
Book Reviews

Robert B. BAKER and Laurence B. McCULLOUGH (eds.). *The Cambridge World History of Medical Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 876 pp.

The editors of the World History of Medical Ethics (WHME) aim to make its subject accessible not only to scholars but to the public, to students, to practicing health care professionals, and, of course, to bio-ethicists. They observe that, as bioethics has “professionalized”, the broad knowledge base integral to bioethics’ initial success is atrophying. The editors hope that bio-ethicists will use the WHME to gain historical perspective on their own endeavours, to bring long-term social forces into focus, and to contemplate alternatives to currently accepted viewpoints. They also hope that the global sweep of WHME will assist readers in understanding the deeper cultural and historical background of medical ethics. Practical constraints led to the editors’ decision to end the history in 2000, the last year of the twentieth century.

Amazingly enough, the editors wonder if the title should not have been “A history of discourses of medicine and morality”. Generally speaking, medical ethics is understood to comprise diverse discourses on the responsibilities of healers to the sick and the healthy, to society, to each other, and to the gods or God. They use the term “discourses” in the sense given prominence by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who extended the meaning of “discourse” to include a wide range of discussion and writing in the public arena. They would hope that, after reading the introduction and perusing the volume, readers will agree that the book might have been more aptly titled “A History of the Discourses at the Intersection of (Bio)Medicine and Morality”. Influenced by Jürgen Habermas, a leading proponent of “discourse ethics”, they borrow his term “discourses” to operationalize their experientially rooted concept of many voices articulating norms and values related to health and health care. They sent all contributors the following characterization of “discourses” to guide them in their work:

A discourse is a written or oral communication about a subject over time. Until recently, the history of medical ethics has focused on formalizations of medical morality, such as oaths and codes. The expression “discourses” indicates a broader conception of this history, embracing the perspectives of religious figures, philosophers, the public and patients, as well as practitioners. “Discourses” include oral forms of expres-

sion as well as texts on medicine, religion, philosophy, and bioethics. It also includes various forms of patient and public expression and social commentary. Sources may include not only published texts but cartoons, graffiti, inscriptions, letters, pamphlets and other vehicles that the general public, patients, practitioners, and religious and social figures have used to express moral values, ideals, standards and norms for healthcare and sickness care, and for practitioners and medical practice (15).

They fear, however, that a volume entitled “Discourses” would likely seem too abstruse and academic to be of practical value. They envisage their reader as someone – a student, a patient, a policy maker, a health care professional, a scientific researcher, a scholar, a bio-ethicist – seeking historical perspective on one or other current controversy or aspect of biomedical or health care ethics. This is the reason why “discourses” would be too academic and why they are convinced that WHME “might seem exactly right”. Personally, I am convinced that this was a poor and inaccurate choice, and I am left with the impression that commercial motivations influenced them in their option for the more ostentatious WHME.

The WHME is divided into eight parts. Part I provides an introduction to the history of medical ethics, addressing the history of the concept of “medical ethics”, the historiography of the subject, and the interrelationship between bioethics and the history of medical ethics. The contribution of Martin S. Pernick on “bioethics and history” is very interesting. He rightly observes that “bio-ethicists, like physicians, rarely share historians’ relish for ambiguity, irony, and particularities.” Historians also like to keep some distance from their sources, and they resist identifying too closely with current decision makers. Thus, historians of medical ethics may see bioethicists as their objects of study rather than their partners, as the sources of “primary” data to be interpreted but not as legitimate participants in the process of interpreting (20).

To situate major figures and texts in the context of world history and the history of medicine, a chronology has been created in Part II of the volume. Events, persons and texts are presented from page 22 to page 97, starting around 4000 BCE (first urban centres in Mesopotamia) and ending with the Human Cloning Regulation Act of Japan, the text of José A. Mainetti’s *Compendio Bioético* and Albert Jonsen’s *Short History of Medical Ethics*.

Culture is the focus of Part III. In this part the contributors present diverse cultural interpretations of the life cycle, serving as an interpretive framework and background to the discourses on medical ethics that are explored in subsequent chapters: Hindu India, Buddhist India, China, Japan, Europe and the Americas, and the Islamic Middle East.

Parts IV to VII, which encompass more than half of the volume, address the discourses of religion (Part IV), philosophy (V), practitioners (VI) and the discourses of bioethics (VII). Part VIII is devoted to discourses on medical ethics and society. In Part IV, the different religions are presented: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Jewish and Islamic Medical Ethics. Part V presents the discourses of philosophical medical ethics (by the editors themselves). Part VI

overviews the discourses of practitioners in Africa, India, China, Japan, Ancient Europe, the Hippocratic Tradition, Ninth to Fourteenth Century Middle East, Medieval and Renaissance Europe, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe, Eighteenth Century France and Germany, Eighteenth Century Spain, Eighteenth Century Britain, Eighteenth Century North America, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century France, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Spain, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany, Eighteenth to Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Britain and the United States, Modern and Contemporary Islamic Middle-East.

