
Vasil Gluchman (ed.), *Morality: Reasoning on Different Approaches* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2013), 182 pp.

Central Europe has never had (especially in recent history) many well established scholars in the field of ethics. Vasil Gluchman may be one of them, and one of his last editorial efforts published abroad might be the proof of this statement. It is easy to get a suitable notion of what this book of essays might be about from its name: *Morality: Reasoning on Different Approaches*. Ten authors, from seven different countries across the world, were put together in an attempt to introduce their views on different concepts of morality and new trends in understanding it. An attempt to understand morality is an attempt to understand ourselves; to understand our past and sometimes even to predict our future, the future of humanity. As Gluchman recalls in the introduction: each period in our history has its own moral problems, however, in many cases, they are the same; despite a change in their urgency or intensity (1). Even this statement may mislead one to think that we failed in an attempt to resolve those problems, this is not the issue. Morality is not static, on the contrary it changes. Morality, as a reflection of specific economic and social relations in a specific period, is dynamic (2). The necessity to struggle with our problems is the momentum which helps us to continue in our journey. It is the strength which helps us to continue in search of better understanding and maybe even for a better “self”. The main aim of the reviewed work is to help us to continue in this journey.

In the first part of the book, *Different Concepts of Morality*, the reader can find five essays focused on one main concept: understanding morality. The opening essay written by Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, “The Moral and the Ethical: What Conscience Teaches Us About Morality”, is an attempt to introduce the concept of relational reason. Bendik starts his article with his own definitions of the moral and the ethical, to show the difference as the grounds for his next argumentation. He claims that viciousness is a state of character that interferes with how we must relate to each other and connects it to the moral domain, not to the wider ethical one (14). Viciousness is taken away from the realm of practical reason and located in the realm of relational reason. He states that moral reason is a kind of relational reason, specifically, a kind of relational reason that cooperates with practical reason. Later, Bendik tries to clarify his statement with the help of the issue of conscience which in his view helps us to see that the moral and the relational are tied at heart (14). Conscience is understood as a form of reflection in which the claims of others, or of myself as an other, come to mind as evidence of the personal limits I must heed. Conscience is relational – its relationship one has with oneself or others; it’s formed out of empathy for others (something that keeps us mindful of others). Finally he states that relational reason is a third rational process alongside practical

and theoretical reason. It's a form of reasoning, rational process, whereby we try to connect with others (17–18). Relational reason is an interesting notion and it might be referred to as an unusual way of reminding us that morality serves human relationships. The only real objection to the essay is that it lacks better and clearer examples of how the findings might be put into use.

Another very interesting essay, “A Critical Evaluation of a Classic Moral Scientist: Are There Any Moral Facts to Discover?”, written by Howard M. Ducharme, integrates and critically evaluates the classical moral science of Thomas Hobbes, with our modern theories of morals (ethics) – which are determined and limited by a modern scientific paradigm. Thomas Hobbes is introduced and used as a primary example of a classical moral scientist – a scientist who studies moral philosophy as the natural science of the passions of man (25–29). Through him, ethical naturalism (ethical anti-realism) as the belief that moral features of the world and language can reduce to non-moral properties of the natural world and natural science, is criticized. In this sense Ducharme deals with: moral nihilism, subjectivism, ethical egoism, cultural relativism, utilitarianism, contractarianism and even neo-aristotelian naturalism. He criticizes scientism as a strong, paradigmatic worldview that all knowledge, reasoning, understanding, and explanation of reality must meet the criteria of the magisterium of science (28). All of those who are representatives of this ideology, who are overly determined and limited by the modern scientific paradigm are defenders of what he calls SFP – science first paradigm. Furthermore ethical naturalism is shown as a concept in which people have merely instrumental value and the moral purpose of existence doesn't exist. There is no *summum bonum* in nature, thus no meaning or purpose for life either (34–35). Throughout his essay Ducharme is looking for answers to basic yet very complex questions: Are there any moral facts to discover? Are there real moral agents? Are there real, knowable self-conscious moral agents? (26–27). The journey he takes us on in search of those answers is refreshing and interesting. One of the answers we are looking for might be summed up as: we need real science, not pseudo-science, and we do not need scientists surreptitiously teaching ideologies as if it were science (39).

