

1. A short history of the last decade

Over the last five years, the character of the journal changed quite dramatically. A decade ago, the journal was primarily filled with articles written by the members of the Netherlands Association for Philosophy of Law (VWR). The journal was published in Dutch and was closely related to the VWR and thus felt familiar to its members. At the same time it was not run very professionally and did not live up to the standards of peer review as we have endorsed them today. However, since more and more VWR members developed a more international profile, publishing in English and opting for more international journals, it became more and more difficult for the journal to attract sufficient copy.

Hans Lindahl is the initiator of the process towards the internationalizing of the journal and he initiated quite some important steps in that direction. Mireille Hildebrandt endorsed the situation in which the journal was when she took over as editor-in-chief – a *sur place* halfway in the process of internationalization. Mireille was (and is) of the opinion that hybridity is a desirable in-between situation for a journal like ours and her main aim during her term as editor-in-chief was to maintain this *Janus face*-status: focusing on the one hand on Dutch legal philosophers and at the same time seeking to further the process of internationalizing of the journal.

We have made quite a number of steps away from the journal we were a decade ago. For one thing, we adopted an English title and over time the basic architecture of the journal and the homepage has become 100% English – with the exception of the Dutch articles we publish. In fact, in the 2014 volume we only published one single article in the Dutch language but we will publish more in the 2015 volume. Moreover, we cut the close connection of editors to the various Dutch legal philosophy departments (it used to be the case that each major Dutch legal philosophy department had at least one delegate in the editorial board). Mireille made a major step towards the internationalization of the editorial board by inviting Anthony Duff and she has been very active in internationalizing the advisory board of the journal by inviting new members from abroad – basically the ‘subjects’ of the special issues of the last years. It now consists of the following members:

- René Foqué (KU Leuven, Belgium)
- Serge Gutwirth (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)
- Ton Hol (Utrecht University, NL)
- Bonnie Honig (Brown University, USA)
- Marc Loth (Tilburg University, NL)
- Thomas Mertens (Radboud University Nijmegen, NL)
- Philip Pettit (Princeton University, USA and Australian National University, Australia)
- Kristen Rundle (The University of Melbourne, Australia)
- Jan Smits (Maastricht University, NL)

- Gunther Teubner (Goethe University, Germany)
- Wibren van der Burg (Erasmus University Rotterdam, NL)
- Neil Walker (University of Edinburgh, UK)
- Steven Winter (Wayne State University, USA)

During the last general meeting of the VWR, Thomas Mertens proposed to tighten the ties between the journal and the Dutch and Flemish legal-philosophical community by having at least one person of each legal-philosophical section in the advisory board (thus not the editorial board) and to have a meeting with that board, say every second year. I know that Mireille was not too fond of such an approach, I am less opposed to the idea.

Therefore I propose to invite the following persons to include all Dutch legal philosophy sections that are actually involved with the journal:

- Anne Ruth Mackor (Groningen NL)
- Hans Lindahl (Tilburg NL)
- Wouter Veraart (VU University Amsterdam NL)
- Marc de Wilde (UvA Amsterdam)

However, the editorial board wants to make it explicitly clear that we are only accountable to the *Netherlands Association for Philosophy of Law*, and not separately accountable to the various legal philosophy sections in NL/BE. All members of the VWR are invited to attend the general meeting of the VWR, and, if they wish to, they can voice their opinion on the journal there. We endorse the role advisory boards have in general: advising and supporting the editorial board. In addition, membership of the (international) advisory boards serves primarily as a signalling/credentialising body for the identity and quality of the journal.

2. The next decade

Hans Lindahl and Mireille Hildebrandt should be applauded for making made important steps in the process towards the internationalization of the journal. In her term, Mireille endorsed a hybrid in-between position for the journal. I myself am less convinced that this hybrid situation is a sustainable position for a journal like ours. We have already lost the close link Dutch legal practitioners – if there ever has been such a close link, it seems to me a rosy reinvention of the past. I do not think that we can turn back the time and revert to the good-old days and should be honest to our critics and ourselves. Over time we have become an academic journal and we have raised the quality standards we impose on the articles we publish. I think this is a welcome and a necessary development. But this implies that both our readership and our authors have moved away from the more general practitioners to a more specialized group of academics. In that sense we have become a quite independent academic journal and definitely lost our status as ‘club bulletin’ of the VWR. I think that the majority of the members of the VWR acknowledge and endorse this status. But maybe we should be frank about it, and present this *fait accompli* as a *fait accompli*.

Threats

The major threat is that we do not attract enough unsolicited copy to maintain the journal. On the one hand, we do not attract enough unsolicited copy from *Dutch* tenured staff. On the other hand, we are too locally positioned, too Dutch to be considered a truly international journal to attract enough copy from senior staff abroad. Currently we primarily attract copy from students (chapters from PhD theses and revised MA-theses), post-docs and, interestingly enough, retired professors. This problem of insufficient copy is a serious threat to (the quality of) our journal, and its perspective for the future. Moreover it undermines the morale of the editorial board: we want to discuss which of the papers available to select for publication and not, issue after issue, whether we can hold on to our quality standards and still be able to fill up the issue.

