

Most previous issues of this journal laid the focus on the moral obligations of present vis-à-vis future persons. But ‘intergenerational justice’ is not only forward-looking, it also encompasses the relationships between past and present people. Thus, this issue of *Intergenerational Justice Review* is dedicated to the topic of how we ought to respond to past injustices and their lasting effects on the well-being of currently living people. The relevant past wrongdoings, especially such crimes that were committed in the name of an unlawful state, are often referred to as ‘historical injustices’. They give rise to moral claims, and potentially even ‘rights’ of the deceased vis-à-vis the currently living generation. We are proud and happy to present to you five original contributions by authors from Australia, Canada, Germany and Switzerland. All articles published in this issue underwent a thorough peer-review process. We would like to thank all our reviewers (see full list on page 2) for their most helpful constructive criticisms and advice. From now on the *Intergenerational Justice Review* will be published with continuity as a peer-reviewed journal, aiming to improve our understanding of intergenerational justice and sustainable development through pure and applied ethical research. It will be published quarterly in English and German from now on.

It is less than obvious which acts rightly count as historical injustices for which we can blame past people accordingly. In his article *Untangling Historical Injustice and Historical Ill* Michael Schefczyk, who is lecturer of philosophy at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, argues that we should use the notion ‘historical injustices’ for what he has dubbed “legalised natural crimes”. For Schefczyk, a ‘natural crime’ consists in the deliberate violation of a natural right, and ‘legalised’ means that it is prescribed, permitted or tolerated by the legal system. (those who do not use the concept of natural rights might want to replace ‘natural crimes’ by ‘grave immoral acts’). This is, as Schefczyk acknowledges, a different understanding of historical injustices that is at odds with the standard definition in the philosophical literature which understands historical injustices not with regard to the internal features of events, but with regard to a relation between the event and a claimant. On one hand, Schefczyk’s definition is wider than alternative definitions: our present policies like amassing nuclear waste or exposing pregnant women to cigarette smoke could be ‘historical injustices’.

On the other hand, it is a narrow definition: if the members of one family killed dastardly all the members of another family in a conflict about water rights, it is a case of collective injustice, but it is no historical injustice, even if it happened in the distant past and the involved persons are deceased. Even if you disagree with the definition as proposed by Schefczyk, his terminological discussion is clearly useful for an introduction into the topic.

How then ought we to respond to historical injustices? There are three main problems. First, can the deceased victims of historical injustice be said to have rights or claims vis-à-vis currently living people? Second, can currently living people be understood to be indirect victims of injustices that were committed against past people owing to their standing? And if so, can indirect victims have rights to reparations? Finally, how can we identify the relevant bearers of the corresponding duties to provide reparations?

In his article *Intergenerational Rights?* Richard Vernon, who is professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, is highly critical to the notion that deceased victims of injustice—or past people in general—can be understood to be bearers of rights vis-à-vis currently living people today. But for Vernon, disputing that past people have rights today does not rule out the possibility that the lasting effect of these injustices are normatively relevant today.

Janna Thompson, professor of philosophy at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, takes issue with such an understanding of the normative relevance of historical injustices. In her *Historical Responsibility and Liberal Society* she argues that demands made by those who are now dead can be the source of obligations of people living today. This is despite the fact that people living today cannot be blamed for the injustices committed by others in the past and people cannot be benefitted posthumously. Thompson’s general account of historical responsibility and her interpretation of obligations of reparation for historical injustices are based upon the following idea: for people to have meaningful lives they need to be members of transgenerational communities that enable them to make and have fulfilled lifetime-transcending demands; this, however, we cannot have without us as members of our transgenerational community taking responsibility for the acts carried out in the name of our polity in the past.

David Miller’s account of historical responsibility differs from Thompson’s. But this is not Prayank Sanklecha’s concern in discussing Miller’s understanding of how (transgenerational) nations can inherit responsibilities. In *David Miller’s Account of Inherited National Responsibility* Sanklecha argues that, contrary to what Miller seems to claim, currently living members of a nation cannot be shown to have such inherited responsibility owing to past injustices committed in their name (and the obligation to provide measures of reparation) if the current members of the nation have not benefited from the injustice in question. Depending on how we interpret relevant cases Sanklecha’s critique, if correct, would show Miller’s account to be significantly limited.

Last but not least Daniel Weyermann, the second young Swiss philosopher who writes in this issue, submits an original interpretation of indigenous peoples’ claims to their lands (from which they often were expelled). In his *Indigenous Minorities’ Claims to Land* Weyermann understands their claims as being grounded in a just claim to self-determination. In turn, he interprets self-determination prepolitical property rights: indigenous peoples’ claims to their lands are interpreted as claims to realising their prepolitical ownership rights to the land, and realising them is understood to be constitutive for their cultural autonomy.

As the quality of a journal depends to a large extent on its editorial board, we present the members of the editorial board from page 37 on. And do not forget to have a look at the Call for Papers for the next issues of *Intergenerational Justice Review* on such interesting topics like ‘A Young Generation Under Pressure?’ or ‘Climate Change and Intergenerational Justice’.

We hope you will enjoy reading our newly peer-reviewed magazine.

Jörg Chet Tremmel  
Editor-in-Chief



Lukas H. Meyer  
Guest Editor

