

From the Editors

The three articles in this issue discuss very different topics, but there is a common style of argumentation that unites them. All three articles question established dividing lines between philosophical camps, and all three thus open up ways for unconventional inquiry.

Ben Davies' article on *Utilitarianism and Animal Cruelty* challenges the widely accepted notion that veganism (as a practical standpoint) and utilitarianism (as a moral theory) go hand in hand. Davies argues that veganism is, in some ways, more radical than utilitarianism commands, and might in other ways be less effective. For instance, while vegans and utilitarians might agree on the immorality of eating (factory-farmed) meat, their opinion could diverge drastically on other instances of animal cruelty, such as extremely painful medical testing. Furthermore, utilitarians would worry about the difference that individual vegans can make (when it comes to large social and economic structures like meat production and consumption) and they might be willing to consider that some instances of exploitation of animals could be justified in light of the very specific pleasures they provide humans (we could think here of the use of animals in sport, for instance).

Harriet Baber, in her article *Transworld Egoism, Empathy, and the Golden Rule* argues that thinking about counterparts in other possible worlds – who are very much, but not quite like us – could provide us with an egoistic rationale for altruistic policies. Baber starts with the distinction of narrow and broad preferentialism – where narrow preferentialism only takes into account of the desire I do in fact have, and broad preferentialism even takes into account preferences I easily *could* have, given my psychological make-up as it is here and now. Broad preferentialism allows us to formulate a preference-based egoism in which I have a motivation to benefit even those counterparts of mine who are very much like me, but do not have the exact same desires. This, according to Baber, amounts to an egoistic justification of the Golden Rule: If I have an interest to treat such counterparts like I treat myself, then I do have a reason to treat everyone who is like me in relevant respects like I treat myself.

Augustin Fragnière, in his article *Ecological Limits and the Meaning of Freedom* considers the supposed conflict that arises when sustainability goals are imposed on individuals and thus clash with their liberty. It is a common argument of skeptics of ecological and sustainable policies that such policies infringe on important liberty rights (and that sustainability goals would thus be better pursued by providing incentives rather than by rules and regulations). Fragnière argues that this conflict does not occur for every philosophical concept of liberty – and he suggests Philip Pettit's account of liberty as non-domination as one that is actually compatible with stringent „green“ policies.

As I mentioned above, what I think these contributions have in common is that they challenge established 'truths' about which moral foundations can (or cannot) undergird specific ethical practices. 'Utilitarianism is a theory for vegans', 'Egoists cannot care about others', or 'Environmentalists care little about individual liberties' – these commonplaces are put into question in this volume. And I think that in light of recent events inside and outside academia, the general thought we can perhaps take away from this volume – and its unifying theme – is to not take established truths for granted, since they are so easily destroyed by those who care nothing for truth.

Those who believed that someone like Donald Trump could never become president of a democratic country were proven wrong; as were those who believed he would change his abrasive and mendacious political tactics once in office. Democracies all over the world are in peril, and Europeans are waking up to the fact that a democracy does not simply maintain itself. The emerging radical right in Central Europe, spearheaded by Marine Le Pen and the *Alternative für Deutschland*, does not play by the established rules of democratic discourse – and 'fact-checking' will not be enough to counter them.

In academia, funding becomes scarcer, employment becomes more precarious, and grants and prizes become more competitive by the year – and many young scholars are realizing that the university cannot offer them a perspective for their professional future. Contemporary universities are no longer protected spaces for the unfettered search for scientific or moral truth. They are increasingly run like businesses and their employees are forced to adapt to this new reality.

One might be tempted to counter the hopelessness and the fear that reigns in academia and in international politics at this time by even more competitiveness and defensiveness. But if there is a general lesson to draw from the papers assembled here, 'business as usual' is not it. All three papers urge us to think unconventionally, to not rely on established dividing lines; and two papers, at least, also make a case for 'surprising allies'.

Applied to politics, this can be taken as an urge to look for all who would defend liberal democracy – across party lines. Applied to academia, this can be taken as a call for real solidarity among those who work in precarious positions – as opposed to mere (and often meaningless) 'collaboration'.