case virtue epistemology cannot be dissociated from the meaning of competence.

Undoubtedly, Sosa's development inscribes in what David Harvey (1989) dubbed "postmodernism", which exhibits an state of knowledge fragmentation, which was originally caused by the decentralization of capitalist economies after 70s decade. If this state of decentralization remains unregulated, the concept of reality as an unique and immutable entity broke into thousands of pieces, each one adjusted to peoples' perception. It is important not to lose the sight if the cultural project of Enlightenment offered all-encompassing models of reality, the world of Sosa operates from an allegory to individualism, but trying to construct a new interesting bridge with the lost world of Enlightenment. His obsession to return Aristotle's legacy reminds us the importance to understand action within virtue. In this vein, professor Geoffrey Skoll (2014) discussed to what extent the epistemology of social sciences (in capitalist societies) rest on the needs of producing a third object (dialectics) to explain things otherwise would not be digested. This type of "fetishism" which allows the center to mark but in the same action be unmarked, paves the pathways for the exception of law, which very well is conducive to human exploitation. Since the explanation (justification)

of our acts always lies outside of our mind, the responsibilities of elite are endorsed to workforce, which legitimate such an state of exploitation (Korstanje 2015). In this vein, I feel Ernest Sosa`s book not only offers a valid, smart, and pertinent argument about the possibilities to use the epistemology of Ancient World to overcome the ethics dilemma posed by postmodernism (without falling in pragmatism) but also defies the hegemony of psychologism and instrumentalism that are ideologically monopolized by status quo.

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Jean Godefroy Bidima, Victorien Lavou Zoungbo (eds.). *Réalités et représentations de la violence en postcolonies*. Perpignan : Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2015, 399p.

Alexandra Acatrinei, Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi, Romania / Paris-Est Creteil University, France

*Réalités et représentations de la violence en postcolonies* [Realities and representations of violence in the postcolonies], edited by Jean Godefroy Bidima, a Professor at Tulane Univeristy and Victorien Lavou Zoungbo, Professor at the Perpignan University, was published in 2015 by the Perpignan University Press. The volume includes 20 articles thematically

grouped in three parts, or “moments”, to quote the authors: “Written violence, represented violence”, “Cunning and practices of political violence” and “Violence: between ethics and justices”. The Introduction qualifies the book as a quest, in the sense that Herodote gave to the term, that is “a sort of palimpsest that, on the one hand, shows the reality of violence only to suggest its representation, and on the other hand conveys the reality of violence that is to be found beyond any representation” (p. 18). The articles highlight variations of violence in the postcolonies, from Africa to Canada, to Germany, the USA or Latin America, and the different contributions are written in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese.

In the Introduction, Jean Godefroy Bidima and Victorien Lavou Zoungbo assimilate violence to absurdity and injustice, also claiming that it sometimes bursts out of lack of modesty. The editors dare name what the articles in the volume only suggest, that is the link between infatuation and bestiality, which annihilate reason and give birth to violence.

The structure of the volume is a very balanced one. The first part includes six articles which analyze violence in writing and in its representations. Natali Leduc shows, in a study on a novel by Réjean Ducharme, *La fille de Christophe Colomb*, that divagation is a form of violence, as it transgresses the norm and disturbs the order established by the powers seeking to exercise control. In an article on the history of the Mapuche communities, Andrés Ménard signals the opposition between the culture of this people, defined as a space of orality and harmony, prior to conflict and negotiation, and the violence-propagating writing, associated to a space of conflict, which is exterior and foreign to the community.

Ute Fendler finds in Madagascan writer Jean Luc Raharimanana’s work the theme of colonial history and of violence, which are always liked together. The history of colonization in Madagascar, and implicitly the Relationship between colonizer and the colonized implies a violence that the writer translates on the plan of discourse as a fragmented narration. Marlène Marty analyses the modalities in which the Africans’ belonging to the social and cultural structures of Costa Rica is reduced to

“a question of figures” (p. 75). The fact that the Black is reduced to pure statistics enables the author to talk about an inscription of violence.

Zulma Palermo studies the constitution of a national literature in Argentina, revisiting the key moments of the history of the nation, and focusing on the impact played by Western political and epistemic models. Diane Sabatier talks about a novel by the American authors, Sergio Troncoso, *The Snake*, which highlights the “bicultural violence and the fears that come out of it” (p. 106). Tuyi, the main character, positioned at the border between the USA and Mexico, finds it hard to come to terms with his own identity; the novel focuses on the ways in which violence influences history in writing in the Chicanos family.

