

Volume 10

Human Beings and Human Doings



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Meet the Team



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Anna Gaudet is a Politics and International Relations doctoral candidate in the School of Social Sciences. Her research evaluates gender-based disinformation (GBD) targeting women politicians online within the context of the United States. Additionally, Anna is a Co-Editor in Chief of the PGR run Granite Journal.



Monica Jones

CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

Monica is a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity, and her work is associated with the Research Centre for Autism and Theology. Her research seeks to understand autistic experiences of becoming part of religious communities, and the wider sociological implications of this on religious group identity. In addition to being Co-Editor in Chief of Granite, Monica is the Doctoral Representative for the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology (BIAPT), and is working as a Research Assistant on a John Templeton Foundation funded project looking at Autistic Spirituality.



Abigail Kovaleski

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Abigail is an Environmental Humanities Doctoral candidate in the School of Language, Literature, Music, and Visual Culture. Her work centers on the American poet Mary Oliver and Environmental Spirituality. In addition to working on Granite, Abigail is a Postgraduate Representative for the University, Adjunct Faculty at the University of Sioux Falls, and a member of multiple international research organizations.

Meet the Team



Graham Davidson

SECRETARY & SENIOR EDITOR

Graham Davidson is a Sociology PhD student researching how members of religious and non-religious value-based student societies negotiate their sacred beliefs in post-sexualization Scotland.



Jim Dodge

PEER REVIEW LEAD & SENIOR EDITOR

James Dodge is a PhD candidate in the School of Law at the University of Aberdeen, focusing on human trafficking. A former prosecutor, James is currently researching the effectiveness of the UK's Modern Slavery Act 2015, the US's Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000, and the US's Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act 2003 in providing compensation for the victims of human trafficking.



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King Fung Kelvin Chan is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. Kelvin's research is in comparative philosophy between ancient Chinese Daoism and contemporary analytic philosophy. Kelvin is also the PGR representative for the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy, and Art History

Meet the Team



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Lara Dasar is a PhD Medical Sciences student researching the relationship between glycaemic control and exercise chronobiology across the menstrual cycle. Lara is also a PGR representative for the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition.



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Grace Johnson is a PhD candidate in Politics and International Relations researching mass shootings, radicalisation, and violent extremism. She is also the PGR Representative for the School of Social Science.



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Stephen D. Morrison is a PhD student at the University of Aberdeen studying Karl Barth's theology of resistance. He is the author of several books, including *Karl Barth in Plain English* (2017) and *All Riches Come From Injustice* (2023). His work in print and online focuses on making modern theology accessible. He currently lives in Columbus, Ohio.



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HUMAN BEINGS AND HUMAN DOINGS

Editorial

Jones, M., Gaudet, A., Kovalski, A., Chan, K.F., Dasar, L., Davidson, G., Dodge, J., Johnson, G., Morrison, S. Granite Editorial Team

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1 Introduction

As Granite Journal marks its tenth volume, we address the critical and timely theme of “Human Beings and Human Doings.” In drafting this issue’s theme, the editors considered the impact of significant global crises, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the accelerating threat of global warming. These profound challenges highlight how human actions directly shape the world and demand immediate attention and informed responses. The importance of this theme lies in its ability to illuminate the direct consequences of human decisions and behaviours. Understanding how individual and collective actions contribute to global events provides clarity in navigating solutions to these urgent crises. Engaging with this theme fosters greater accountability, encouraging individuals and communities to critically assess their roles and responsibilities within broader social, political, and ecological contexts. In doing so, we gain valuable insight into the creation of sustainable and equitable futures through intentional and collaborative efforts.

Contributors to this volume come from diverse academic disciplines, clearly demonstrating the wide-ranging and impactful nature of postgraduate research at the University of Aberdeen. Our editorial team, working across continents and time zones, exemplifies the journal’s dedication to international and interdisciplinary cooperation.



Despite logistical and cultural barriers, our shared efforts illustrate the powerful results that collaborative academic dialogue can achieve. In celebrating Granite's tenth anniversary, we reaffirm our commitment to facilitating meaningful scholarly exchange that actively engages with pressing ethical, social, and ecological questions. This volume encourages readers to critically examine human agency's role in addressing global issues and underscores the urgency of collective action. We hope these contributions inspire continued reflection, dialogue, and collaborative solutions to the challenges that define our time.

Senior Editor, Abigail Jean Kovaleski

2 Volume Articles

The volume begins with an article on Art History, a wonderful demonstration of the diversity of our theme. Conny Bogaard's article considers the representation of grotesque humanoid bodies within the fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter. The article suggests a theological purpose for portraying such ugly imagery, with Bogaard's conclusions arising from attention also to the beautiful images illustrated in this manuscript. The article concludes that it is through the grotesque that this manuscript historically caused its viewers to question the meaning and purpose of human life, and life after death. Throughout the article, Bogaard provides a reflection on the question of what it means to look human (or non-human) in the past, and how this might contribute to being human, not just in body, but also in soul.

