

Judith Shklar on the Problem of Political Motivation

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The political thought of Judith Shklar is often invoked by contemporary theorists of realism in support of their arguments. This article contends, however, that realist discussion of Shklar has overlooked a concern central to her thought—the worry that individuals are often unwilling to reevaluate their views on the questions of political life. Shklar’s theoretical concern with this ‘problem of political motivation’ will be demonstrated by examining the evolution of her views on the relationship between utopia and hope, showing how this evolution maps on to her view of the affective conditions necessary to motivation. The article proceeds to show that Shklar seeks to address this problem directly, aiming to shape the psychology of her readers through her prose, and that in this she takes inspiration from her reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Evaluation of Shklar’s reflections on the purposes of political theory reveals her concern with the problem of political motivation to be a vital aspect of her conception of the discipline. This problem, I suggest, is one which should be taken into consideration by contemporary theorists of realism if they are to produce theories which fully adhere to the realistic moral psychology they endorse.

Keywords: Judith Shklar; realism; political motivation; psychology; prose; Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

I. Introduction

The work of Judith N. Shklar (1928-1992) is often discussed with respect to the subject of realism in political theory.¹ This is unsurprising given that her ‘liberalism of fear’, for which she is best known, starts from the premise that the first concern of politics should be to avoid the *summum malum* of cruelty and the fear this creates.² Indeed, Shklar frequently expresses her concern with the relation between political theory and the realities of political life, stating that it is the worst fault of theory ‘to talk in a vacuum [...], to heap words upon words that have no bearing on anything or anyone who has ever lived and spoken in the actual world.’³ She is referenced frequently in contemporary scholarship on realism, much of it following the influential example of Bernard Williams, who cites Shklar’s liberalism of fear favourably in

his discussion of the distinction between the listener and the audience of political philosophy.⁴ To take a more recent example, Katharina Kaufmann also argues that Shklar's liberalism of fear can be harnessed to respond to realist aims in a way which avoids a particular defect of both realist and non-ideal theory: namely that neither provides an independent normative standard which can be used to critique political arrangements. On her account, the liberalism of fear provides such an independent normative standard whilst retaining a critical stance toward ideal theory.⁵

My concern in this paper is that this scholarship has neglected a persistent concern of Shklar's which has important implications for realist political thought. It is the contention of this paper that Shklar demonstrates a pervasive worry with what I call 'the problem of political motivation'—the problem that individuals are often unwilling to consider reevaluating their existing views on the questions of political life. While Shklar herself does not use this label, I argue that it expresses a problem which she not only explores theoretically, but also seeks to address through her prose, where she aims to encourage individuals to engage their capacity for independent judgement despite the psychological discomfort that comes with uncertainty and change. Such use of independent judgement is contrasted to the easy answers offered by unthinking adherence to grand ideologies or utopian schemes. The unwillingness of individuals to reevaluate their existing views is for Shklar a basic fact of human psychology. Yet the problem of political motivation which follows from this—motivation in the context of thought, prior to action—is overlooked by contemporary theorists of realism even though many of these theorists, like Shklar, emphasise the importance of proceeding from the basis of a realistic moral psychology.⁶ I want to suggest that accounts of a political theory which start from a psychologically realistic vision of human beings remain incomplete when they do not follow Shklar in addressing the

problem of political motivation, and that if realists want individuals to think differently about politics, they must address the motivational barriers to doing so in the first instance.

With respect to the broader scholarship on Shklar, this paper builds on work emphasising the centrality of psychology as well as literature examining her writing style. Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess contend that '[i]n many ways, Shklar's entire work can be understood as a search for [...] a modern political psychology',⁷ but her concern with the impact of her own writing on the psychology of her readers has gone largely unacknowledged. The argument below contends that Shklar's concern with the problem of political motivation helps to shape her prose, linking to arguments such as that of James Brown and Thomas Osborne, who claim that *Ordinary Vices* has a 'political-rhetorical' dimension and should be read as a kind of literature rather than just a series of arguments. Indeed, Brown and Osborne contend that Shklar's book 'performs what it is arguing' in the way that it reads literature, and hence serves her argument about the tensions and ambiguities bound up in the private self and public life.⁸ Brown and Osborne's chapter concerns Shklar's prose and argument in *Ordinary Vices* but does not consider the problem of political motivation. Nevertheless, in the way that it considers Shklar's prose as instantiating her argument, the analysis I offer below is somewhat analogous to it. In the same volume as the above essay, Tracy B. Strong argues that the construction of Shklar's prose, in particular her use of literature, forces the reader to 'acknowledge' (though not necessarily accept) her conclusions and be honest in the face of them.⁹ While Strong's essay focuses on Shklar's engagement with literary texts, the recognition that Shklar seeks to impact her readers through her prose is something which features in my argument below.

Considering both theoretical content and prose, this paper seeks to uncover the problem of political motivation as a central feature of Shklar's thought and to illustrate the nuances and layers of her engagement with it. I will first demonstrate Shklar's theoretical

concern with this problem by examining the evolution of her views on the relationship between utopia and hope, showing how this evolution maps on to her view of the affective conditions required for political motivation. I go on to argue that this problem shapes Shklar's prose in some of her works, through which she attempts to address this motivational concern by directly impacting the psychology of her readers. Following this, the next section links Shklar's prose to her engagement with Rousseau, suggesting that he is an important source of inspiration both for her theoretical concern with the problem of political motivation, and for the crafting of her prose with this in mind. I turn then to Shklar's broader reflections on the tasks of political theory, and to her teaching, with the aim of demonstrating that the problem of political motivation is central to her conception of political theory and its tasks. I conclude with the contention that uncovering Shklar's concern with the problem of political motivation ought to prompt realist political theorists to consider motivation in the context of thought, not just action, and that they might reflect more on the way their arguments are presented.

II. The affective conditions for motivation

In her first book, *After Utopia* (which was based on her PhD dissertation and published in 1957), Shklar argues that with the end of the Enlightenment came the end of radical philosophy, since radical philosophy requires utopianism and the latter had been lost along with the Enlightenment. More specifically, she contends that a baseless 'utopian faith'—'the belief that people can control and improve themselves and, collectively, their social environment'—is necessary for the construction of political theory.¹⁰ Shklar did not think of *After Utopia* as a book primarily about utopia, noting that the title of the work was produced by her editors:¹¹ it was not conceived as an intervention in 1950s debates on anti-utopianism which saw thinkers such as Karl Popper and Leo Strauss claiming a necessary link between

utopianism and totalitarianism.¹² Nevertheless, *After Utopia* embarks on a survey of romanticism and Christian fatalism as well as contemporary liberalism and socialism in order to demonstrate that none of these contain the utopianism necessary to overturn fatalism and generate radical political theory. In her later essay ‘What Is the Use of Utopia?’, she states that in *After Utopia*, she ‘proved to my own satisfaction that with the end of utopia, by which I meant the end of hope for a better future, we had run out of political ideas as well.’¹³ She thus identifies hope, an affective state which accompanies utopianism, as a necessary condition for political motivation which is currently lacking. At this point, in 1957, despair is hence the most pressing impediment to generating political theory.