The discourses of bioethics in Part VII are devoted to the United States, the United Kingdom, Western Europe, Post-Communist Eastern Europe, Latin America, East Asia, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The first subdivision of Part VIII describes the ethical and legal regulation of medical practice and research, with a central interest in research on human subjects. The second division of Part VIII enters into the debate on medical ethics, imperialism, and the Nation State (with a chapter on Nazism, Japanese doctors' experimentation, Apartheid, military medical research in the United States). The final subdivision on Medical Ethics and Health Policy enters into the ethical debates on health policy, organ transplantation, defining and redefinition of life and death.

The appendices are designed to assist readers by providing them with brief biographies of major figures in the history of medical ethics and a comprehensive bibliography of the subject.

Having gone through this volume as a professional bio-ethicist, I have also become aware of my evident limitations. I am of European origin, have strong roots in the Roman Catholic tradition, and in European philosophical and cultural mainstreams. This awareness serves to illustrate immediately that the use of a title such as "World History of Medical Ethics", not only sounds absurd, it *is* absurd. Indeed, the editors would have been much more honest to their readers and to the general public, if they had entitled the volume – as they seem to admit – a subjective reading of "discourses on medical ethics".

Many parts in this publication are indeed highly subjective. The chronology of medical ethics is a rather biased presentation of events and persons. The editors are one-sidedly interested in euthanasia developments, ignoring many other important movements and evolutions in bioethics. The absence of so many links makes the chronology a real failure, with no historical objectivity and value at all.

This illustrates one of the major weaknesses of this volume: the editors are not trained in historical sciences, and they have therefore allowed the contributors to make a great many mistakes. Reading the part on the "discourses of bioethics in Western-Europe" (by Maurizio Mori) as a Western European, I could not avoid conceding to a degree of suspicion concerning the quality of other contributions. Mori's subjective presentation of historical developments in bioethics in Western-Europe is verging on the hilarious.

On the positive side, Mori could have done much better if he had read the excellent contribution of another author in the WHME, namely that of Darrel W. Amundsen on

Roman Catholic Medical Ethics (Chapter 14). This chapter is genuinely magnificent and highly insightful. Nevertheless, his description of Personalism could be less “Americanized” and more “Europeanized”, given that Western Europe is and remains the actual source of Personalism.

Finally, with all these warnings and caveats in mind, and well aware that the contributors have presented their discourses in a highly personalized and subjective way, the WHME will of course be an enormously valuable source for many readers (and especially teachers in medical ethics and bio-ethics). The present reviewer would have been more at ease, however, if he had not been so disturbed by the evident – and often correctable – one-sidedness of some of the contributions.

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David KOEPSSELL. *Who Owns You? The Corporate Gold Rush to Patent Your Genes*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 187 pp.

Almost 20% of our genes are now patented. In *Who Owns You*, David Koepsell describes why he thinks this is not right, legally as well as morally. To prove his point, he takes what he calls an ontological approach, rather than following the traditional ethical lines of thought of deontology or consequentialism. He argues that to understand whether DNA can be owned and whether gene patenting should be abolished, we should first find out the nature of DNA and the relationship it has with individuals and persons. A major part of the book is allocated to describing the functioning of DNA and genes and the history of their discovery. The author also describes the history of gene patents. Beginning with the patenting of certain genetically engineered animals, such as Onco-Mouse™, there appears to have been a slippery slope towards the patenting of genes. However, as the book repeatedly states, there is a big difference between the two: genetically engineered animals are the result of invention and intention, new genes are not invented but discovered.

Koepsell refers to the fact that people are intuitively shocked when they find out about gene patenting. In order to explain this shock, he believes that a thorough reflection on the relationship between genes, individuals and personhood is needed. A particular genetic constitution makes up an individual, but only a subset of individuals makes a person. To be a person, certain traits, such as a minimum level of consciousness and intelligence, are needed, and these traits are the result of a certain genetic makeup. Persons are entities and subjects of rights and duties. Hence, genes form at least some basis for the special status persons have.

Koepsell also investigates the legal issue of the ownership of genes and investigates whether genes can be considered intellectual property. He argues that they differ from intellectual property because no labour or intention is involved in the creation of a gene, as it is the result from million years of evolution. Furthermore, genes do not fit within

other legal categories of ownership, such as land, ‘movables or chattels’, because they are non-exclusive and non-rivalrous. Koepsell himself is inclined to think that genes best resemble the idea of ‘the commons’. Since they cannot be enclosed, but can be regulated, they are like radio wavelengths. In this respect, he advocates a model that resembles that of Open Source Software (OSF) rather than a model based on patenting. He argues that gene patenting limits rather than promotes scientific discovery. The OSF model would encourage such discovery and at the same time be profitable. But he also admits that genes are what make us unique as persons. This unique element is separate from the public good and should be protected by rigorous privacy laws.