The second part of the volume examines the cunning and practices of political violence in eight articles, that include case studies from Argentina, the Democratic Congo, Haiti or Brasil. Sylvie Suréda-Cagliani presents three decades of history in Argentina, starting with the 1960s, under the dictatorship of general Juan Carlos Onganía, until the beginning of the 1980s, when the military dictatorship of general Rafael Videla ended. The author also examines forms of violence during the 1976-1983 period, called PRN or «Proceso de Reorganización Nacional». Mylène Botbol-Baum studies the case of the so called witch-children on the streets of Kinshasa, ill children, victims of exclusion due to a meta-narration – the rumor of witchcraft – which is meant to make for the incapacity to translate the Sida virus and its consequences into a conveyable language. The author asks whether the narrative capacity (Michel Foucault) can help resist violence of exclusion and acquire capabilities (Amartya Sen) of being an actor of one’s own norms. The article of Laura Hengehold analyses how, during recent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, sexual violence was used as a war strategy, rape being associated both to physical repression and to symbolic manipulation. Alain Pascal Kaly proposes an analysis of the situation in Brazil, where the multiple forms of violence are disturbing: violence of the representation the media, monetary violence which mixes up poverty, prostitution and ignorance, urban violence of the social marginals and of interracial confrontations.

The third and last part of the book offers a different perspective on violence, that it examines through ethics and justice. Michela Fusaschi studies the semantic field that conveys the genocide memory in Rwanda, in order to understand the implications of identity constructions. The new term *jenocide*, adapted to the phonetics of the Bantou language, conveys both the local dimension (*itsembaùbwòko*) and the global one (genocide). Emmanuelle Danblon insists on the rhetoric and the rituality of the traditional African speech, which can be irenic – out of conflict – or agonistic – assuming the conflicts that society must confront in order to reach peace. The author opposes the African speech to the Western one, based on the negation of intuition and of emotions, and privileging reason. Suzanne Crosta focuses on the work of Congolese novelist Emmanuel Dongala, and she analyses the ambiguities of compassion, leading to a redefinition of identity.

Jean-Yves Paraiso denounces the privileged relation that Catholic Church had with dictatorships in Germany, from 1933 to 1945, and in Argentina, between 1976 and 1983. The author explains this fact by the integralist Catholicism, that irrigated the two Churches and lead dictatorships and Religious authorities in the two countries share perspectives on themes such as morals, sexual moral, relationships between sexes or perspectives on the family. Victorien Lavou Zoungbo analyses filmic violence in post-revolutionary Mexico. Focusing on the film « La Zona », he insists on the discordances in the country, and especially on the cleavage between the wealthy middle class, the « have », and the rest of Mexico - the « have-not », those that were neglected by the « desarrollista » politics. Jean Godefroy Bidima examines the issue of the exploitation of attention, which modifies the ways of social reinsertion of individuation. The violence defining the solicitations and exigencies of specialization asks the postcolonial Subject to sell not only his or her work capacity, but also his or her « attention capital ».

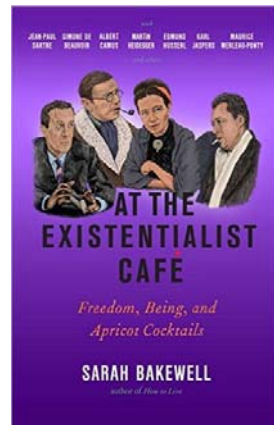
Jean Godefroy Bidima and Victorien Lavou Zoungbo reassert, in their Conclusion, the importance of the violence in the postcolonial territories, as violence is inherent to the colonial principle, that is to any form of occupation of a country, be it geographical, political, economic

or psychological. The volume names and denounces the transformations and disguises of violence in the postcolonies, and the authors suggest different directions of this phenomenon. We are talking here about the implementation of a repairing justice, which recognizes errors and reintegrates both the torturer and the victim within the community, but also about taking very seriously the conditions where an emancipating techno-science can emerge, and finally about a politics of the imagination based on different registers of belief in the postcolonies.