Shklar’s views on this, however, and hence also her views on the relationship between utopia and hope, shift over the course of her career. Although the later Shklar still considers despair to be a problem, she comes to think that excessive hope is the affective state which poses the more serious challenge to motivation. Shklar describes how after publishing *Legalism* (1964), which involved thinking through the Nazi era, she felt ready to move on to other subjects.¹⁴ This focus on the Nazi era may have been influenced by her own background—as ‘essentially German Jews’, her family had to flee their home in Latvia when Shklar was a child, and she attributes her taking up of political theory to a desire to ‘make sense of the experiences of the twentieth century.’¹⁵ Moving away from this initial historical focus may have contributed to Shklar’s change of view on the problem presented by despair, since Nazi atrocities had led some to view any kind of utopian politics as fantasy.¹⁶ More to the point, intellectual developments after 1957 such as the publication of John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* (1971) had demonstrated that there were alternatives to both fatalism and utopianism.¹⁷ Shklar describes Rawls’s theory as a ‘normative model’, a form of political theory which is both critical and reformist, demonstrating the potential of existing forms of government. In so doing, normative theory for Shklar is future-directed to some extent, since

it posits a horizon of possibility which is not currently in existence, but does so in a manner oriented toward the actual state of affairs. This is as opposed to the utopian model, which builds from the ground up and does not consider present realities.¹⁸ Shklar stresses that ‘the idea of a best form of government as a norm is not only not utopian but perfectly compatible with a very critical view of utopian theory.’¹⁹ By the 1980s, then, she thinks that political theory ‘d[oes] *not* depend entirely on the survival of future-oriented ideologies’, and that there are alternative ways of pursuing it.²⁰

Still, while she no longer regards utopian thinking as necessary, Shklar nonetheless retains the conviction that hope is required for political theory. Hope does not have to be identified exclusively with the transformative mode of change implied by utopia.²¹ Instead, Shklar now identifies utopia with an *excess* of hope and criticises nineteenth-century utopian communities and novels on this basis.²² The moderate hope associated with normative political theory is considered sufficient. The content of the liberalism of fear, developed later in her career, supports the view that Shklar came to view excessive hope as more of a problem than despair. The focus on cruelty in this theory acts as a means of quashing excessive hope, continuously reiterating the flaws of human beings and the consequent limits of aspiration for a better future. This is epitomised by Shklar’s description of her liberalism of fear as belonging to ‘a party of memory rather than a party of hope’.²³ Contrary to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s original characterisation, her conception of liberalism is one in which hope is counterbalanced by the memory of past cruelties. Cruelty is the basis of the liberalism of fear not just because it is an evil, but also because it is inescapable— governments of all types are overwhelmingly likely to engage in cruel acts, and awareness of this fact should shape our political thinking.²⁴ This is not a hope-inducing basis for a political theory, and Shklar’s use of it indicates that she was more worried about excessive hope than about despair.

So it is excessive hope which is a problem for Shklar because it can result only in political action which is at best ineffectual, and at worst in danger of perpetuating cruelty by advocating for overambitious goals and ignoring or legitimating cruelty inflicted in the pursuit of these goals. In addition (and related) to utopianism, Shklar identifies excessive hope with ideology. Ideology in this context refers to ‘grand’ ideology in its ‘historicist, all-explaining form’.²⁵ She does use ‘ideology’ elsewhere to refer simply to ‘political preferences’, and the expression of ideology in this latter sense is taken to be both inevitable and not necessarily pernicious.²⁶ Regardless, the grand ideologies which Shklar considers to be a problem are identified, along with utopianism, with political fanaticism. These interrelated entities are collectively associated with excessive hope because they all aim at transformation.²⁷ Shklar describes political fanaticism as ‘the greatest of all modern social vices’,²⁸ a condemnation which might well be extended to the excessive hope with which it is associated. Ideology ‘serves as an excuse for every kind of political cruelty’ because it enables its adherents to abandon their own judgement when identifying victims and victimisers in any given situation, ridding them of the doubt and uncertainty which are otherwise pervasive in the making of these decisions.²⁹ Thus the affective state of excessive hope is such a serious problem because of its propensity to deprive individuals from exercising their capacity for judgement. While this worry does represent a shift in Shklar’s thought, it should be noted that her conviction in favour of moderate hope is implicit in *After Utopia* in that she does not advocate here for a full return to utopianism, instead suggesting that only a small quantity is required.³⁰ She does however change her view on which affective state poses the greater challenge, and this causes the shift in her views on the necessity—or otherwise, as it turns out—of utopianism for political motivation.

Some commentators have claimed that Shklar condemns utopia wholesale, but her identification of utopia with excessive hope does not lead to this conclusion. Mathias Thaler

asserts that Shklar ‘delivered one of the most vociferous indictments against utopianism in the twentieth century’.³¹ As Forrester contends, however, Shklar is not anti-utopian;³² in 1989 she describes her liberalism of fear as ‘nonutopian’, not anti-utopian.³³ Furthermore, in ‘The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia’ (1965), she argues that ‘classicism’ restrains our political imagination and produces political theory which bears no relation to social experiences.³⁴ Classicism for Shklar is a nostalgic longing for the past, particularly classical antiquity, which produces a melancholy contrast between the idealised past and the comparatively inferior present. She views classicism as present particularly in pre-French Revolution utopian texts, as opposed to utopias written after this point, which she views as overly optimistic in a way which renders them useless.³⁵ In this way, Shklar’s advocacy for a political theory which better expresses the reality of our experiences is placed in opposition to the outdated premises of classicism rather than utopianism as such. Shklar’s attitude toward utopia did however align to some extent with those of other Cold War liberals, notably Isaiah Berlin, who argued that as ‘guides to conduct’, utopias ‘can prove literally fatal.’³⁶ Nevertheless, she did not see utopianism as necessarily ending in totalitarianism as did some of her contemporaries,³⁷ and in fact condemns this abuse of utopia as making positive political thought impossible.³⁸

III. Shaping psychology through prose

Shklar’s writings on utopia and hope, largely directed toward her fellow political theorists, demonstrate that the question of the affective motivation necessary to the exercise of individual judgment is for her a substantive theoretical issue. This concern, moreover, is instantiated in some of her prose. One means by which Shklar seeks to impact the psychology of her readers is through literature, with the sheer volume of literary references in many of

her works indicating her conviction of the importance of literature to political theory. In her study of Montesquieu, she assesses the psychological impact of his novel *Persian Letters*—this literary work shows, for Shklar, ‘how the visitors are gradually transformed by the experience of an alien way of life. The French reader is jolted into seeing himself as he appears to a Persian’.³⁹ Montesquieu’s prose here is taken to be successful in making people see themselves differently, something which Shklar also aims to achieve. In her teaching, as well, the sources for her series of lectures on political obligation include Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot alongside more standard figures such as Hobbes, Locke, and Hume.⁴⁰ The resources of political theory are therefore not limited to works explicating abstract theoretical arguments in a systematic manner, and Shklar’s treatment and selection of these sources suggest that this is the case at least partly because she views them as a means of gaining psychological traction with readers. In *Ordinary Vices* (1984), Shklar uses literary sources and other methods to instantiate her concern with political motivation in her prose, seeking to shape the motivation of a broader readership (the citizens of liberal democracies⁴¹) in more subtle ways than through persuasive theoretical argument alone.