Who Owns You is lucidly written and reads as a 101 on gene patenting. It is a book suitable for all who wish to understand gene patenting, and obtain a fresh perspective on associated ethical and legal matters. It is also – and primarily – a first attempt at laying the foundations of an ontology of genes and personhood, and its legal and ethical implications. There are still some loose ends to be resolved, such as the relation between the ‘personal’ aspect of genes and their common aspect. Also, some would consider the author’s definition of person as a human being with a given set of characteristics to be inaccurate. To his credit, however, he readily admits these shortcomings in the concluding chapter.

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James GARVEY. *The Ethics of Climate Change. Right and Wrong in a Warming World*. London: Continuum, 2008. 179 pp.

The Ethics of Climate Change. Right and Wrong in a Warming World is the first in *Think Now*, a series of books on central contemporary and political issues from a philosophical perspective. Aiming at a broader audience including “any intelligent reader”, the series tries to bring “philosophical rigour to modern questions which matter to most of us”. Climate change is certainly an urgent enough question to deserve discussion in this series. James Garvey is both co-editor of this series and author of its first book.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter on the science of climate change, Garvey tries to demonstrate that there is considerable agreement within the scientific community about the issue. He refers for the most part to the work of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC), which, given the panel’s constitution, is indeed a plausible source to start with. Contrary to the more popular media, in which climate change is sometimes presented as being a significant source of disagreement, the scientific community is more or less settled on its opinion about the issue and the role of human beings in the process, Garvey argues. In this same chapter, he tries to elaborate on what human beings can expect in both the immediate and more distant future.

For those readers who do not have a background in philosophy, the second chapter provides a general introduction to moral philosophy and the justification of moral

beliefs in particular. Garvey provides a thorough overview here, illustrating why it is so important to provide reasons for and to justify one's moral beliefs. This chapter is also interesting to read for the well-informed philosopher. Contrary to the often annoyingly superficial picture of the moral landscape, Garvey manages to provide the reader with a basic overview of the – for environmental ethics – most important moral theories.

In the remaining four chapters, the author's tone becomes more pressing. In Chapter 3, he discusses the notion of responsibility. Using a somewhat particular version of the 'prisoner's dilemma' and the 'tragedy of the commons', he tries to explain why people living in the developed world have a responsibility to take action. He discusses several options that might serve as the basis for such a responsibility: historical principles of justice, present entitlements and capacities, and sustainability.

Arguments supporting "doing nothing" are the topic of the fourth chapter. With increasing fervour, Garvey refutes the arguments of uncertainty (we don't know enough about the science of climate change), cost (taking action on climate change is too costly), technological rescue (future – or even existing – technology will save us from the worst of climate change), and waiting for others to react (action on climate change should be postponed till others react). The book's layout clearly serves its purpose in this chapter. Garvey demonstrates that all these arguments are based on *ad hoc* reasoning and not on a principle, let alone a defensible moral principle. This indicates, Garvey argues, that reasons for delaying action might make the reader suspicious. What is the real motivation behind this delay? For Garvey, the only credible answer to this question is "selfishness."

Garvey dedicates the following chapter to what the world has done and what it should do. After identifying a set of criteria to judge the moral adequacy of proposals for action, Garvey applies them to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, and two different proposals for further or future action (Peter Singer's idea of "Equal Per Capita Shares" and Martino Traxler's idea of "Comparable Burdens"). The unfortunate conclusion of this chapter is that the existing proposals for action are far from perfect, if we assess them in terms of the criteria set forth in Chapter 3 (i.e. historical principles of justice, present entitlements and capacities, and sustainability).

Assuming that most readers are not part of (national) governmental bodies, the final chapter entitled "Individual Choices" is probably the one most "tailored" to the lives of ordinary readers. Contrary to popular books about climate change, the present volume does not provide a list of practical tips to improve one's behaviour on a day to day basis. Instead, Garvey starts by reiterating the importance of humane consistency (i.e. consistency in thought and action). If the reader is outraged by a lack of action on the part of nation states and large corporations, he or she should also be outraged about their own "inactive" behaviour. Given this moral outrage, what *should* we do? This question is answered in a last section on civil disobedience. The main message is that people are not powerless against governmental and corporate forces. Societies do change and sometimes "these changes are internally motivated, brought about by collective groups of like-minded people" (151). Although this civil obedience is "nothing other than a

BOOK REVIEWS

campaign by us, against us” (152), Garvey is convinced that his appeal is not irrational. While we will probably have to give up some (material) things, we can expect more of something else (justice, goodness) in return. This, according to Garvey, can never be irrational because “there is nothing irrational about insisting on a more human world” (153).