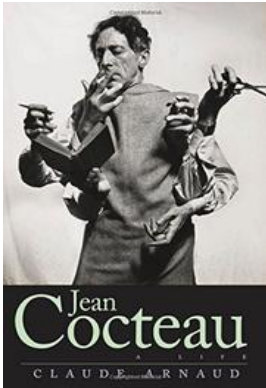
## BOOK PRESENTATIONS

Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Others*, Other Press, 2016, 448 p. ISBN 978-1590514887

Sarah Bakewell studied philosophy at the University of Essex and teaches creative writing at City University, London, and for the Open University. *At the Existentialist Café* combines the exhilaration of initial discovery with the more considered evaluations of a mature thinker. The result is a warm and challenging work of intellectual history that retains something of existentialism's glamor without ever sacrificing its vigorous interrogation. It also re-centers existentialism as a viable method of philosophically engaging with contemporaneity. Featuring not only philosophers, but also playwrights, anthropologists, convicts, and revolutionaries, *At the Existentialist Café* follows the existentialists' story, from the first rebellious spark through the Second World War, to its role in postwar liberation movements.







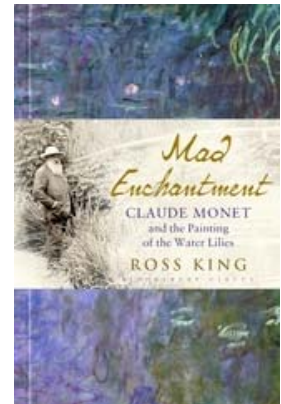
Claude Arnaud, *Jean Cocteau: A Life*, translated by Lauren Elkin, Charlotte Mandell, Yale University Press, 2016, 1024 p. ISBN 978-0300170573

Claude Arnaud is a writer and recipient of the 2006 Prix Femina Essai. In this overstuffed life of the writer, artist, and filmmaker, he does much, for example, to correct the emphasis on Cocteau as eccentric artist that comes “to the detriment of the creator.” Focusing closely on Cocteau’s works, Arnaud ventures that he was often at his best as a collaborator, whether encouraging Marcel Proust during the long years of his writing *Recherche*, even if Proust may have thought of him as “a piece of furniture,” or concocting strange experiments with Pablo Picasso. In the end, Arnaud provides a portrait of a committed, seasoned artist who was, in Ezra Pound’s phrase, a vortex of energy, constantly at work, writing “on invitations, record jackets, cigarette boxes, theater programs, book covers.” As a matter of fact, concludes Arnaud, “we haven’t yet finished with Cocteau.”

Ross King, *Mad Enchantment: Claude Monet and the Painting of the Water Lilies*, Boomsbury, 2016, 416 p. ISBN 978-1-63286-012-5

Ross King is the author of the bestselling *Brunelleschi's Dome* and *Michelangelo & the Pope's Ceiling*. Claude Monet's water lily paintings are among the most iconic and beloved works of art of the past century. Yet these entrancing images were created at a time of terrible private turmoil and sadness for the artist. The dramatic history behind these paintings is little known; Ross King's *Mad Enchantment* tells the full story for the first time and, in the

process, presents a compelling and original portrait of one of our most popular and cherished artists. Drawing on letters and memoirs and focusing on this remarkable period in the artist's life, *Mad Enchantment* gives an intimate portrayal of Claude Monet in all his tumultuous complexity, and firmly places his water lily paintings among the greatest achievements in the history of art.

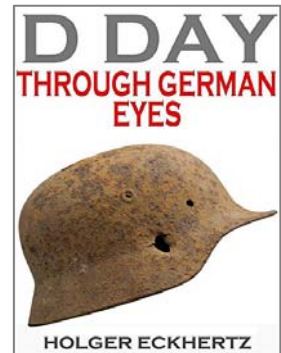




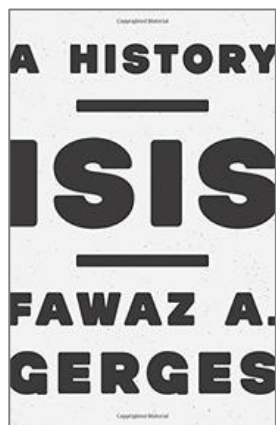
Keith Houston, *The Book : A Cover-to-Cover Exploration of the Most Powerful Object of Our Time*, Norton, 2016, 416 p. ISBN 978-0-393-24479-3

Keith Houston, who has written a history of punctuation (*Shady Characters: The Secret Life of Punctuation, Symbols, and Other Typographical Marks*, 2013), returns with a text that is erudite, playful, and illuminating. Accompanied by many useful illustrations, the text approaches the subject in several ways: the author recounts the history of the writing surfaces and implements humanity has used (from papyrus to paper, reed to keyboard), rehearses the evolution of illustrations in texts (from illuminated manuscripts to our contemporary mass-produced pages), and describes the advance from the scroll to the codex. In each of these major sections, Houston is appealing both to general readers and to bibliophiles who will wish to know the specifics of making papyrus, of stitching together pages, and of learning how we arrived at today's paper sizes.