This book is where Shklar’s awareness of her mode of writing as a vehicle for directly addressing her readers’ psychology is most apparent. While the explication of her arguments is nowhere especially systematic, in *Ordinary Vices* Shklar takes this further, adopting a style in which abstract theoretical argumentation takes a backseat to explorations of the vices through history, literature, and personal anecdotes. (So much so that even sympathetic reviewers such as Annette Baier have criticised *Ordinary Vices* on the basis that it lacks systematic theoretical arguments.)⁴² With reference to history, incarnations of the vices in different historical periods are invoked for the sake of better comprehending their modern forms through comparison. For instance, Shklar claims that ‘to understand current thinking about both treason and subversion, it helps to remember other mentalities’, and goes on to

elucidate a range of historical examples to demonstrate that in the modern context subversion has become a more significant form of betrayal than treason.⁴³ Devices such as these are utilised in her other works but are primarily illustrations for arguments made theoretically. In *Ordinary Vices*, however, Shklar states explicitly that many of the stories she uses are not meant to be merely illustrative. Rather than supporting a persuasive argument, they are intended ‘to force us to acknowledge what we already know imperfectly’.⁴⁴ In relation to cruelty in particular, Shklar argues that it is only literature which can ‘bring home’ what she describes as this ‘ultimate political irrationality of ruling and being ruled’.⁴⁵ Here, literature is deemed able to bring individuals to an appreciation of something which, being irrational, they cannot fully comprehend through logical reasoning alone. In *The Faces of Injustice*, she remarks that general statements are unlikely to impact upon what she calls the ‘cognitive responses’ of readers, but that stories about individuals and ‘sensational example[s]’ are more likely to incite responses.⁴⁶ This suggests that the particularly extensive use of stories from literature and history in *Ordinary Vices* is directed towards eliciting the kind of responses which have the potential to jolt readers into willingness to change their thought processes.

The prose of *Ordinary Vices* works simultaneously on two levels: the theoretical level and the affective one. First, Shklar seeks to persuade the reader through theoretical arguments that cruelty should be put first—that is, thought of as the worst vice. Putting cruelty first would allow political systems to avoid the worst of what human beings are capable of and help to cultivate the least harmful—or even, in some cases, constructive—forms of the ‘ordinary vices’ which Shklar identifies. Shklar does contend in the final chapter that the preceding chapters ‘are not held together moving on to a destined goal.’⁴⁷ They are rather, as she discusses in the Introduction, explorations of the forms of the vices if cruelty is put first.⁴⁸ Regardless, the benefits of putting cruelty first emerge throughout the book, and when the

additional context of her 'Liberalism of Fear' essay is taken into account, we can take *Ordinary Vices* to be offering a theoretical argument of some sort for this position.

The second level on which the prose of *Ordinary Vices* acts is its attempt to place the reader in the affective state which Shklar considers to be necessary to a willingness to respond to the theoretical arguments she elucidates. This state is one where readers are unsettled, denied the comfort of sheltering from reality either through excessive hope or through despair, and thereby willing to change how they think. In fact, Shklar identifies the unseating of both despair and optimism (conditions of psychological shelter) as motivating her own 'intellectual action'.⁴⁹ In relation to *Ordinary Vices* specifically, she describes it retrospectively as 'an effort to worry rather than soothe'.⁵⁰ Indeed, this intention is not limited to *Ordinary Vices*, though it is perhaps most evident here; in a lecture given as she was revising *The Faces of Injustice*, she states that she means this too to be unsettling,⁵¹ and comments in the book itself that her inquiry is 'bound to create puzzles rather than to solve them.'⁵²

The second level on which Shklar's prose operates in *Ordinary Vices* works partly through presenting examples of how types of the ordinary vices may appear in everyday life. For example, Shklar gives a personal anecdote to demonstrate involuntary snobbery:

I remember telling a woman whom I had just met that our new house was a "big barn."
No sooner had I said it than I realized that she would have loved to be able to live on that street and in that house and that my manners, though only too natural, must have seemed to her mocking and mean.⁵³

By way of anecdotes such as this, to which the reader is intended to be able to relate, Shklar confronts the reader through her prose, making them uncomfortable through implicating them in the vices she demonstrates. This confrontation is not, however, intended to reduce the

reader to despair due to over-critical assessments of their own character. By emphasising how these vices are *ordinary*, the reader is reassured that their faults are shared with others, thereby limiting the extent of self-criticism. Shklar emphasises, for example, how the ordinary vices ‘are the sort of conduct we all expect’,⁵⁴ part of everyday life, not the actions of individuals who don’t live up to some minimum moral standard which most are able to reach. She describes how her intention is to ‘review critically the judgments we *ordinarily* make and the possibilities we *usually* see’ in order to ‘make our conversations and convictions about our society more complete and coherent’, not to contribute to a purely academic debate.⁵⁵ Shklar also includes herself in her explication of the vices, both through the use of personal anecdotes and more generally in her language, consistently using the first person to discuss the shared vices. In this way, she seeks both to prevent the reader from giving in to excessive hope by reminding them of their vices *and* to reassure them by stressing the commonplace nature of these vices. She hopes to strike this balance in an attempt to place her readers in the affective state which she considers most conducive to making them willing to think for themselves.

The way Shklar seeks to do this, especially in *Ordinary Vices*, is shaped strongly by her admiration for Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne is the acknowledged ‘hero’ of *Ordinary Vices* because Shklar thinks with him in putting cruelty first and exploring what follows from this.⁵⁶ She also acknowledges her substantial debt to Montesquieu in this respect, often treating him in tandem with Montaigne as expounding a liberalism conditioned by a hatred of cruelty.⁵⁷ Beyond cruelty, however, and further than Montesquieu, Montaigne is also the hero of the book in the sense that Shklar takes great inspiration from his prose. Shklar’s use of stories ‘in the hope that they could carry messages to the reader and then suggest some more’ is taken from Montaigne.⁵⁸ Further, the form of the book as a whole can also be attributed at least partly to her admiration for Montaigne, since she states in her later autobiographical

reflections that he ‘increasingly has become my model as the true essayist, the master of the experimental style that weaves in and out of the subject rather than hitting the reader over the head.’⁵⁹ Indeed, the form and content of *Ordinary Vices* are intertwined—since the aim is to illuminate moral complexity, imposing an illusory coherence on her subject matter through analysing concepts or evaluating particular models in a systematic manner would be counterproductive.⁶⁰ It is the form she takes from Montaigne, for Mark Hulling, that accounts for her ‘uncanny ability to shake us into thinking for ourselves’.⁶¹