This closing sentence is exemplary of the book as a whole. It is a tough manifesto against inaction with a high level of engagement from the author. For opponents of such committed writing, the author’s pressing tone may be a bit overbearing. Sentences like “[The principle] hardly bears spelling out. You know exactly what I mean by it” (75) are not very common in literature intended for an intellectual audience. But if we look beyond the “popular phrasing,” we see a very concerned author.

The cover text contains recommendations by philosophers such as Ted Honderich and Peter Singer, both well known for their social engagement. For readers unafraid of the call to action and ready to be “morally outraged” (Singer), this book offers an excellent and “capturing” (Honderich) introduction to the ethics of climate change.

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Donald H. DUNSON. *Child, Victim, Soldier. The Loss of Innocence in Uganda*. New York: Orbis, 2009. 145 pp.

The cruel, atrocious and emotional stories recorded by American priest Donald Dunson about the lives of young victims of the civil war in Uganda continued to haunt the mind of the present reader long after she had read the book. Dunson allows the children – kidnapped or orphaned by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) – to speak for themselves, reinforcing their words with emotional commentary of his own. It remains to be seen, however, whether the written documentation of this evil does sufficient justice to the reality of the situation in Uganda. Furthermore, the reader is faced with a need to distance him or herself after a while to engage in philosophical/theological reflection, and it is not clear whether the volume under review provides this necessary opportunity.

The book opens with a fictional story about Samuel, inspired by interviews with former child soldiers. The fictional character of the narrative and the improbable heroism of its main character, however, serve only to undermine its plausibility.

Following the fiction of the first chapter, the second chapter immerses the reader in a succession of facts, sketching the history of Uganda from the 17th century to the present day. The introductory character of this chapter is particularly helpful and enlightening for the lay reader with little if any knowledge of Uganda and its conflicts.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 then relate the personal and moving stories of the former child soldiers, children whose families have been massacred, and a woman married off to one of the leaders of the LRA. The naive manner with which these stories are told, in which the children being interviewed always appear to have been able to escape the

clutches of the LRA by one or other heroic deed and return to the right path in an equally unparalleled fashion, begins to irritate after a hundred or so pages. Where are the stories of the children who do not fulfil this ideal image? Only a minimum of attention is devoted to such children, in spite of the fact that they must surely have constituted a large proportion of the LRA's victims. By recording the stories of 'good' and 'heroic' children, the book seems to offer the hope of a brighter future for Uganda, but at the same time, its romanticisation of life during and after the war does not do sufficient justice to Uganda's past and present.

Dunson argues that a shift from hope in a brighter future to the reality of a brighter future for Uganda is partly dependent upon the involvement of 'the Western world' in Uganda's problems (132). The author's efforts to involve the West in Uganda's situation tend, however, to be forced and it remains unclear whether such a connection between the West and Uganda is necessary. The narratives of war are potent enough on their own to make an impression on the reader without a link with events in the West.

After the personal stories have been told, chapter 8 offers a number of points for reflection: why was the LRA so successful? (121), how should we judge the former child soldiers? (125), how indeed can they be forgiven and ultimately forgive themselves? (134). The author's questions, however, give rise to a variety of different and ultimately unsatisfactory answers. He suggests, for example, that the success of the LRA was due in part to the underdeveloped brains of the child soldiers (124), and goes on to argue that we are all God's creation and we must thus judge these children as if they were our own (84). The biased character of such answers disappoints more than it convinces.

In spite of the book's shortcomings at the level of reflection on the narratives it presents, it invites the reader nevertheless to make his or her own analysis and pose philosophical and theological questions about its content. Dunson's book offers a number of starting points for reflection but does not offer sufficient reflection on its own. In the author's favour, however, he clearly exposes the need for reflection on the events in Uganda and does so in a gripping manner by relating the stories of the victims of war. Reflection is perhaps the first step in the journey towards a better future.

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Richard HOLTON. *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009. 203 pp.

Imagine this: "...a being that, having formed an intention, would be inexorably moved to action by it" (11). But the human person is not such a being. In *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*, Holton argues that a capacity exists that can help us stick to our intentions: *willpower*. His book offers an analysis of the factors that are determinative of human action and a sketch of his hypotheses on *weakness of will* and *strength of will*, relating them to reflection on *freedom of the will*.

BOOK REVIEWS

Holton tries to provide a picture of the human decision-making process based on both philosophy and psychology. Although the combination of the two is not always successful, his work nevertheless produces a number of interesting ideas for further reflection.

Willing, Wanting, Waiting is a collection of re-written essays and new chapters on a variety of different concepts. It is striking that Holton does not provide a separate discussion on our capacity to form a judgement, although he refers to it in relation to other capacities, which he believes are designed to compensate for our inability to form judgements and stand by them.

In the first chapter, the author discusses intentions. An intention is the result of a choice and cannot be reduced to faith and desires. A choice can also be made even if no judgement is present (chapter three). A resolution is a strong form of intention formed in order to offer resistance to potentially opposing inclinations in the future. Intentions and resolutions, however, are not always effective.