Holger Eckhertz, *D Day Through German Eyes – The Hidden Soty of June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944*, DTZ History Publications, Kindle Edition 2015, 142 p. ASIN B00VX372UE



Almost all accounts of D Day are told from the Allied perspective, with the emphasis on how German resistance was overcome on June 6th 1944. But what was it like to be a German soldier in the bunkers and gun emplacements of the Normandy coast, facing the onslaught of the mightiest seaborne invasion in history? What motivated the German defenders, what were their thought processes - and how did they fight from one strong point to another, among the dunes and fields, on that first cataclysmic day? What were their experiences on facing the tanks, the flamethrowers and the devastating air superiority of the Allies? This book sheds fascinating light on these questions, bringing together statements made by German survivors after the war, when time had allowed them to reflect on their state of mind, their actions and their choices of June 6th.

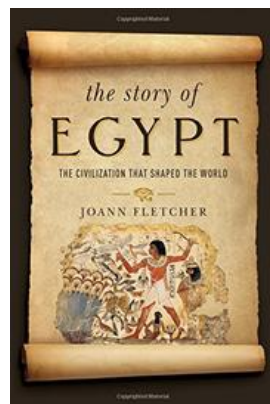


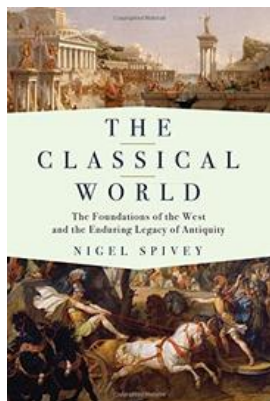
Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, Princeton University Press, 2016, 296 p. ISBN 978-0-691-17000-8

The Middle East scholar Fawaz A. Gerges (International Relations/London School of Economics and Political Science) wrote a rigorous synthesis of what is actually known about the jihadi terror group. He shows how The Islamic State emerged strong from the shattered democratic ideals of the Arab Spring and, before that, the devastating sectarian violence that resulted from the American invasion of Iraq. Though the Islamic State perversely took credit for the unleashing of popular discontent during the Arab Spring, Gerges points to the power grab resulting from the “grand collusion” between Arab autocrats and their patrons to maintain the status quo, concluding that the ideological-driven terror organization will eventually self-destruct because it cannot supply the civil state and institutions of freedom and social justice that the Arab people desperately want and need.

Joann Fletcher, *The Story of Egypt: The Civilization That Shaped the World*, Pegasus Books, 2016, 496 p. ISBN 978-1-68177-134-2

From the earliest creation myths of the sun god—the great “He-She”—the Egyptian universe brought together two halves of a complete whole: “female and male, mother and father, sister and brother, daughter and son.” As such, insists British Egyptologist at the University of York and prolific author Joann Fletcher, “the modern tendency to focus on the masculine can only ever see half the story.” The author emphasizes this idea as she traces Egyptian history from the earliest cattle herders and hunters of the river valleys 30,000 years ago to the zenith of wealth and influence under the rule of Amenhotep III of Thebes to the annexation of Egypt by Rome and death of Cleopatra VII in 30 B.C.E., pointing out to different modes of burial customs, flax production, writing, and more.



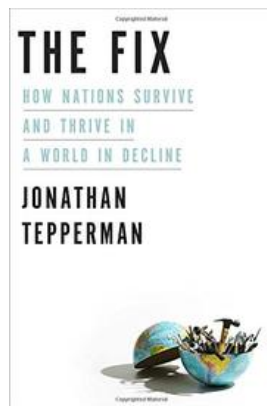


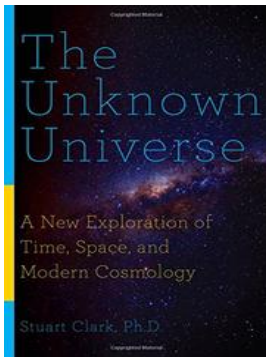
Nigel Spivey, *The Classical World: The Foundations of the West and the Enduring Legacy of Antiquity*, Pegasus Books, 2016, 368 p. ISBN 978-1-68177-151-9

Nigel Spivey is Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at Cambridge. This book is a masterly investigation into the Classical roots of Western civilization, taking the reader on an illuminating journey from Troy, Athens, and Sparta to Utopia, Alexandria, and Rome. It is an authoritative and accessible study of the foundations, development, and enduring legacy of the cultures of Greece and Rome. Starting with Troy, where history, myth and cosmology fuse to form the origins of Classical civilization, Nigel Spivey explores the contrasting politics of Athens and Sparta, the diffusion of classical ideals across the Mediterranean world, Classical science and philosophy, the eastward export of Greek culture with the conquests of Alexander the Great, the power and spread of the Roman imperium, and the long Byzantine twilight of Antiquity.