Some have however disputed Shklar’s success in fulfilling her intentions in this respect. Andrew Sabl notes that *Ordinary Vices* ‘assumes an ideal reader who snacks on libraries, and seems content to leave all actual readers panting to catch up.’⁶² In fact, Shklar states explicitly that she assumes a readership with a shared ‘fund of historical and literary memories’,⁶³ not accounting for the fact many may have limited familiarity with this ‘fund’. This suggests the basis of a critique— if her prose is inaccessible to readers, it is unlikely to have the desired psychological effect. This is further emphasised by Sabl’s observation that the ‘extraordinary erudition’ of *Ordinary Vices* ‘ignores the forms of storytelling most likely to form contemporary characters: it cites no movies, no TV shows.’⁶⁴ In this respect, it may be the case that despite not being written in as academic a register as some of her other works, *Ordinary Vices* is still too erudite to connect with Shklar’s broad intended audience, and she therefore fails to achieve her intended psychological impact.⁶⁵

IV. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the inducement of uncertainty

Regardless of her success or otherwise in impacting the psychology of her readers, Shklar’s conviction of the importance of attempting to do so is shaped by her reading of Rousseau, whom she considers to be exceptionally successful in the task of unsettling the reader. While

the importance of Montesquieu and Montaigne to Shklar is well-documented, Rousseau's importance is less frequently commented upon.⁶⁶

Shklar describes herself as 'mesmerized' by Rousseau, a fascination with the thinker which began as an undergraduate.⁶⁷ Shklar's Rousseau is the last of the 'classical utopists', the pre-French Revolution utopian theorists who are distinguished from later utopian thinkers by the fact that they offer criticism of society without suggesting a programme for change.⁶⁸ He is, for Shklar, concerned with the internal psychological unity of individuals, which he champions as key to their happiness but views as ultimately unrealisable. To demonstrate this, Rousseau presents two different utopias: Sparta and the Golden Age. In Sparta, individuals achieve psychological unity as citizens because they are comprehensively subjected to the military purposes of the Spartan state. The Golden Age, on the other hand, is the utopia of the quiet village, where individuals achieve psychological unity as men because they live in almost isolated family units and are not troubled by the need for a public identity.⁶⁹ In both utopias, social arrangements are structured in order to inhibit the development of *amour-propre*, the quality which leads to psychological disunity. Shklar's Rousseau, however, thinks that although these utopias can be imagined, they are unachievable.⁷⁰ This is the tragedy of man's condition—although psychological unity is imaginable, the individual self will always be divided in reality. Rousseau's purpose in showcasing this impossibility, on Shklar's account, is to bring his readers to an awareness of their situation. Awareness is deemed to be an improvement on ignorance, even if one is incapable of doing anything about it.⁷¹

While there are substantive aspects of Rousseau's political thought which Shklar takes up, for example suggesting a modified form of his proposal of continuous deliberation on the rules of justice as a helpful tool in dealing with injustice,⁷² Shklar's greatest debt to him is with respect to what she views as his attempt to impact the psychology of his readers through his prose. In *Men & Citizens*, Shklar notes that the use of language in the ancient world (in

poetry, drama, and rhetoric) ‘all spoke not to dry reason and calculation, but to the primary emotions. That is what is meant, no doubt, when Rousseau spoke of the Legislator’s ability to “persuade without convincing”, and of his acting directly upon the will.’⁷³ This use of language is something, moreover, which Shklar views Rousseau as attempting to emulate, and she herself follows him in this intention. To clarify, however, it should be recognised that it is not precisely the Legislator’s ability to ‘act[...] directly upon the will’ which Shklar looks to emulate.⁷⁴ Rather than acting on the will directly, Shklar is concerned with forming a psychological context in which the will might be induced to move. The Rousseau quote is taken from the *Social Contract*, wherein it is the task of the Legislator to educate citizens so that their particular wills are voluntarily subordinated to the general will of the community.⁷⁵ Only in the context of the existence of the general will is the Legislator able to act directly on the will of individuals. Shklar’s admiration of Rousseau’s Legislator, then, should be taken to be admiration of his appeal to the ‘primary emotions’, not of his direct persuasive power over the will. Indeed, elsewhere she states that ‘[o]ther philosophers write [...] in measured sentences, and they often do persuade us of their case. But they do not shake us, as Rousseau does, with his epic prose.’⁷⁶

Shklar values Rousseau so highly because, on her reading, he has the ability to ‘disturb the unconcerned’.⁷⁷ She credits his rhetorical skill as responsible for his ability ‘to awaken, to shake, to alter the vision and inner dispositions of so many generations of readers.’⁷⁸ In fact, she notes that Rousseau has had this impact on her, describing his thought as ‘alien’ to the liberal mentality and yet crediting him with conferring ‘a political imagination and a second education.’⁷⁹ By rhetoric, Shklar refers to a form of prose which aims to persuade not solely through ratiocination. The effective use of metaphors and personifications is something which Shklar considers to be essential for the rhetorician,⁸⁰ and she regards Rousseau’s use of these as central to his success. In particular, she argues that

Rousseau utilises familiar metaphors and personifications but gives them new meanings, and that this serves as a shortcut to display his ‘utter contempt for prevailing political opinion’.⁸¹ For example, one way in which he uses the metaphor of the body politic, according to Shklar, is to portray government as the source of the diseases and ultimately the death of the body politic, through the magistrates overriding the general will. This is as opposed to the traditional use of the metaphor to legitimate governmental authority.⁸² Shklar’s praise for Rousseau’s rhetoric, in a non-pejorative sense, as being responsible for his success in unsettling his readers perhaps indicates that the admiration of Rousseau is one of the factors which informed Shklar’s attempt to shape the psychology of her readers through her prose.⁸³

V. The tasks of political theory

While Shklar writes variously about encouraging people to think for themselves, to judge for themselves, or to see themselves and their world differently, the common denominator between these is that the *will* is deemed their indispensable precursor. Although she seeks to persuade her readers of numerous different specific arguments across her writings, and has correspondingly varying types of readers in mind, moving the will is a concern pertinent to them all. At the root of Shklar’s views on the tasks of political theory is her conception of human psychology. She identifies as a ‘discouraging’ psychological problem the unwillingness of people to change their beliefs when confronted with new information.⁸⁴ Thus Shklar thinks that it is simply unrealistic to expect individuals to change how they think on the sole basis of persuasive rational arguments. It is necessary also to place them in a psychological state which makes them willing to reassess their prevailing views and exercise their capacity for independent judgment. The necessary psychological state is one of uncertainty and discomfort, negating the complacency encouraged by settled affective states

like despair or excessive hope. One important reason why individuals are often reluctant to think or judge for themselves is that people find comfort in believing what they want to be true, or what they already believe⁸⁵—it is less disconcerting to cling on to our existing views, even where these have been proven misguided, than it is to undergo the discomforting process of reconfiguring our ideas. Addressing this psychological problem—the problem of political motivation—is for Shklar an essential task for any political theory which seeks to change how people think about themselves, and about politics.