According to Holton, weakness of the will (chapter four) is not about acting against one's better judgement (*akrasia*), but rather about rash and hurried changes of judgement, about the facile abandonment of already formed resolutions. Direct temptations (chapter five) are not in opposition to judgement, they determine it. The strong willed person (chapter six) will be able to maintain his or her original resolutions. Holton thus distinguishes willpower as a distinct capacity that can be actively deployed in our efforts to resist temptations. In order to stand by a resolution it is important that we repeat it, but it is equally important that we avoid reconsidering it. In most instances it is more rational to avoid new arguments and rationalisations (chapter seven), because reconsidering our resolutions often leads to the hasty revision thereof.

In his final chapter, Holton discusses willpower as the basis of our experience of freedom of will: the idea that there is a point to resisting temptation contributes to our experience of ourselves as free beings.

While Holton's book combines a plethora of sources, among them his own ideas, the results of empirical research and the theories of other philosophers, this sometimes stands in the way of an adequate elaboration of individual elements treated therein.

Holton points to the importance of empiricism for demonstrating that the concepts he discusses are related to matters that really exist, but he tests his philosophical theses against the material of an otherwise limited number of scholars. He also pays no attention to potentially contradictory empirical results and is insufficiently critical in his analysis of the findings and interpretations of other scholars. Holton claims that his theory of willpower is constructed for the most part on empirical evidence. While one might question whether empirical science is ultimately capable of providing the foundation for a philosophical theory, Holton's foundations remain unstable and he seems too eager to forget the critical role philosophy is expected to adopt.

Detailed elaborations of the theories of other philosophers are few and far between in *Willing, Wanting, Waiting*. Hume and Bratman are given sufficient legroom, but the

philosophy of Aristotle, for example, is only mentioned between the lines, as it were, in spite of the fact that the evident similarities between his own thesis on willpower and Aristotle's ideas on habit formation call for further reflection. At the same time, a more robust dialogue with his predecessors would probably help to reinforce Holton's thesis on judgement. One might ask oneself, for example, whether what Holton calls intention is not (at least partly) the same as what others understand by the term 'judgement'.

The virtue of Holton's book, however, is that it suggests a manner of gaining potential control over ourselves by actively remembering our resolutions while refusing to reconsider them. It is this idea that makes the book a worthwhile read for both philosophers and psychologists.

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David A. CROCKER. *Ethics of Global Development; Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 416 pp.

David Crocker's book is the culmination of the life's work of one of the leading initiators of the field of development ethics. In the introduction, Crocker sketches the moment in 1978 when he agreed, albeit with some hesitation, to meet as a philosopher with a professor of zoology and a professor of Indian culture in order to plan the first university course in development ethics, while none of them had a clue what such a course might entail. Thirty years later, the present volume thus represents the end result of that meeting. Earlier versions of several of the chapters have appeared elsewhere throughout his career, but new material has also been included. It has become a substantial book from a clearly passionate author, which has much to offer to different groups of readers. While one might classify it as just another book about the currently popular 'capability approach', *Ethics of Global Development* is much more than that and can be read in a variety of different ways, one of them being as a reflection on ethics and ethicists, as I will explain at the end of this review. However, let me first discuss the contents of the book.

Although Crocker frequently makes clear how the chapters and parts of the book are connected, each of the book's four parts can still be read independently and three of them – on development ethics, overconsumption/hunger and participation/democracy – may also be interesting to people with no particular interest in the capability approach. For relative newcomers to development ethics like the present reviewer, the introduction and first part of the book offers an excellent place to start. It presents the history, agreements, controversies, and challenges of the field, as well as a detailed vision on the position of development ethicists in relation to both practitioners and (social) scientists concerned with development. Here the capability approach is placed in a broader perspective, and its founders Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen figure only as two contributors to the debate among many others. The second part of the book is

most explicitly and exclusively concerned with the capability approach. It explains the critique of capability theorists on the most important alternative foundations for development ethics, namely commodities, primary goods, utility and basic needs. It then provides a detailed discussion on the meaning of the most important concepts within the capability approach: agency, capabilities, functionings and freedom. It also explores the issue of deciding about and evaluating functionings and capabilities, thereby laying a basis for the fourth part of the book. The third part of the book contains two chapters in which Crocker applies the capability approach to overconsumption in the North and hunger in the South. The basis for the former is a Spanish work on consumption ethics written by philosopher Adela Cortina. The chapter contains a lengthy discussion of Cortina's work, which apparently remains quite abstract and is far from being applicable to our everyday consumption choices. Cortina's outlook appears to be Kantian-inspired and proposes that consumption should be autonomous, just, co-responsible and happiness-generating. In the final section, Crocker outlines nine challenges that deserve further attention. The present reviewer found this to be the most interesting part of the chapter and considers it a shame that the author concluded without choosing to engage in additional reflection on the said challenges. The capability approach seems to have little to say in this chapter. The chapter on hunger, on the other hand, is much more concrete and demonstrates in detail how the work of Sen and his capability approach have helped us to re-frame our understanding of the nature and causes of hunger and its possible solutions. To give some examples: a shift has taken place from looking at mere food availability in a region to looking at personal food entitlements and – recognizing the fact of individual diversity – a further step has been made in looking at what certain food allows an individual to do and to be.

