

Editorial Note

A. W. Musschenga · F. R. Heeger

Published online: 19 January 2014
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2014

Reviewing the work of older and younger colleagues is an essential part of academic life. Therefore, it is a good custom to open a new volume with a list of persons who served the journal as a reviewer in the previous year.

The first part of the issue is a special issue. The theme is ‘alienation’. In his introduction, guest-editor Tim Henning explains why the concept of alienation which was central to the grand philosophies of history of Rousseau, the Romantics, the German Idealists, and the early Marx, and which lost in the last century the interest of philosophers because it had become associated with what Henning calls ‘oversimplified laments about a loss of immediacy and naturalness’, still deserves attention. While Henning not only introduces the theme of the special issue, but also the contributions to it, what is left for us is presenting the remaining contributions, to start with that of Aaron Simmons. He argues that, although some forms of empathy may not be morally important, empathy with another’s basic well-being concerns is both necessary and sufficient to care for another’s well-being, provided that one’s empathy is both cognitive and affective. Joseph Millum discusses whether coercion by a third party, not from the person to whom consent would be proffered, but, e.g., from family members, can render consent, e.g., to participate in a clinical trial, invalid. Jaakko Kuosmanen examines what makes the harm of persecution special and argues that it is the simultaneous occurrence of three elements: asymmetrical and systemic threat, severe and sustained harm, and unjust discriminatory targeting. Mozaffar Qizilbash seeks to find out whether the ‘vagueness view’ is defensible. This view holds that when evaluative comparisons are hard, there is indeterminacy about which comparative relation holds. It is sceptical about whether there are any incommensurate items (in some domain). Peter Schaber responds to an article by Doris Schroeder in this journal (Volume 15:3) in which she defends the view that human rights derive from human dignity should be rejected. Schaber argues that there is no reason to assume that no account of human dignity is capable of doing this. In the last contribution, Moran Yemini goes into the seemingly irresolvable problem of ‘dirty hands’ in relation to torture. After discussing the views of influential philosophers to the debate on ‘dirty hands’, he concludes, contra Walzer, that it is possible for a person (politician) acting in a situation of ‘dirty hands’, not to believe herself to be guilty, but still be a moral person.

A. W. Musschenga (✉) · F. R. Heeger
Department of Philosophy, VU University, De Boelelaan 1105, Amsterdam 1081 HV, The Netherlands
e-mail: a.w.musschenga@vu.nl