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Introduction

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The essays in this issue employ several more or less novel methods to establish the plausibility of a relatively simple point. The long tradition of legal thought that we have inherited and through which we work accepted the relative autonomy of law, but it systematically closeted *relativity* in an effort to expose and confirm *autonomy*. The specific mechanisms employed in the service of this movement constitute an important chapter in the history of liberalism, legalism, or the rule of law.

Kennedy's essay on Blackstone is the first published of his larger study of the historically specific styles of legal consciousness—the specific management or deployment of doctrines, principles, and so forth. He argues that the fundamental purpose of these strategies is to avoid confronting the dilemma of community and autonomy as complicated by the mediation of state power. To be sure, other contingent purposes intrude and these are considered as the occasion demands. His account of Blackstone's doctrinal organization iterates the unfolding story of relativity on virtually every page.

Katz's essays in adjudication and politics are at once more and less general. As essays in Boundary Theory they are simply case studies working through a general notion of the categories of thought and experience. On the other hand, there is only a superficial attempt in these papers to say anything about the legal consciousness of a period. While the doctrinal problem is taken in historical context, Katz is at pains to show a pattern in the construction of doctrinal solutions and to offer a new account of why these solutions seem critical.

Though the essays in this issue employ related methodologies, it would be a mistake to read them entirely from the perspective of method. Many of the legal scholars currently at work on a critical jurisprudence, including the two published here, share a belief that law is relative to social practice and social theory; that contemporary jurisprudence is an obfuscating apologetic; that legal analysis that gets relevant by gesturing outside law toward a pseudo-consensus morality or the technical abstraction of efficiency has already lost its own battle for autonomy and is madly searching for allies who have seemingly secured their own autonomous turf; that there can be no plausible legal theory without a social theory; and that the notion of legal autonomy is a lie.

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