The fourth and final part of the book is devoted to participation and democracy in service of enlarging human agency, topics that have been a connecting thread throughout the book. The basis for this fourth part of the book was already established in part two, in which Crocker discusses familiar differences between Nussbaum and Sen: Nussbaum's list of ten central capabilities, which should – according to her – be guaranteed within constitutions *versus* Sen's refusal to compose a single, universally applicable list of capabilities, and Sen's choice for agency as an important concept, needed to complement that of capabilities, *versus* Nussbaum's belief that using the latter is sufficient. Crocker squarely sides with Sen, emphasizing that the capability approach views people in developing countries and elsewhere as agents in charge of their own lives, instead of patients to be helped. Throughout the book, he hammers home his objections to Nussbaum's version of the capability approach, leaving the reader without the slightest doubt as to his own position. While he makes the occasional concession, acknowledging and praising the fact that Nussbaum at least revised her list after consultation with people worldwide, he comes across nevertheless as unjustifiably harsh at times. After all, Nussbaum has – in her own way – dealt with the topic of agency. She has argued, for example, that policy focus should be on (multiple realizable) capabilities instead of functionings, and she has included practical reason and control over one's environment

as two of the capabilities on her list. In the end, Crocker has not managed to convince me that Nussbaum's position insufficiently incorporates the value of agency. Yet reading the book did leave me with a renewed appreciation of the *inherent* value of democracy – as opposed to its instrumental value. Crocker reveals himself to be a fervent believer in and defender of democracy in the service of human agency at all levels of society, from the local to the global. He even quotes Dewey, saying that the answer to democracy's problems is always more democracy and never less. To fill a lacuna that Sen has apparently left open, he presents and discusses the theory of deliberative democracy in the first chapter of this fourth part, with the second chapter on deliberative participation in local development. What I found especially illuminating here is Crocker's classification of different types of participation (based on the work of Denis Goulet) and his own analysis of participation in the case studies in Pakistan taken from Sabine Alkire's *Valuing Freedoms* (2002). The final chapter of this fourth part – and the final chapter of the book as a whole – focuses on the question of globalization. Of course, deliberative democracy is a quite demanding ideal and it is a pity that Crocker decided not to discuss the capacities and skills that deliberators need, a topic on which he has written in the past. In a book about the *capability* approach, this would have been particularly appropriate. One might also be concerned about democratic decisions not always being *just*. Other authors on the capability approach – such as Severine Deneulin in her book *The Capability Approach and the Praxis of Development* (2006) – have recently taken up this concern, sometimes adopting positions opposite to that of Crocker. Further dialogue between such authors and Crocker in the future would be fruitful and interesting.

Having mentioned the 'capability approach' and 'participation and democracy' as leitmotifs in Crocker's work, I would like to suggest a third reading strategy, namely as a reflection on the contribution of (applied) ethics to solving the world's problems and on the role that ethicists might play therein. Various segments of the book have something worthwhile to say on this topic, sometimes extensively and sometimes more succinctly. Of course, there are Crocker's comments on the role that Nussbaum sees for herself as a philosopher – sketching the rough outlines of the contents of national constitutions – which Crocker is convinced unsurprisingly is not the way to go. In the introduction and the chapter on hunger, moreover, Crocker rejects the abstract way in which philosophers such as Hardin and Singer dealt with the topic in the 1970's. They argued about our duties to the distant needy, but "ignored what happened to famine relief donations or food aid once they arrived in a stricken country." Crocker makes a strong appeal for an ethics that is genuinely relevant to solving today's problems. And this means an interdisciplinary ethics that takes into account institutions and practices, an ethics that is "explicit, contextually sensitive, public, and engaged." In Crocker's view, ethicists need to be in close contact with other groups, such as social and natural scientists, policy makers, journalist, and citizens. This, of course, remains a challenge. One of the strong features of this book is that Crocker provides a thorough and insightful analysis of the multiple, related parts of what he calls "development theory-practice" (chapter three). He explains in detail, and with plenty of examples, the interactions between development institutions/practices and development critique; between ethical

principles and scientific/methodological assumptions within development studies, etc. This is very helpful. Crocker's commitment to making ethics matter is also inspiring. He presents a convincing vision that I recognize among leading figures in other 'young' and upcoming fields of applied ethics, such as the ethics of technology. As such, *Ethics of Global Development* has the capacity to provide input for joint self-reflection among people working within applied ethics. It goes without saying that interesting opportunities for mutual learning can arise where such subfields overlap – e.g. when we see a role for technology in boosting development and combating poverty – but that is a different story.