Although she avoids programmatic recommendations relating to methodology, Shklar's scattered reflections on the discipline of political theory, when taken in the context of the above analysis of specific aspects of her work, indicate that this problem is something with which she is deeply concerned. Shklar contends that 'the most obvious task of political theory has always been the elucidation of common experience', which consists of 'the re-examination of inherited ideas, their adaptation, and even their utter rejection.'⁸⁶ This implies that political theory must try to make individuals willing to think for themselves, which for Shklar is part of facing reality. It entails choosing to reject 'the mental luxury of certainty' which comes with the uncritical adoption of particular theories, ideologies, or doctrines.⁸⁷ The 'false comfort' of these cognitive short-cuts only serve to hide 'the facts of moral life.'⁸⁸ Upending these comforts is for Shklar necessary to avoiding cruelty, as we saw above in her claim that excessive hope serves to make cruelty more likely. This task, however, is also an end in itself because she regards comfort as a form of 'self-deception'—the good philosopher (Rousseau, for instance) seeks to 'rob us of our illusions' so that we might be made aware of our deceptions.⁸⁹

Shklar's rejection of psychological comfort is evident in the marked absence of positive political prescription in her work. Rather than offer prescription, her work is taken by Jonathan Allen as an example of what he terms 'negative morality'. One aspect of this

negative morality is that as a ‘sensibility’, it affects the manner in which moral doctrines are held, qualifying them and ‘preventing them from turning into frozen ideologies.’⁹⁰ Thus in *Ordinary Vices* Shklar explicitly denies any prescriptive intent, stating that she ‘cannot think why any readers of this book would ask for my advice’ on either political policy or individual conduct.⁹¹ Even in her ‘Liberalism of Fear’ essay, which is often cited as the work containing the most positive prescriptive content, it is not easy to draw out substantive recommendations from her argument—while she describes the liberalism of fear as a ‘guide to political practices’, the furthest she goes towards prescription as to the form of government it would require, for example, is that it should be limited and democratic.⁹² Of course, placing the avoidance of cruelty and fear at the heart of politics is a positive prescription, but it is not programmatic. Her distaste for prescription can also be seen in her attitude towards feminism, which is briefly discussed in ‘A Life of Learning’. Although she describes problems she experienced as the only woman in the Harvard Department of Government and expresses concern about discrimination against women more generally, she describes herself as ‘not a real feminist’. She explains that she has an aversion to ‘making an ideological issue of my own career difficulties’, and, moreover, that ‘[t]he idea of joining a movement and submitting to a collective belief system strikes me as a failure of intellectual values.’⁹³ The use of the word ‘submitting’ is telling here—Shklar considers the adherence to ideology as involving the subjugation of one’s individual capacity for judgment. Invoking this capacity for judgment is what political theory, as opposed to ideology, should do.

In *Legalism*, Shklar explicitly denies producing positive doctrines which are intended to be strictly adhered to, stating that ‘[i]f there are proposals as well as criticisms here, neither are meant to be dogmatic.’⁹⁴ In fact, elsewhere she issues a warning against the generation of political theory which is intended as ‘a guide to political action’, stating that this has ‘a history that should be carefully reviewed before one calls for its revival’ (she previously

describes Enlightenment political theory as adhering to this model).⁹⁵ Shklar contends of those who seek prescription in political theory that this ‘expresses only the inner needs of those who find the doubting spirit and the tentative mode intolerable.’⁹⁶ The implication is that discomfort with uncertainty is an affective defect which ought to be overcome, not something which should be indulged. In this respect, the sceptic is psychologically well-placed, likely to tolerate uncertainty because of a critical attitude toward beliefs and doctrines.⁹⁷ As Shklar writes in ‘Learning without Knowing’: ‘The psychological perils of didactic uncertainty and of unsteady knowing are real enough, but one does not need to be superhuman to accept them.’⁹⁸ In fact, to induce this uncertainty is how political theory must proceed in the face of complacency, because only then can individuals be motivated to think for themselves. Hence the absence of substantive prescription from Shklar’s political theory is an indicator of her concern with encouraging individuals to use their own judgment and become willing to potentially change their minds.

Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess’s use of the term ‘maieutics’ with respect to Shklar’s work is helpful in bringing out how she approached her engagement with her readers in this respect. Hess cites Mark Greif’s account of maieutic discourse as ‘insistent and forceful questioning’ which ‘help[s] to say what must be addressed and talked about, [...] regardless of its ability to solve or determine the inquiry.’⁹⁹ Hess argues that Shklar employs this form of discourse in her writings on the themes of exile, obligation, and loyalty, and that in doing so she ‘call[s] for a paradigm shift’ in how we think about these subjects, ‘even if that entails no guaranteed prospect of immediate improvement or a “call to arms” or some form of radical action.’¹⁰⁰ Ashenden and Hess highlight further how Shklar conducts her discussions of totalitarianism and justice using maieutics.¹⁰¹ The term ‘maieutic discourse’ does not fully capture the idea that Shklar’s attempt to provoke her readers into a willingness to change how they thought is a response to what she identifies as the problem of political

motivation. In addition, its mode, of ‘insistent and forceful questioning’, does not capture the full breadth of how Shklar seeks to impact her readers’ affective states, as discussed above. It does, however, align with the manner in which Shklar constructs her prose. Moreover, in its emphasis on exploring questions with the intention of shaping the terms in which they are discussed rather than seeking to come to definite conclusions, and in the lack of focus on immediate action, the language of maieutics is useful in describing Shklar’s work, in particular her attempt to foreclose prescriptive takeaways from her writing.

Ashenden and Hess identify teaching as a key medium through which Shklar practised maieutics,¹⁰² and thinking about this aspect of her work brings new insights to the question of how she seeks to impact readers through her prose. Shklar views her written works of political theory as an indirect form of teaching and does not recognise writing and teaching as competing or even separable occupations.¹⁰³ Indeed, she was equally well-regarded at Harvard for her (direct) teaching as for her writing. Stanley Hoffmann, who was taught by Shklar, describes her teaching as ‘a kind of academic tough love, which incited its recipients to stand on their own feet and to know their own minds.’¹⁰⁴ This indicates a continuity between her intentions in her written work and in her teaching with respect to encouraging readers or students to utilise their own capacity for thought. In her lectures on political obligation, which were given at Harvard in 1992 shortly before her death, Shklar presents students with her interpretations of classics in literature and political theory, but frequently exhorts them to disagree with her if they so wish. In her lecture on *Antigone*, for example, she states that since there are a multitude of scholarly interpretations of the play, ‘[y]ou should therefore feel perfectly free to make up your own mind.’¹⁰⁵ Similarly in her lecture on Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, she encourages her students to ‘interpret it differently’, reassuring them that they ‘may find [themselves] in good company’.¹⁰⁶ Shklar’s intention to disturb the psychological ease of her readers through her prose is closely related to her

encouragement of students to disagree with her interpretive decisions, since both are directed to the end of making individuals think for themselves.

