GUEST EDITOR’S PREFACE

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This volume contains four contributions, each of them in its own way focusing on the problem of the nature and the origin of moral normativity in a broad sense.\(^1\) Though the scopes of the four essays are quite different, they all share as a general background the observation that phenomena like morality and religion, supposedly either explained or explained away by contemporary naturalism, have in fact turned out to be one of naturalism’s major stumbling blocks.\(^2\) For that reason, the general topics of the contributions are normativity and society, the role of nature in morality, and the connection between God, nature, and morality.

In the first contribution, Gabriele De Anna shows that societies are intrinsically normative and are constituted as by-products of the actions of the society’s members. According to De Anna, societies help us dealing with our practical limitations by aiding us pursuing the good; therefore, they ultimately find their normative measure in the concept of the common good. The second contribution, written by myself, aims at reconstructing some crucial aspects of the modern debate between John Finnis and Pauline Westerman concerning an adequate understanding of Aquinas’s theory of natural law as the basis for human morality and its rooting in metaphysical and theological considerations. I argue that, amongst others, we should re-evaluate and re-interpret Aquinas’ concept of nature as a basis for moral philosophy. In the third contribution, Fiona Ellis argues that the concept of nature could and should be expanded in order to not only include moral normativity, but even God as its source. In arguing for this kind of an expansive theistic naturalism, Ellis follows lines drawn in the discussions between John Cottingham, Peter Railton, John McDowell, and others.

\(^1\) The texts were originally presented in a series of workshops organised by the Research Centre for Methods of the Justification of Normativity (Forschungsstelle für Methoden der Normenbegründung) at the Universities of Bamberg, Germany, and Udine, Italy, between December 2016 and June 2017 by my colleague Gabriele De Anna and myself. I would like to thank Jana Funk and Gustav Melichar for her translations of Gabriele De Anna’s and Fiona Ellis’s texts into German.

David Wiggins, and ingeniously combines them with the philosophy especially of Emanuel Lévinas. This expansive theistic naturalism is a conception that Dieter Schönecker rejects although he agrees that one has to assume the existence of God in order to explain why there ‘is’ such a thing as morality and moral norms. Schönecker insists on a more ‘classical’ concept of nature and a conception of God as being a supernatural, not – in an expansive sense – ‘natural’ entity.