If I can allow myself one small criticism it would be the volume's lack of a bibliography. References can only be found as part of endnotes to each chapter, abbreviated in most cases, meaning that one often has to leaf back through the book to find the full references. When I recently had the opportunity to talk to David Crocker at a conference of the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA), which he helped to establish, he readily admitted that this is a minor deficiency. But his publisher forced him to drastically trim the size of the book – 416 densely printed pages – and there was just so much that he wanted to share with his readers.

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G. Elizabeth M. ANSCOMBE. *Faith in Hard Ground. Essays on Religion, Philosophy and Ethics*. Edited by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally. St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs. Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008. 273 pp.

"In her mind, faith came first, and this is why we kept the faith." This testimony by Mary Geach, the daughter of Elizabeth Anscombe, might function as a motto for this second collection of papers by a 'giant among women philosophers' (Mary Warnock). The first volume, also edited by Mary Geach and her husband Luke Gormally, was a collection of papers hitherto not collected or published – except the famous article 'Of Modern Moral Philosophy' – devoted to ethics, human life and practical reason. This second volume brings together 24 papers penned by this beloved pupil of Ludwig Wittgenstein, each bearing witness, directly or indirectly, to the sustained and profound influence of Anscombe's Catholic faith on her philosophical and ethical explorations.

We learn from Mary Geach's fine introduction that her mother converted to Catholicism when she was still a student. Throughout her adult life, Anscombe shared a very explicit faith with her husband Peter Geach, the renowned virtue ethicist. Because of her religious devotion, she was considered something of a curiosity among the majority of non-religious analytical philosophers, although they were always obliged to acknowledge her astonishing philosophical talents. The various contributions to this volume reveal how an exceptional mind like that of Elizabeth Anscombe found a source of inspiration and guidance in her devotion to the Catholic tradition that resulted in a truly autonomous and lucid way of thinking on issues of faith and superstition, religious

dogmas (transubstantiation, the immortality of the soul), sin and evil, etc ... Anscombe demonstrates her eagerness to acknowledge the limits of human reason and understanding on these topics, while at the same time strongly advocating the view that religious devotion and humility can free the mind of the self-conscious philosophical enthusiasm of some of her most admired colleagues in the analytical tradition. The reader will be intrigued and amused by the paper ‘Twenty Opinions Common among Modern Anglo-American Philosophers’ in which she criticises without further argument some doctrines popular among *some* colleagues in the analytical tradition that are directly ‘inimical to Christianity’ and should therefore be withdrawn. Fascinating but difficult to understand is the final essay ‘on Wisdom’, in which Anscombe connects a reflection on the correct translation of the Bible with a critique of the naturalism of Willard Van Orman Quine, who is characterised as a very intelligent fellow philosopher who nonetheless – and mistakenly – ignored the fact that not all relevant knowledge is scientific knowledge.

The majority of the papers in this volume deal with ethical topics, from ‘obedience to God’ to the issue of nuclear warfare or the status of the embryo and the problem of usury. There is also a very interesting digression on the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which Anscombe speaks about the ‘strong and shining virtue of chastity’, while at the same time providing evidence of her unusually clever and wise attitude in subtle ethical reflection on the issue of family planning, contraception and sexual behaviour in general. The paper entitled ‘Two Moral Theologians’ on the writings of two forgotten Jesuit moral theologians, the German Christian consequentialist Bruno Schüller and the Flemish professor at the Gregoriana Arthur Vermeersch (1858-1936) is also a joy to read. Anscombe is astonished by Schüller’s ‘ridiculous’ speech-act theory of ethical judgments, although she demonstrates a little more patience with the Latin treatise of Vermeersch: ‘De mendacio et necessitatibus commercii humanii’, a work in which the author defines the act of lying as ‘always wrong but not always mortally sinful’ – a conclusion with which Anscombe appears to sympathise.

Unpopular and even old fashioned as her ideas on religion and her moral positions may seem, Anscombe defends and exposes her ideas with a refreshing cleverness and sensibility that might be considered a lasting source for Catholic moral theology. In short, a collection that should be obligatory reading for every philosopher or theologian who is looking for something more than the currently popular avoidance of any form of substantial ethical or religious discussion in the name of a misunderstood ideal of secular moral pluralism.

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Talbot BREWER. *The Retrieval of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 344 pp.

At first sight, Talbot Brewer appears to be a nostalgist of the Golden Age, as we read on the first page of his book: “The history of ethics looks like a story of progress only if its

main texts are read in reverse chronological order.” Even if we are not expected to understand this statement literally, we still have to take it seriously: for the author, modern ethics is fundamentally flawed as it has departed from its Aristotelian conception. This thesis is not new – and Brewer is well aware of this – but it is presented here in a very thorough and convincing manner. What is distinctive of this presentation is the fact that it is rooted in action theory. Moral philosophers usually take the concept of an action for granted (think of Utilitarians, for example, who speak of the consequences of an action without elaborating on the action itself or where its borders lie). For Brewer, however, this is a mistake, because morality cannot be understood apart from action. It is even a twofold mistake, because the concept of action taken for granted by most contemporary philosophers is also inadequate. They understand human action as a kind of production, whereas it should be conceived as directed towards a good or a value.