Sian Brookes approaches the concept of human 'doing' through a theological lens, challenging assumptions that humans are necessarily passive in old age. Western concepts of personhood often stress the ability to act independently as being inherent to agency, so ageing and its associated decline in physical ability concomitantly may be seen as leading to passivity. Employing a theological redefinition of activity away from individual autonomy, Brookes argues that agency can be and is discovered outside of the self and achieved through Christ. By adopting a wider lens on activity, even the simplest forms of human action in old age, including simply breathing in and out, can, through Christ, be regarded as agency.



The impact of human doings on both human beings and the environment is the subject of Iona Collins' paper critiquing sustainable and indeed unsustainable growth. Identifying Western constructions of, and related "solutions" to, poverty as being inherently linked to consumerism and neoliberal ideology, Collins employs dependency theory and a post-structuralist lens to problematize the impact of "development" on indigenous communities and the Global South. Policies ostensibly aimed at promoting sustainable development have instead led to development and the very concept of the 'need' for development itself being sustained. Theories and practices of post-development, by contrast, point the way to genuine sustainability. Operating outside the western "growth" mindset, grassroots organisations in the Global South promote sustainable lifestyles and economic models that prioritise economic protection and community well-being. However, the embodied impact of the growth and development mindset means it cannot realistically be entirely rejected, while neither does rejecting policies of growth eliminate suffering. Acknowledging that post-development theory has its limits and drawbacks, Iona calls for a synthesised approach of degrowth and decoloniality in the Global North, coupled with policies promoted by grassroots movements in the Global South to promote social justice, environmental sustainability, and to address the "sustainable development" myth.

Dhimal's "Modern Medicine as a Site of Colonial Continuity" invites readers to challenge our present assumptions about human beings and human doings by providing commentary on the profound impact of colonialism on past and current understandings of medicine, wellbeing, and healthcare. The author first gives the reader a succinct overview of the evolution of medicine as a tool of colonial control, challenging the notion that Westernised understandings of health and medicine are based in apolitical and neutral scientific rationality. Dhimal then explores the commodification of wellness as a capitalist, neoliberal project that fundamentally replicates colonial dynamics, therefore continuing the exertion of colonial control. In closing, Dhimal leaves readers with thoughtful consideration of the importance of moving towards the decolonisation of medicine and healthcare.

James Dodge's "What Makes It Human Trafficking?" grapples with the conceptualisation of one of the most impactful human experiences, human trafficking,



in an effort to broaden our understanding of the practice itself. In building a foundation for their argument, the author primarily revisits key ontological questions regarding our recognition of human trafficking and identifies some clear deficiencies in the legal definition of human trafficking. In addressing these conceptual ambiguities, the author moves beyond legal analysis and uniquely evaluates the characteristics of human trafficking via the lens of objectification. By taking this approach, the author establishes an argument towards a more comprehensive understanding of human trafficking in identifying its essence. Ultimately, this article shifts perspectives on the exploitative and objectifying realities of “human doings” inherent to human trafficking and its recognition.

Owabelemam Ibim (Belema) surveys the complex legal, ethical, and social issues involved in euthanasia and assisted dying, with a specific focus on the relevance of these debates for UK law. The topic of assisted dying hones in on the limits of human doings, particularly as it constitutes a human action that affects life and death. Ibim examines various legal cases alongside Kantian ethics to raise vital questions about the efficacy of legal grounds for euthanasia and assisted dying. Readers will be confronted with the complexities of the issue and the detailed responses available in current legal precedent in this paper, which is sensitive to the moral, religious, and social realities involved in this multifaceted debate.

Lahiru Jayamanne draws attention to the exponential growth of autonomous weapons – both in terms of their prevalence and their operational autonomy – raising critical questions about the role of human beings in decision-making in armed conflicts. Examining the existing legal framework of the International Court of Justice, Jayamanne reveals gaps in that framework that serve to highlight concerns about the capacity of autonomous weapons to comply with the basic principles of International Humanitarian Law. Without being an alarmist, Jayamanne clearly and plainly details the urgent need for the International Court of Justice (through rulings and advisory opinions) to act preemptively in developing an appropriate regulatory response by human beings to what are fast becoming machines that would go of themselves.

Summaries written by Editorial Team



3 Conclusion

It is our hope that the papers contained within this volume demonstrate ongoing work in a wide range of fields, highlighting how prevalent questions about the nature of humanity are. This volume has looked at what it means to be human, to strive for ethical human activity, and to recognise the outcomes of both ethical and unethical human “doings”. As we have assembled this volume, it is unfortunate that the theme has become even more relevant than it was when we first proposed it in Summer 2024. We are becoming increasingly more aware of the impact human behaviour has on our environment, both natural and constructed, and on the social structures which have upheld human civilisation to this point. In the last year, a number of events have occurred which are sure to have lasting consequences for humanity, events which have been brought about by human beings and their human doings. By shining light on the many topics covered by the articles of this volume we hope readers of *Granite* will truly reflect more deeply on their nature as human beings, and the impact their doings can have.

Co-Editors-in-Chief, Anna Gaudet & Monica Jones

4 Acknowledgments

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