The bottom line is: the journal can only survive as a serious journal of legal philosophy if it attracts more high quality papers. Both hybridity and going back to the old days are not viable options. We as the editorial board have a strong preference to further pursue the path that Hans took. It is essential to further our international profile in order to attract more submissions of senior staff from abroad *and* the Netherlands/Belgium. Indeed, we think these two go in tandem; given the increasingly stringent publication requirements for Dutch academics, a more international profile will make our journal more attractive to them as well.

Answering these threats

The journal has taken a number of steps already in the last few years. The special issues revolving around the work of an internationally renowned author have been quite effective to attract well-known authors. The international conferences with calls for papers have been very successful to increase “brand awareness” – especially the 2013 conference revolving around the work of Anthony Duff and the 2015 conference revolving around the work of Jean Cohen attracted quite a number of participants.

In addition, in a recent meeting, the editorial board agreed upon the following strategies to making submitting to our journal more attractive to prospective submitters:

- The journal welcomes special issues, under the condition that it brings good papers of (relatively) well-known persons to the journal.
- We are organized quite well and are thus able to work relatively fast – compared to some other journals – and we could use it in our advantage.
 - From January 2015 we will have established (and will explicitly advertise) a short turnaround period from submission to either desk rejection or process of peer review of three weeks. This might make our journal more attractive because it makes it painless to give the journal a try without losing much time. An author just knows that in case of a desk rejection (s)he only loses three weeks.

- In addition, if a paper is accepted for review we will provide the final verdict on acceptance, re-submission or rejection within three months.
- To strengthen the editorial board, we will look for two to four new associate editors, by filling the empty seats of Mireille and Morag, and the opening places of Bertjan and Carel (spring 2016). They should be persons with a strong international reputation, who know the game of publishing in international refereed journals, and, given the current composition of the editorial board, be more senior persons – mid-career. Luigi Corrias agreed to take over the role as book review editor from Bertjan Wolthuis. We have started a search procedure for at least two new editors from abroad. We compiled a shortlist of possible candidates and we are in the process of contacting possible new editors.

Further steps

The editorial board has also considered further steps to increase our visibility and appeal to authors in order to sustain our viability and an international journal of legal philosophy.

- **Title.** We think that the word “Netherlands” in the title might hinder us in our attempt to attract more copy. We think that a more general title, for example “Journal of Legal Philosophy” or “European Journal of Legal Philosophy” might be more attractive.
- **Publisher.** We as the editorial board are in favor of moving the journal to a well-known and genuine international academic publisher – preferably a university press. Why would someone from abroad submit a paper to a journal with a publisher they have never heard of? Moreover, such a step would include our journal into the huge packages these publishers offer to university libraries, giving academics access to the journal and includes our articles in the search functions in these university libraries. One international publisher already showed a remarkable interest in our journal and such an unsolicited interest is encouraging. We have an established journal with a well-functioning editorial board, over the last five years we have published quite a number of papers by established names, consider for example this list that I compiled for the leaflet for the conference folder for the June 2015 conference:
 - **Jean Cohen** (2015) *Freedom of Religion Inc.: Whose Sovereignty?*
 - **Kristen Rundle** (2014) *Legal Subjects and Juridical Persons: Developing Public Legal Theory through Fuller and Arendt*
 - **David Dyzenhaus** (2014) *Hobbes, reciprocity, rule of Law, conscience, legality, liberty*
 - **Dora Kostakopoulou** (2014) *Liberalism and Societal Integration: In Defence of Reciprocity and Constructive Pluralism*
 - **Antony Duff** (2011) *Who Must Presume Whom to Be Innocent of What?*
 - **Gunther Teubner** (2011) *Transnational Fundamental Rights: Horizontal Effect?*
 - **Neil Walker** (2010) *Constitutionalism and the Incompleteness of Democracy: An Iterative Relationship*
 - **Philip Pettit** (2009) *Responsibility Incorporated*
 - **Bonnie Honig** (2008) *Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory*

It could very well be that if we offer such a package (well organized team, journal with a tradition and potential) to an international publishing house we might be able to find a home there.

3. Conclusion

I think we are running an interesting journal, but we should think long and hard about how keep it sustainable in the current market situation. That is, how can we guarantee to attract enough publishable papers to maintain the journal while holding on to our quality standards? In order to maintain a viable journal, we should pursue the path towards internationalization that is taken by the previous two editors-in-chief. This is my major aim in my term as the 2015-2019 editor-in-chief.

Utrecht August 2015, Roland Pierik, editor-in-chief NJLP.