Shklar's teaching (in direct or indirect form) did not aim principally at 'results' in the sense of actions taken or minds changed in a specific direction. As John Dunn argues, her teaching did not aim to impart 'a series of detachable and standardizable conclusions',¹⁰⁷ since this would render unnecessary the exercise of individual judgment. For her, '[t]he only reason to teach political theory is the conviction that a complete person must be able to think intelligently about government'.¹⁰⁸ Although she does not expand on what she means by 'complete' people, this implies that motivating individuals to think for themselves is an end in itself. Even with regard to this aim, moreover, Shklar seems to have low expectations as to her potential impact: in her lecture on Crito, she comments that '[m]ost philosophers, however offensive their doctrines, are just ignored.'¹⁰⁹

Insofar as Shklar thought of teaching and writing as two sides of the same coin, her writing, though intended for a different audience to her teaching, might be thought of as sharing the intentionality of her teaching. Therefore, Shklar's exhortations in her lectures on political obligation that students should think for themselves might be thought of as extending to the readers of her written work. Dunn contends in support of this that although '[n]one of her books is really a didactic exercise [...] they are all intended to teach', describing her political theory as 'an exercise in teaching'. This teaching, moreover, was centrally concerned with training the 'judgment and sensibility' of her readers (and students).¹¹⁰ Good teaching, for Shklar, like good writing in political theory, did not comprise of persuading others to follow one's own maxims or doctrines. Rather, the only way in which one can 'rise above banality' in the study of political theory is 'to learn to think one's way through the works of the great writers on the subject and to learn to argue with them.'¹¹¹ Good teaching is that which both motivates and guides students in this endeavour.

Concurrent with her exhortation for students to ‘learn to argue’ with great thinkers, Shklar in several places refers to political theory as entailing discussion, with it being ‘just another name’ for ‘public discourse’.¹¹² As implied, this is discourse not only between scholars, but between texts and their readers. For example, Shklar takes Plato’s *Republic* to be a classic work of political theory, so when she claims that the text ‘invites one to rigorous reasoning, [...] not to passive credulity’,¹¹³ we might infer that the dialogue between text and reader that this implies is something she considers to be a paradigmatic feature of the discipline. Moreover, Shklar states frankly in her lecture ‘Obligation, Loyalty, Exile’ that she is ‘not good at conclusions’, and that, in fact, ‘[t]he desire to arrive at them strikes me [...] as slightly childish’, unfit for ‘a type of discourse that is unending.’¹¹⁴ Thus political theory is not about imparting particular propositions for the reader to be persuaded of. Rather, Shklar considers political theory to be a work of ‘illumination through discussion’, where discussion is a process requiring the re-examination of existing ideas, and hence independent thought.¹¹⁵

VI. Conclusion

As we have seen, Shklar’s worry about the excessive hope of utopianism and the grand ideologies is that it prevents individuals from being willing to think or judge for themselves. Her attempt to unsettle her readers through her prose in *Ordinary Vices* is directed to the end of putting them in the psychological state which she deems necessary to a willingness to reconsider one’s existing way of thinking, inspired by what she sees as Rousseau’s attempts to do the same. Shklar’s reflections on political theory suggest that, although she doesn’t name it as such or discuss it systematically (perhaps because she thinks that doing so might hinder her efforts to motivate her readers), addressing the problem of political motivation is conceived as one of the central tasks of the discipline.

Realists do often consider motivation in their accounts of politics as part of the recognition that actors do not always act in accordance with reasoned principles and that self-interest and emotions play a significant role in determining action.¹¹⁶ The question of motivation in the context of thought, however, which this paper's reading of Shklar highlights, is not given the same consideration.¹¹⁷ If realist scholars wish to theorise according to a thoroughly realistic moral psychology, as per their stated intentions, then the problem of political motivation ought to be the subject of consideration. To put this in terms set out by Bernard Williams, a crucial reference point for many realists: For Williams, Shklar's liberalism of fear is unusual—and laudable—because it deals in universals of politics, and hence has more listeners than audience members. That is, the group of people 'to whose particular attention the text will, if properly understood, be best taken to be directed' is more numerous than the group of people who are actually expected to read the text, and Shklar achieves this without displacing politics. Rather, her liberalism of fear 'address[es] its listeners in the presence of their politics.'¹¹⁸ We might argue that Shklar's success in this respect is not only due to the content of the liberalism of fear but should also be attributed to the attention she pays to whether and how these listeners might be brought to a willingness to change how they think. Her worry about the problem of political motivation is part of accounting fully for the presence of politics. If this is indeed the case, then realist scholars who hope to address as many listeners as Shklar without displacing politics should perhaps, like her, think carefully about the problem of political motivation.

Furthermore, this paper highlights the importance of considering the mode of presentation of political theory. Shklar argues that 'what is said cannot be separated from how it is expressed', and thus '[a]ll political theorists must, amongst other things, be competent rhetoricians.'¹¹⁹ While many scholars of realism invoke Shklar, they have not followed her in this stylistic concern. As this paper has shown, however, for Shklar these stylistic

considerations are not an afterthought, but are integral to the tasks of political theory. Theoretical argumentation alone has its limits as a persuasive mode—Shklar’s concern with the impact of her prose on her readers indicates that more subtle means may at times be more effective. If we share Shklar’s worry about how to get individuals to change how they think, then this issue ought to be given greater attention. In fact, the implications for analytic political theory are potentially disquieting, since most work in the academy deals with narrow topics in highly specialised prose which is unlikely to unsettle readers as Shklar considers to be necessary.¹²⁰ It may be that not all political theory seeks to induce individuals to think differently in the same manner in which Shklar’s work does. Or perhaps a division of labour is appropriate, either within political theory or between political theory and other disciplines such as literature and history, so that not all political theorists must be continuously concerned with the problem of motivation. But in any case, scholars who seek to persuade their readers might do well to consider Shklar’s concern with the problem of political motivation and how she seeks to address it.

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Declaration of interest statement

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Footnotes

¹ As will become obvious, when this paper discusses ‘realism’, it refers to the methodological debate in contemporary political theory, not to the realist approach to the study of international relations. Shklar did occasionally discuss realism in international relations, for example in Judith N. Shklar, *Legalism: Law, Morals, and Political Trials* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 123-6. For discussion of Shklar and realism in this context, see: Kamila Stullerova, ‘Cruelty and International Relations’, in *Between Utopia and Realism: The Political Thought of Judith N. Shklar*, eds. Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 67-85.

² Judith N. Shklar, ‘The Liberalism of Fear’, in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 29.

³ Judith N. Shklar, ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four: Should Political Theory Care?’, in *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Stanley Hoffmann (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 341.

⁴ Bernard Williams, ‘The Liberalism of Fear’, in *In The Beginning Was the Deed*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 52-61.

