EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Problems for democracy abound. In the United States, we notice these problems in our daily lives, when lascivious spam bombards our email in-boxes; in our weekly lives, when our newspapers report the abductions of children by convicted sex offenders; and, upon occasion, when terrorists attack our citizenry. The freedom guaranteed by our democracy seems to open the gates to attacks upon our sanctity and our security. On the other hand, proposed governmental regulations to prevent further attacks seem to threaten our freedom. Our freedom is in tension with our safety.

Our Constitution specifically affirms our ideal of freedom through guaranteeing us equality and rights. The liberal foundations of our political system entail not only freedom, equality and rights, but also inherent limits upon our freedom, insistence that equality extends to all, and obligations conjoined to our rights. If we are all free, then we must respect the freedom each other. If we are truly equal, no one is better than anyone else. If we all have rights, then we must respect the rights of each other.

The ultimate foundation of this freedom, this equality, and these rights is a shared conception of morality. The criteria of the extent of our freedom, as well as the morally justified limitations upon our freedom required to protect the freedom of each, come from this morality. Our conception of human nature that necessitates the ideal that we are all equal to one another comes from this morality. The conception of the rights to which we are entitled and the obligations to which we are bound comes from this morality. As our Constitution represents ideals of freedom, equality, and rights for all, the foundational morality represents ideal of human character and action.

The authors in this volume, members of the Concerned Philosophers for Peace, present alternate viewpoints about the interpretation and application of that foundational moral conception. They write in response to the problems that have arisen recently in the life of democratic polities (especially, but not exclusively, the United States) and the institutions within these polities. The authors in this volume are political philosophers. Thus, many of their reflections address foundational questions concerning political order. The authors in this volume are ethical philosophers. Thus, many of their reflections address the moral foundations of democracy and peace.

Writers in this volume advance alternate interpretations of the moral foundation of our liberal democracy, they advance differing accounts of the implications of that foundation for social, political, and economic order. These implications concern education, affirmative action, multi-culturalism, private property, civil disobedience, community, and military service among others. They advance differing accounts of the implications of that foundation for international relations, particularly as concerns war and peace.

The concerned philosophers for peace, in their writings and in their discussions and arguments with one another, in their teaching and their civic discourse, participate in what John Stuart Mill regards as the most essential

guardian of our liberty—the free and active exercise of thought and discussion. He says in Chapter Two of *On Liberty* that the preponderance among humankind of rational opinions and rational conduct is "owing to a quality of the human mind, the source of everything respectable" in us, either as intellectual or as moral beings, to rectify our mistakes by discussion and experience.[1] These discussions—entailing disagreement about the interpretation and application of our principles; varying understandings of democracy; argument and counter-argument concerning freedom, equality, and rights—these are the most efficacious ways to keep us free and equal, and progressing toward the as yet incompletely realized ideals of our Constitution and its moral foundation.

Mill tells us why we must be open to discussion, examination, and disputation concerning our ideals, even if they are completely true, even if anyone completely understands them, when he says:

> First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.
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> Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collisions of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.
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> Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds. And not only this, but fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct: the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction from reason or personal experience.[2]

While freedom, equality, and rights entail problems, particularly threats to our safety and security, the moral superiority of a political system that supports freedom, equality, and rights is unquestionable, particularly one such as ours that permits free thought and discussion, though our political system, perhaps, does not encourage it as much as it should. The Concerned Philosophers for Peace are among those in this democratic republic who—by their example, teaching, and writing—exercise and promote the rights of freedom of thought and freedom of discussion.

Tyrannies prohibit rights, equality, and freedom—particularly the freedom of expression—but provide even less safety to their citizens than liberal democracies. So, whatever its dangers may be, a democratic republic most successfully guarantees our freedom to pursue truth and human flourishing and even our sanctity and safety.

John Kultgen and Mary Lenzi have labored to provide an excellent representation of the free and thoughtful discussion of the problems of democracy, in order not to threaten our republic but to strengthen it. It is a discussion in which they participated fully both at conferences of the Concerned Philosophers for Peace and in their editing of this volume.

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1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 24–25.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 64.