There is a considerable difference between the two: not every good aimed at is a state of affairs that should be produced (promoted or maximised); some goods are internal to actions, making those actions intrinsically good. This is particularly clear with respect to what Brewer calls ‘dialectical activities’ (activities such as fine art, philosophy or friendship). Dialectical activities are first and foremost constituent of human flourishing; they are characteristic of the human good.

Thus far, the reader might be inclined to think that Brewer’s book is yet another critique of the one-sidedness of contemporary ethics, focused on individual acts, fundamental rights and well-being, a bias that can be resolved by an appeal to virtue ethics. But it would be a mistake to understand his endeavour this way. It is true that the book militates in favour of a kind of virtue ethics, but with one proviso: mainstream versions of this approach take ‘virtue’ to be the founding concept (like ‘duty’ for Kantianism, ‘right’ for right theories, ‘happiness’ for Utilitarianism), whereas in Brewer’s version the concept of ‘good’ or ‘value’ takes this place. This is an appropriate shift and an actual return to Aristotle. Brewer’s proviso has other consequences, and very important ones. If ‘good’ and ‘value’ are at the foundation of ethics, this means that ethics depends upon axiology and, as already stated, upon action theory. When we become aware of this, we see that such a virtue ethics is not something that can be added to Kantianism or Utilitarianism in order to fill a gap in their approach, but something that modifies the entire ethical landscape and constitutes a radical critique of most contemporary conceptions of ethics.

I shall list the main points of this critique below, but for now I would like to stress the final point. We can see that an Aristotelian approach is not an addendum to mainstream ethics, but a complete rebuilding thereof, if we attend to the conception of a good life (*eudaimonia*). This concept has been discarded by many philosophers because it is no longer possible to agree on its content in our modern pluralist democracies. It has been discarded by others on account of its richness and replaced by something more mundane (e.g. the satisfaction of preferences). At best it has been relegated to the domain of personal morality. But the characteristic of a human action (in contrast to a merely physical movement) is that it is directed towards a goal; and for the action to be moral, this goal ought to be good. It is impossible, nevertheless, to specify what goods

we must aim at without having a conception of the human good, i.e. a conception of what is a good life for a human being. Ethics, therefore, cannot do without with a conception of *eudaimonia*. To put goodness or value at the centre has several important consequences for ethics and moral psychology (here begins the details of Brewer's critique). Desire can no longer be understood as a merely propositional attitude, because it possesses an evaluative content, consisting in the apprehension of an apparent good. Desire, therefore, cannot be contrasted with belief in the sense that each coordinate in a different direction (world/mind *versus* mind/world). Practical reason is not a reflection on a pre-existing goal, taking place before the formulation of an intention, but an ongoing *processus*, refining our apprehension of the as yet 'opaque' good we aim at. Pleasure is not the sensation Utilitarians (and other modern thinkers) think it is, but a way to act, as it is evinced in expressions like 'to take pleasure in φ -ing'.

As it appears, contemporary mainstream philosophical ethics are procrustean: they reduce their subject matter to one kind of moral concern, cutting its roots from what should be at its base: a conception of the good and of *eudaimonia*. Openness to values is thus replaced by reasons to act, and the domain of those reasons is divided into two opposing parts, self-oriented and other-oriented. Brewer thinks that this dualist conception of reasons, and consequently of goods, rests on a profound misunderstanding of what goodness is. This misunderstanding pervades the entire modern conception of ethics (e.g. morality *versus* prudence), and has been very clearly formulated by Sidgwick. As a consequence, the place of the self and the place of the other people in ethics have not been correctly appraised, and morality has become obsessed with the denunciation of egoism. Brewer does not want to deny the importance of other people for ethics: they remain significant, of course, and have a particularly central place in friendship, an all too important relationship in the formation of moral character. It is through friendship that we become aware of our duties toward our fellow human beings (and not through a Kantian universalisation of maxims).

It is not possible in a review to convey the shrewdness of Talbot Brewer's analysis. An analysis based on thick ethical concepts and promoting them at the centre of an inquiry is too rich to be summarized with ease. That is why I have only indicated the topics this book addresses and the consequences it draws for a correct conception of what ethics is. As I hope to have shown, we are offered a strong argument in favour of the thesis that ethics cannot be pursued in isolation, but must be accompanied by action theory and, finally, by a full conception of human nature, that is, by a philosophical anthropology. To limit ethics to a list of rights or duties, to build it on a thin conception of the good, as is now too often the case, is ultimately to reduce it to the role of a servant to law.

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