

Guidelines for Book-Reviewers of the Intergenerational Justice Review

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1.) General information on reviews

Scientific reviews are particularly common in the humanities. They offer an overview of new publications in particular subject areas and facilitate the decision of which book is worthy to read. The review usually refers to a publication – mostly a monograph, sometimes an anthology as well. Depending on the reviewer, the review may cover several publications in comparison to each other. A review is composed of three parts: the first part locates the reviewed book within the scientific discourse. The second part sums up the main arguments and thoughts of the reviewed book. Finally, the third, concluding part of the review is a positive, negative (or both) or neutral assessment / evaluation of the reviewer. It is key to work out the common theme and to point out possible inconsistencies.

With regard to the reviewer's self-organisation, it is helpful to take note of the book's important points already during the reading process.

2.) Characteristics of a book review

2.1) Structure

The review must have its own title. Below, the name of the author and the original title must be mentioned, then (the line below) 'reviewed by...', and the name of the reviewer. See the following as an example:

Brian Christian: The Alignment Problem: How Can Artificial Intelligence Learn Human Values?

Reviewed by Michael Haiden

At the end of the review, the general information about the reviewed book is listed: surname, forename of the author, year of publication, complete book title, place of publication, publisher, ISBN-number, page numbers, price.

a) Introduction / Contextualisation (see above: first part of a review)

A successful opening sentence is important as it entices the reader into reading more. Think carefully about the first sentence! The introduction (see above: first part of a review) should include a localisation of the publication within the scientific field. It should be made clear in which context the book has to be seen, to which strand of theory it belongs (if any) and to which questions, discussions and perspectives it refers. What audience precisely is the publication answering to and written for? If it is a follow-up book by the author, in which relation does it stand to his previous book(s)?

b) Textual overview (see above: second part of a review)

A review's main task is to sum up the core arguments of the publication and to reflect them critically. Therefore, the most important arguments need to be filtered out. In the following, the argumentation is reproduced in consideration of the theoretical basis and theses. In doing so, please limit your review to the essentials. A review is not re-narration. The second part of a review should not make up more than 60% of the review. The aim is to give the reader an idea of the book's content. In this part, exact quotes can be used, albeit sparingly. If direct quotes are used, the page number should be included in brackets directly afterwards (see the section '2.3 Formalities') below.

c) Evaluation (see above: third part of a review)

The reviewed work is then critically reflected. In fact, the idea is not about writing a polemic or to come to a positive or negative result. First of all, it is worth asking what kind of goal the author attempted to pursue. The work will be measured thereon. In this context, the reviewer shall consider precisely (after having read the introduction and the outline) whether the expectations have been met. The following questions can be asked: What is new about the reviewed work? What contribution does it make to the topic/field? Is the methodological procedure appropriate with regard to the question? Are the different arguments clear and concise? Which theses and statements are weak or contradictory and require in-depth discussions? Are there any unresolved issues left? Are there inconsistencies? In general, did it turn out well? What are the book's contributions?

Furthermore, the theoretical consistency and the plausibility of the book's statements have to be evaluated.

Moreover, its scholarly 'added value' needs to be taken into consideration. Particular attention should be given to the relation between the book itself and the current state of research. Ideally, therefore, the reviewer should be an expert in his or her field.

Concerning the weight of the different sections, you can follow this division a) ca. 10 %, b) ca. 60 %, c) ca. 30 %. However, these are merely indicators for orientation.

2.2.) Style of a scientific review

A good review is distinguished by an elegant and smooth language (if this is asking too much, then at least by a fluent and clearly legible style). Since a review is an informative and evaluative text, the description and evaluation have to be precise and verifiable.

Please avoid nested sentences. It is about expressing complicated thoughts as easy as possible, and not the other way around.

2.3.) Formalities

The length of the review should be 10,000 to 13,000 characters (incl. spaces). Double book reviews which compare two monographs can have up to 15,000 characters. If core theses of the author are quoted or referred to, the passages in the review have to be cited (page number in the book but omit >p.<). Examples:

>This thesis, according to Green, questions “our whole notion of historical progress and indeed the viability of the current social and political order” (122).< (from IGJR 2/2018)

>The author justifies this by saying that education “is amenable, at least in some areas, to some relatively simple policy reforms which would make a difference” (87).< (from IGJR 2/2018)

In reviews, footnotes are uncommon, but not impossible. To avoid plagiarism, any source (or fact) that is not common knowledge and is mentioned by the reviewer must be properly referenced.

Accentuations shall not be presented bold, but in italics. The review should stick to 12pt Times New Roman and to a one-and-a-half line spacing. Please also refer to the sections ‘Style Guide’, ‘Punctuation’ and ‘Citations’ in the Author Guidelines. Of course, the newest edition of the work should be used. If the author has gone through a development (read the prefaces!), this is something that needs to be mentioned in the review. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned if the reviewed book is the abridged version of a more extensive book.

2.4.) Review of reviews

Presumably, the reviewed book has already been reviewed in other journals / on the internet. In this case, the external review can be mentioned (positively or negatively) in one’s own review. This review must be cited correctly according to the IGJR citation rules.

Contact and further information:

E-mail: editors@srzg.de

www.igjr.org