

PREFACE

In the main, this book is a cross-fertilisation of history and philosophy in the broadest possible sense. Ideas of death, posthumous harm, punishment and redemption germinate in both the conceptual ground of philosophical analysis and the empirical ground of historical case study.

One metaphor for the approach to this book is of germination. At the beginning of this project I had more of a conceptual understanding of death and harm than any sustained appreciation of how that related to any historical contextualisation. However, after spending three years with archaeologists and historians my conceptual training as a philosopher germinated in an appreciation of historical case studies.

Cross-pollination of ideas from history to philosophy chapters and vice versa has led to the germination of an interdisciplinary perspective. That said, each of the chapters also stands alone as either broadly philosophical or historical. This makes the character of the work also appear multidisciplinary in nature.

I cannot make any claims to personally partaking in any serious historical research. I have not visited archives, unearthed any undiscovered and illuminating primary sources. Instead I have stood on the broad shoulders of historians who have inspired me to refashion the lens of philosophical/conceptual inquiry.

Another metaphor that can be used to understand my approach is the fashioning of a varifocal interdisciplinary lens.

So, what is the difference between an ordinary disciplinary lens and a varifocal interdisciplinary lens? A disciplinary lens is pre-ground with a

fixed focal length that illuminates a particular kind of academic territory. The problem with importing a disciplinary lens to a different academic territory altogether is that while it illuminates some things in an unexpected way, it will also distort many other details. I began my foray into a historical case study of posthumous harm and redemption in this way.

By trying to understand the conceptual distortions as well as the illuminated focus, I could sense, not re-grind/grind in order to widen the field of view, steadily increasing over-all illumination and the ability to focus near and far. This gave my lens a varifocal quality: a way of looking both out to the far distance of key conceptual distinctions and the near distance, which added sharp empirical focus to a conceptually informed history.

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