⁵ Katharina Kaufmann, ‘Conflict in Political Liberalism: Judith Shklar’s Liberalism of Fear’, *Res Publica* 26, no. 4 (2020): 583. Another example of considering Shklar’s work as a resource to pursue realist aims, although here it is ultimately rejected, can be found in Matt Sleat, *Liberal Realism: A Realist Theory of Liberal Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 93-4; 106. See also the invocation of Shklar in: Robert Jubb, ‘On What a Distinctively Political Normativity Is’, *Political Studies Review* 17, no. 4 (2019): 360-9. The issue of whether Shklar should be labelled a realist, or of what kind of realist she might be, is not the subject of this paper. For discussion of this, see: Stullerova, ‘Cruelty and International Relations’; Andrew Sabl, ‘History and Reality: Idealist Pathologies and ‘Harvard School’ Remedies’, in *Political Philosophy versus History? Contextualism and Real Politics in Contemporary Political Thought*, eds. Jonathan Floyd and Marc Stears (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 151-76; Kamila Stullerova, ‘The Knowledge of Suffering: On Judith Shklar’s “Putting Cruelty First”’, *Contemporary Political Theory* 13, no. 1 (2014): 23-45; Katrina Forrester, ‘Judith Shklar, Bernard Williams and Political Realism’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 11, no. 3 (2012): 247-72.

⁶ William A. Galston, ‘Realism in Political Theory’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 4 (2010): 398; Katrina Forrester, ‘Judith Shklar, Bernard Williams and Political Realism’, 252.

⁷ Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess, ‘Introduction: Judith N. Shklar’s Lectures on Political Obligation’, in *On Political Obligation*, eds. Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), xiv. Other scholarship which emphasises the importance of psychology in Shklar’s work includes: Katrina Forrester, ‘Experience, Ideology, and the Politics of Psychology’, in *Between Utopia and Realism: The Political Thought of Judith N. Shklar*, eds. Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 136-57; George Kateb, ‘Foreword’, in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, vii-xx; Andreas Hess, ‘The Meaning of Exile: Judith N. Shklar’s Maieutic Discourse’, *European Journal of Social Theory* 21, no. 3 (2018): 288-303.

⁸ James Brown and Thomas Osborne, ‘Imaginative Literature and Political Theory: An Engagement’, in Ashenden and Hess, *Between Utopia and Realism: The Political Thought of Judith N. Shklar*, 117; 133.

⁹ Tracy B. Strong, ‘Literature and the Imagination’, in Ashenden and Hess, *Between Utopia and Realism: The Political Thought of Judith N. Shklar*, 101; 106.

¹⁰ Judith N. Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020 [1957]), 268; 219; 271.

¹¹ Judith N. Shklar, ‘Appendix: A Life of Learning’, in *Liberalism without Illusions*, ed. Bernard Yack (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 274.

¹² Katrina Forrester, 'Hope and Memory in the Thought of Judith Shklar', *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 595.

¹³ Judith N. Shklar, 'What Is the Use of Utopia?', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 186. This essay was only published posthumously and is undated. It contains references to Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, and since Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* was published in 1981 it seems reasonable to assume that the essay was written in the 1980s, although unfortunately it is not possible to be more specific.

¹⁴ Shklar, 'Appendix: A Life of Learning', 275.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 272. This is also highlighted by John Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 19.

¹⁷ There is evidence that Shklar had decided political theory was not dead before 1971, since she writes in *Legalism* that 'political thinking did not begin with them [the grand ideologies], nor need it disappear now'. Here however, she describes the task of political theory as 'the elucidation of common experience', so it seems that the intellectual developments precipitated by Rawls and Habermas did help her to come to the further realisation that a form of political theory which also proposed models and yet was still not utopian might be possible. Shklar, *Legalism*, 27-8.

¹⁸ Shklar, 'What Is the Use of Utopia?', 189.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 187 (my emphasis).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

²² *Ibid.*, 186.

²³ Shklar, 'The Liberalism of Fear', 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵ Shklar, *Legalism*, 5; Judith N. Shklar, 'Ideology Hunting: The Case of James Harrington', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 207.

²⁶ Shklar, *Legalism*, 4-5.

²⁷ Shklar, 'What Is the Use of Utopia?', 190.

²⁸ Shklar, *Legalism*, 69.

²⁹ Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 21-2. See also Shklar's 'Rights in the Liberal Tradition', where she condemns the 'perfect self-assurance of ideological fervour'. *Political Studies* 71, no. 2 (2023): 286.

³⁰ Shklar, *After Utopia*, 271.

³¹ Mathias Thaler, 'Hope Abjuring Hope: On the Place of Utopia in Realist Political Theory', *Political Theory* 46, no. 5 (2018): 676. Stullerova also describes Shklar as anti-utopian, yet acknowledges that she does not dismiss the importance of hope. 'The Knowledge of Suffering', 30-1.

³² Forrester, 'Hope and Memory in the Thought of Judith Shklar', 592. Allyn Fives goes further, describing Shklar's mature work as a form of utopianism, although I think this is a step too far. *Judith Shklar and the Liberalism of Fear* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 139.

³³ Shklar, 'The Liberalism of Fear', 26.

³⁴ Judith N. Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', *Daedalus*, 94, no. 2 (1965): 379.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 372-3; 376.

³⁶ Isaiah Berlin, 'The Pursuit of the Ideal', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity, 2nd Edition*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 15.

³⁷ Such as Jacob Talmon, Leo Strauss, and Karl Popper. Forrester, 'Hope and Memory in the Thought of Judith Shklar', 595.

³⁸ Shklar, 'What Is the Use of Utopia?', 190.

³⁹ Judith N. Shklar, *Montesquieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 31.

⁴⁰ Ashenden and Hess, 'Introduction', xxiii; xvii.

⁴¹ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 227. It is true that many of Shklar's articles were published in *Daedalus*, the journal for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and might therefore be considered to be aimed at an educated public, similar to *Ordinary Vices*, rather than a narrower academic audience. Regardless, the style and subject matter of *Ordinary Vices* imply a broader intended audience than many of her other works, including *After Utopia* and *Men & Citizens*. James Brown and Thomas

