

Editor's Note

Joel H. Rosenthal

As we go to press with this inaugural Autumn issue of *Ethics & International Affairs*, the events of Tuesday, September 11, dominate our thoughts and those of our readers. We are unable to address these concerns in this issue of the journal, but reflecting on many of the problems that we must all now consider, such as the conditions for the justified use of force, the balancing of public security and individual liberties, and the jurisdiction for international crime, has been and will continue to be among our central aims.

At the level of abstract principle, there is significant consensus on the values that should inform our international order. We should oppose violence, oppression, and severe poverty while promoting the dignity and well-being of all persons. But there is significant disagreement about how these values should be promoted, the relative weight that each should have in our practical deliberations, and the specific institutions and policies that can lead to their realization.

Our aim in *Ethics & International Affairs* is to foster discussions that engage moral argument and are informed by empirical observation. We focus our attention on the space between abstract general principles and the dilemmas of everyday life, recognizing that this requires both theoretical sophistication and an understanding of facts on the ground that are often quite complex. Cultivating these discussions is important if we are to avoid blind acceptance of the social arrangements and practices that characterize our world, and increase understanding of the applicability of general ethical principles to specific actions and institutional design.

Each essay in this issue promotes our aim in different ways. Several of them focus on urgent international concerns such as global warming, HIV/AIDS in developing countries, and significant and increasing income inequality. Each of these discussions is an ethical reflection on the design and function of national and global institutions and on various proposals for their reform, and each requires us to rethink our relationship to these problems. Other essays contribute to our aim by centering on slightly more abstract issues such as how transnational citizenship should be conceived and how collective moral agency can be understood. Considering agency and responsibility in our current global context is of particular importance, because while it is often easy to determine the greatest challenges and threats to people's dignity and well-being, it is often difficult to grasp what role different individual and collective agents should play in addressing them.

The next issue of the journal will appear in Spring 2002. In the meantime, please visit our Web site at www.carnegiecouncil.org for broad-ranging discussions of current events with links to relevant articles from previous volumes of this journal and other publications of the Carnegie Council.