

does not invalidate the intent to mounting a civilization which inhibits injustice notoriously (p. xxiv).

While it leaves out a great deal, this volume does a great service towards highlighting the work that is already ongoing in the spirit of that sentiment.

Bryant William Sculos  
(Florida International University)

**Do All Persons Have Equal Moral Worth: On 'Basic Equality' and Equal Respect and Concern** by **Uwe Steinhoff (ed.)**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 219pp., £50.00 (h/b), ISBN 9780198719502

This collection addresses the question of 'basic equality': of why it is (or is not) that all human beings are in some sense fundamentally equal. Until recently, basic equality was widely taken for granted in (especially) liberal political theory, but it has come under increasing scrutiny. Unfortunately, attempts to locate some quality (or range of qualities) in virtue of which humans are basic equals appear repeatedly to fail. There is a pressing need for justification for a previously axiomatic premise.

At present, there are two roughly opposite responses to the situation, with a range of intermediary positions between: attempt to find some feature that passes the tests and yields grounds for basic equality; or give up on it as mistaken or chimerical. After an insightful, if difficult, conceptual ground-clearing by Christopher Nathan, which establishes that a position on basic equality must necessarily assume certain methodological outlooks on the role of norms, the essays in this collection fall at different points on the spectrum.

George Sher, Thomas Christiano and Stefan Gosepath attempt new variations on old arguments to establish basic equality: either the possession of consciousness, or the Kantian claim that autonomous agents owe duties of reciprocity. Unfortunately, considerations levelled by other contributors indicate that these new variations fail. Héctor Wittwer and Jan Narveson, in very different ways, attempt

to scale back the demands made on the idea of basic equality, but largely in the service of arguments about the coherence of egalitarianism(s) more generally. Uwe Steinhoff engages in an aggressive assault on the belief that there is any sense in talk of basic equality at all – but is tripped up by what seem to this reviewer very elementary conflation between 'basic equality' and the dictum of 'equal concern and respect', and a failure to grasp what the aspiration to basic equality is *about* for contemporary theorists.

The two most interesting essays are by Jiwei Ci and Richard Arneson. Ci suggests that the human desire for recognition, combined with modern consumerist economics, may generate inescapably unequal outcomes, and this sits in deep tension with commitments to basic equality. Arneson deftly summarises the present dead-end of the literature. No arguments for basic equality currently work, but that is not something we should be happy or complacent about: 'In this area of thought, the available alternative positions are all bad. Choose your poison' (p. 52). The paradox of this collection is that it makes a worthwhile contribution, while getting us no closer to satisfactory answers.

Paul Sagar  
(King's College, Cambridge)

**A Guide to Ethics and Public Policy: Finding Our Way** by **D. Don Welch**. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014. 156pp., £26.99 (p/b), ISBN 9781138013797

In few (if any) realms is the now well-established and extensively examined 'ought/is' dilemma of more practical significance to a greater number of people than in the arena of public policy. It is through public policy that governments decide both which societal goals to pursue and how to (best) pursue them – essentially, deciding, in the famous maxim of Harold Laswell, 'who gets what, when, [and] how'.

The fundamental purpose of this pithy and extremely engaging book is 'to offer a framework for answering questions about what ... government[s] ought to do' when confronted