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- Osborne concur that *Ordinary Vices* ‘seeks a readership beyond the academy’. See Brown and Osborne, ‘Imaginative Literature and Political Theory: An Engagement’, 119-20.
- ⁴² Annette Baier, ‘Review: *Ordinary Vices*’, *Political Theory* 14, no. 1 (1986): 157.
- ⁴³ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 162; 182.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.
- ⁴⁵ Shklar, ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’, 347.
- ⁴⁶ Judith N. Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 109.
- ⁴⁷ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 226.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ⁴⁹ Shklar, ‘Appendix: A Life of Learning’, 279.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice*, 50.
- ⁵³ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 123.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 226 (my emphasis).
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-2.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8; 13. Shklar’s work is profoundly influenced by Montesquieu in ways which are relevant to this paper, but unfortunately there is not space to consider them here. On his scepticism, for example, see: Shklar, *Montesquieu*, 27; 68. Discussion of Montaigne and Rousseau is prioritised because these thinkers are more important to Shklar’s prose.
- ⁵⁸ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 228.
- ⁵⁹ Shklar, ‘Appendix: A Life of Learning’, 277.
- ⁶⁰ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 228; 230.
- ⁶¹ Mark Hulling, ‘Montaigne in America: The Political Theory of Judith Shklar’, *The Tocqueville Review* 16, no. 1 (1995): 194-5.
- ⁶² Andrew Sabl, ‘Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Contemporary Political Theory*, ed. Jacob T. Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015-), 2.
- ⁶³ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 227.
- ⁶⁴ Sabl, ‘Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*’, 13.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Some exceptions include: Céline Spector, ‘Rousseau at Harvard: John Rawls and Judith Shklar on Realistic Utopia’, in *Engaging with Rousseau*, ed. Avi Lifschitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 152-67; Fives, *Judith Shklar and the Liberalism of Fear*, Chapters 3 and 4; Katrina Forrester, ‘Experience, Ideology, and the Politics of Psychology’, 145.
- ⁶⁷ Shklar, ‘Appendix: A Life of Learning’, 275.
- ⁶⁸ Shklar, ‘What Is the Use of Utopia?’, 181.
- ⁶⁹ Shklar, *Men & Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16; 23.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 32; 164. See also Spector, ‘Rousseau at Harvard’, 157.
- ⁷² Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice*, 122; Robin Douglass, ‘Cruelty, Injustice, and the Liberalism of Fear’, *Political Theory* 51, no. 5 (2023): 805.
- ⁷³ Shklar, *Men & Citizens*, 157. The Rousseau quote is taken from Book II, Chapter vii of the *Social Contract*.
- ⁷⁴ I am grateful to Michael Thomas, who commented on the paper at the 2023 Stanford Graduate Conference in Political Theory, for pointing out this problem, and to the other participants for helping to develop my response to it.
- ⁷⁵ Shklar, *Men & Citizens*, 186. See also Judith N. Shklar, ‘Machiavelli and Rousseau’ (MA Thesis, McGill University, 1950), 109.
- ⁷⁶ Judith N. Shklar, ‘Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Equality’, in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 290.
- ⁷⁷ Shklar, *Men & Citizens*, 32.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 226.
- ⁷⁹ Shklar, ‘Appendix: A Life of Learning’, 275.

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- ⁸⁰ Shklar, *Men & Citizens*, 226.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 165; 168.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 197-8.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, *Men & Citizens*, 226.
- ⁸⁴ Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice*, 27.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ⁸⁶ Shklar, *Legalism*, 28.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.
- ⁸⁹ Judith N. Shklar, 'Reading the *Social Contract*', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 275.
- ⁹⁰ Jonathan Allen, 'The Place of Negative Morality in Political Theory', *Political Theory* 29, no. 3 (2001): 359.
- ⁹¹ Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 226. Some commentators have contested the alleged lack of prescription in *Ordinary Vices*, for example Fives, *Judith Shklar and the Liberalism of Fear*, 135.
- ⁹² Shklar, 'The Liberalism of Fear', 31; 28; 37.
- ⁹³ Shklar, 'Appendix: A Life of Learning', 271.
- ⁹⁴ Shklar, *Legalism*, 224.
- ⁹⁵ Judith N. Shklar, 'Facing Up to Intellectual Pluralism', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 285.
- ⁹⁶ Shklar, *Legalism*, 222.
- ⁹⁷ Shklar, 'The Liberalism of Fear', 25.
- ⁹⁸ Shklar, 'Learning without Knowing', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, 128.
- ⁹⁹ Mark Greif, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 24-5; Hess, 'The Meaning of Exile', 292.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hess, 'The Meaning of Exile', 292; 298. Hess's account here of the impact of Shklar's own experiences as an exile on the specific form of her maieutic discourse is perhaps overly determinative. The account in Samantha Ashenden and Andreas Hess, 'Totalitarianism and Justice: Hannah Arendt's and Judith N. Shklar's Political Reflections in Historical and Theoretical Perspective', *Economy and Society* 45, no. 3-4 (2016): 526 is more nuanced, stating explicitly that Shklar's experiences and circumstances cannot account entirely for the shape of her discourse, but may still be slightly overstated.
- ¹⁰¹ Ashenden and Hess, 'Totalitarianism and Justice', 507-8; 516.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 508.
- ¹⁰³ Judith N. Shklar, 'Appendix I: Why Teach Political Theory?', in Ashenden and Hess, *On Political Obligation*, 215. I am grateful to Rebecca Buxton for raising the subject of Shklar's teaching in relation to the problem of political motivation.
- ¹⁰⁴ Stanley Hoffmann, 'Minute in the Life and Work of Judith Shklar', TN635296 Papers of John Rawls, HUM 48 Box 41 Folder 15, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.
- ¹⁰⁵ Judith N. Shklar, 'Lecture 2: *Antigone*', in Ashenden and Hess, *On Political Obligation*, 27.
- ¹⁰⁶ Judith N. Shklar, 'Lecture 7: Honor and *Richard II*', in Ashenden and Hess, *On Political Obligation*, 86.
- ¹⁰⁷ John Dunn, 'Judith Shklar as Political Educator', in Yack, *Liberalism without Illusions*, 48.
- ¹⁰⁸ Shklar, 'Appendix I: Why Teach Political Theory?', 215.
- ¹⁰⁹ Judith N. Shklar, 'Lecture 3: *Crito*', in Ashenden and Hess, *On Political Obligation*, 48.
- ¹¹⁰ Dunn, 'Judith Shklar as Political Educator', 48.
- ¹¹¹ Shklar, 'Appendix I: Why Teach Political Theory?', 215.
- ¹¹² Shklar, 'Facing Up to Intellectual Pluralism', 276.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 281.
- ¹¹⁴ Judith N. Shklar, 'Obligation, Loyalty, Exile', in Hoffmann, *Political Thought & Political Thinkers*, 55.
- ¹¹⁵ Shklar, *Legalism*, 28.
- ¹¹⁶ Galston, 'Realism in Political Theory', 395; 398. See also John Horton, 'Realism, Liberal Moralism, and a Political Theory of Modus Vivendi', *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 4 (2010): 434; 442.

¹¹⁷ Edward Hall seems to acknowledge the issue in one article, suggesting that individuals need not just to be ‘motivated to act’, but also ‘convinced’ to do so. There is however no further discussion in this article of ‘convincing’ in relation to thought as preceding action, and his argument that we should ‘speak to [people] in terms that they can embrace’ refers to a need for political theorising which is sensitive to the real ‘motivations, goals and commitments’ of individuals in the sense of motivation for action rather than thought. Edward Hall, ‘How to Do Realistic Political Theory (And Why You Might Want To)’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 16, no. 3 (2017): 296.

¹¹⁸ Williams, ‘The Liberalism of Fear’, 56; 59.

¹¹⁹ Shklar, *Men & Citizens*, 225.

¹²⁰ For example, Shklar argues that ‘simple daily language’ is best when discussing the ‘great theorists’ as opposed to ‘imposing any specialised vocabulary on their thought’. *Men & Citizens*, 218.

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