

Editor-in-Chief's Introduction

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The Journal of Ethics is quite proud and excited to feature this special issue on moral responsibility theory. Like the several previous special issues on this topic in the journal, it contains full-length articles written by some of the distinguished philosophers in the field: John Martin Fischer, Michael McKenna, Ishtiyaque Haji, Saul Smilansky, and Helen Steward. But unlike those other special issues on this topic, each author was asked to set forth his or her own analysis of moral responsibility (or, say, a related concept such as free will), distinguish it from some competing analyses, and then to defend it from concerns that have been raised about it. As readers will observe, this is precisely what each author has done, and with some rather interesting philosophical results. By “results” I mean that in each case authors have taken what Fischer has expressed is a kind of “dialectical stalemate”¹ between the various competing standpoints in moral responsibility theory and they have commenced to open new vistas of philosophical exploration. In some cases, authors provide readers with not only a sense of philosophical optimism about whether or not the problem of free will and responsibility might ever be resolved, but also leave readers with a sense of some of the variety of conundrums facing those who take responsibility and its related concepts seriously. It is hoped that these incisive essays will inspire further work on this most important subject, especially in the pages of this journal.

¹ I borrow this delightful phrase from some of the voluminous writings of John Martin Fischer.

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