

Editorial: Letters to the Editor

- Q. *What is telephony? I hope I was not committing it when I made my call to you on Friday.*
- A. 'Thou shalt not commit telephony' is related to 'Thou shalt make no telephone calls' as 'Thou shalt do no murder' is related to 'Thou shalt not kill'. The court may in either case take account of pleas of self-defence, extreme provocation or other mitigating factors. The Editor's decision is final.
- Q. *I have just read your Decalogue and notice that the article that I sent to you last week breaks the fourth commandment thirteen times, and that my covering letter amounts to a minor infringement of the fifth commandment. What am I to do?*
- A. Let him or her that is without sin among us cast the first stone. Go, and sin no more.
- Q. *The writing of my paper was occasioned by the startling inadequacies of a paper which you published on the same subject—a good instance of the sort of work that gives philosophy the reputation which gave rise to Mary Midgley's Open Letter. How close to home do you see her letter as coming?*
- A. We understand that Mrs Midgley herself regards this journal and this Institute as part of the solution rather than as part of the problem.
- Q. *I have recently completed a manuscript of 581 pages in which I resolve most of the main outstanding problems of epistemology and ontology. May I send it to you, in the hope that some portions of it may prove to be suitable as articles in your esteemed journal?*
- A. No. Authorship is autonomous. Thou shalt not tempt thy brother to commit heteronomy. Or, as the Canadian proverb puts it, 'Every man has got to skin his own skunk'.
- Q. *I now see and acknowledge my manifold sins and wickedness. My recently submitted article breaks the second, third, fourth, seventh and eighth commandments. Is this a record?*
- A. No. You would have equalled the record if you had added a postscript to your covering letter asking to be allowed to review your twin brother's *Dictionary of Philosophy* and your mother-in-law's trilogy on *Philosophy, Philosophers and Family Life*.
- Q. *Dr F. X. Wilberforce of this Department has applied for promotion to a readership. I am sending to you, under separate cover, copies of his thirty-seven articles and fourteen books. We shall be most grateful*

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for your assessment of Dr Wilberforce's standing in the world of scholarship. Will you please let us have your report by the end of next month?

- A. I have just received the proofs of a whole quarterly issue of this journal; there are fifty or sixty articles which I must read and judge by the end of this month; the philosophy students of my university are busy writing this week the answers that I shall be busy reading next week; there are numerous new books waiting for assignment to reviewers, or for consignment to the residuum of unreviewed books. The task you invite me to undertake requires for its proper fulfilment a substantial amount of reading and re-reading, work of a kind of which an editor already has a great deal to do. I shall be grateful if you will send the work of Dr Wilberforce to an ex-editor, or a future editor, or to an editor who has nothing to do but edit, or to someone who has never hoped or expected or intended to be an editor at all.
- Q. *I have been enjoying your editorial Decalogue so much that I was tempted to commit telephony to tell you so. I have resisted and send this card instead.*
- A. Thank you for your card and for your scrupulousness. It is not clear to me that your call would have been an act of telephony. In any case I do not expect conformity to my Decalogue to run at a much higher level than conformity to the original.