

Democracy in Times of Unstable Conditions

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Editorial

About the journal

ETHICS, ECONOMICS, LAW AND POLITICS *Online journal for interdisciplinary discussions on current societal issues* is an academic journal concerned with relevant topics and problems of applied ethics, with its contributions drawing on economic, legal, and political science approaches and perspectives. The journal focuses on current debates and research on justice, morality, responsibility, dignity, rights, and self-determination in relation to socially relevant issues like globalisation, markets, climate change, welfare, migration, and digitalisation. It mainly publishes articles, essays, term papers etc. on pertinent topics written by young scholars and advanced students. In particular, it acts as a journal for students' papers of the MA study programme Ethics - Economics, Law and Politics (MA EELP) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

The international MA EELP provides its students with an interdisciplinary education in applied ethics, practical and political philosophy in combination with the subjects of economics, law, and political science. Thus, knowledge and skills in both normatively oriented practical philosophy and empirically oriented social sciences are brought together. A special emphasis is placed on the qualification of students for independent normative reflection and rational analysis in relation to contemporary ethical problems. The core and the attractiveness of this study programme is the close connection of ethics and law with economics and politics. The content framework for this is provided by the six main topics of the MA EELP, which are reflected in this journal's contributions: globalisation and justice, market and morality, climate change and responsibility, welfare and dignity, migration and rights, and digitalisation and self-determination.

First issue: Democracy in Times of Unstable Conditions

There are strong reasons for organizing societies as democracies and for protecting and defending a functioning democratic constitution. For within a framework of basic rights the

decisions on the specific organization of the effective protection of the rights of citizens to the necessary conditions of being able to lead their lives need democratic legitimization of the decision processes and need control of the involved political and administrative positions of might and influence. This requires a separation of powers, regular elections to offices, and the enablement and protection of civil liberties. However, it must be noted that functioning democracies are difficult to preserve. Those in power may misuse the institutions of the state. The political opponents may be demonized, a basic preparedness to seek compromises may be given up. The electoral process gets increasingly influenced by those with money and the interest in continuing democratic control may be lost. Meanwhile, on the societal level, social trust among citizens may erode, the willingness to cooperate may decrease, and as a result the willingness to engage civically might be discouraged. Thus, democracy cannot be taken for granted. Its reality must be critically reflected, and its design must be adjusted.

In the first issue we give students the voice, on the one hand addressing important aspects of the topic *Internal Threats to Democracy* and on the other presenting political instruments to counteract the climate catastrophe. The short essays by Sebastian Dempf, Sencer Odabaşı, Dimitrios Oikonomou, and Marco Toche Zevallos discuss different internal threats such as: restriction of free speech and opinions in times of digital media and the imperative for more digital literacy, income inequality and unregulated neoliberal markets, the call for a more critical and also louder voice from contemporary political philosophy to respond to the major crises of the time, the restriction of independent courts and their compositions.

All essays were written as part of the essay competition of the *Friends and Supporters of Economic and Climate Ethics*, a non-profit organization associated with the MA EELP. The latter promotes economic and climate ethics by fostering the research and teaching in these fields.

The essays are followed by the article of Svenja Schilling, dealing with the discussion on the effectiveness of a carbon tax and discusses the questions: „Can a carbon tax be considered fair? And is a fair carbon tax feasible?“

With the first volume of ETHICS, ECONOMICS, LAW AND POLITICS, we hope to launch an ambitious publication project so that important student positions and thoughts are published and encourage us to think and discuss further.

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