Jonathan Tepperman, *The Fix: How Nations Survive and Thrive in a World in Decline*, Tim Duggan, 2016, 320 p. ISBN: ISBN 978-1-101-90298-1

*Foreign Affairs* managing editor Tepperman offers a stirring account of the achievements of risk-taking political leaders. Based on more than 100 interviews and the author's deep understanding of international affairs, this welcome book makes "a data-driven case for optimism at a moment of gathering darkness" by exploring how leaders in nations from Brazil and Canada to South Korea and Indonesia have successfully tackled major world problems, including inequality, immigration, corruption, civil war, Islamic extremism, and others. While recognizing the unique aspects of each nation's experience, Tepperman finds lessons that can serve as templates elsewhere.



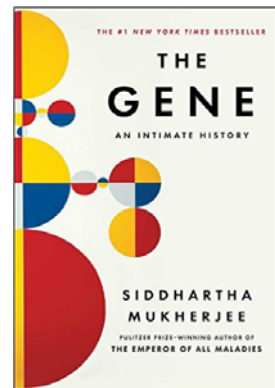


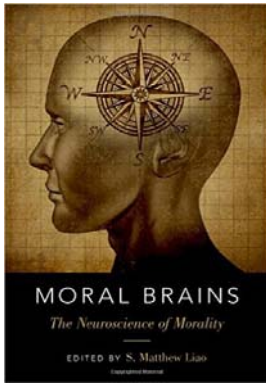
Stuart Clark, *The Unknown Universe : A New Exploration of Time, Space and Modern Cosmology*, Pegasus Books, 2016, 288 p. ISBN 978-1681771533

Stuart Clark, Ph.D. in astrophysics, is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. In this new book on the universe, the author brings the subject up to 2015 with the obligatory new discovery combined with a fine history of cosmology, and he makes it clear that our knowledge and ignorance seem to be expanding in parallel. The Planck satellite has revealed subtle irregularities that can't be explained and, unless the instruments are at fault, "the Planck data showed 'cosmology is not finished.'" Clark begins his history in the 17th century with Kepler, Halley, and Newton, ending in the unsettling 21st, where the universe explained so brilliantly by Einstein has revealed features that he didn't explain, namely concerning this "unknown" univers, which is to be taken literally, because 95 percent of it is invisible, detectable only because its energy and gravity influence movements of the 5 percent we see.

Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene: An Intimate History*, Scribner, 2016, 608 p. ISBN 978-1476733500

Siddhartha Mukherjee was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Emperor of All Maladies*, a "biography" of cancer. Here, he follows up with a biography of the gene, a book which is as informative, wise, and well-written as that first book. Mukherjee opens with a survey of how the gene first came to be conceptualized and understood, taking us through the thoughts of Aristotle, Darwin, Mendel, Thomas Morgan, and others; he finishes the section with a look at the case of Carrie Buck, who eventually was sterilized in 1927 in a famous American eugenics case. Through the rest of *The Gene*, Mukherjee clearly and skillfully illustrates how the science has grown so much more advanced and complicated since the 1920s and how the ethical questions have also grown much more complicated.





S. Matthew Liao (ed.), *Moral Brains: The Neuroscience of Morality*, Oxford University Press, 2016, 384 p. ISBN 978-0199357673

S. Matthew Liao is Director and Associate Professor of the Center for Bioethics, and Affiliated Professor in the Department of Philosophy at New York University. This volume features the most up-to-date research in this area, and it presents a wide variety of perspectives on this topic. In the last fifteen years, there has been significant interest in studying the brain structures involved in moral judgments using novel techniques from neuroscience such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This has led to a flurry of scientific and philosophical activities, resulting in the rapid growth of the new field of moral neuroscience. There is now a vast array of ongoing scientific research devoted towards understanding the neural correlates of moral judgments, accompanied by a large philosophical literature aimed at interpreting and examining the methodology and the results of this research.

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