The second part of the book, entitled *New Trends in Understanding Morality*, consists of five essays. One is written by Frederic Gilbert, “Does Neuropathology Dictate Morality? Acquired Paedophilia as a Neuroethics Case”. It links up with the Ducharme essay by conjoining ethics with science. However, Gilbert's approach is different. His essay focuses on the practical implications of a connection between ethics and science; specifically, on free will and responsibility as ethical and legal issues with significant penal implications. The questions that are asked are very important and at the same time alarming. Is neuropathological behavior born of illness or malfeasance? How should we act upon them? Should they be allowed to pass through the judicial system

without the retributive penalty of imprisonment? (97). The author is looking for answers (and they are quite disturbing) with the help of a controversial case involving acquired pedophilia – the *Devinsky, Sacks, and Devinsky* study (102). The answers we, along with the author, are looking for are neither easy nor simple. If some types of offenders, e.g. acquired pedophiles, lack free will and are not, ultimately, blameworthy for their actions, is the punishment truly deserved? Should this be an impulse for the justice system to rethink responsibility or, more precisely, assignation of responsibility and subsequent actions? An answer might be found in the last part of the essay, where Gilbert deliberates about reparative types of justice instead of the classical retributive ones. In his words: justice should execute medical intervention to prevent what causes the acting (105). Justice in these cases should not be just about repaying society for the wrong which was inflicted. As an example from page 106 shows us it's not even the safest one for the rest of the population. The article is a clear example of the contribution to the much needed debate on the issue of responsibility with the use of the controversial yet very compelling issue of pedophilia.

Gluchman is not just the editor of this book of essays, but he also contributed with his own article, "Humanity: Biological and Moral Issues". In this article, he criticizes the ignorance of moral philosophers. In spite of new knowledge from many types of contemporary scientific disciplines (e.g. biology, ethology and others), many ethicists do not take into consideration these findings. One of the results is incomplete or even incorrect understanding of the issue of humanity. Gluchman advocates the view that humanity is behavior leading to the protection, maintenance and development of human life (126). He begins by presenting the roots of classical meaning (Kant) of the concept, and some of the contemporary understandings (Baron, Korsgaard). Later, he introduces his own concept. The author distinguishes two types, or we may even call them levels, of humanity. On the one hand, there is humanity as a natural-biological quality. This type of behavior¹ is the one we have in common with other animal species, especially mammals and primates. Despite the fact that it's necessary and desirable, it isn't uniquely human (124). On the other hand, humanity is understood as a moral quality. It is not based on a biological or natural, but exclusively moral, basis and related to the protection of variously disabled forms of human life (126). The moral value of both of these levels differs. In the first case humanity is understood as a natural-biological quality typical for members of the human species. In the second view, it is understood as a moral quality, which differs in respect to the object of its realization (strangers). In this second case, humanity is a pure manifestation of our morality and it brings what Gluchman calls surplus moral value. One

¹ An example might be protection and maintenance of our own life, the life of our children, relatives, friends or even acquaintances (124).

of the contributions that the article brings is the hope that morality, despite its natural-biological origin, might be (in its specific forms) uniquely human.

“Are Ethical Experts Also Experts in Morality?” is the title of the article written by Dieter Birnbacher. The author reflects upon the new and rapidly growing need for the help of ethical experts in decision making in our pluralistic society of the 21st century. This emerging urge brings up many questions about the experts themselves and about the role they are supposed to play. Birnbacher asks: can such a thing as an ethics expert exist? The first indicia we are presented with, when looking for the answer, is that an ethics expert is surely not a moral expert (the one who knows which norms and values are the correct ones). This doesn't mean they must refrain from commenting on moral issues (131–132). But does that mean that their opinion is somehow better, that their judgment should be somehow privileged? Birnbacher's answer is indeterminate. Despite this he goes on and presents to the reader three models of a pragmatic approach which can be used by experts in practice: principlism, moral minimalism and moral common sense (133–136). The last part of the paper is concerned with the attacks which ethical experts must withstand. Crossfire, as the author calls it, comes from within and from without their profession. Colleagues from academia accuse them mostly of betraying philosophical purity. The public, on the other hand, accuse them of being servile executors of powerful factions, opinions or interests (136–138). Many ethicists who are involved in public discussions, or even serve as ethical experts will find the closing recommendation by Birnbacher as very truthful: “...the moral philosopher who leaves the ivory tower, does not only need good reasons and sound theories but also, and above all, good nerves” (138).

The presented book of essays offers a wide range of opinions on two main issues: morality and the moral agent. Despite the different notions, book is coherent and readable. Through the mentioned issues, the notion of applied ethics is presented. The book never proclaimed the intention to present us with the “right” understanding of morality or the “right” direction in which we should think. On the contrary, the book is a prime example of openness which is much needed in today's world. It is promising to present the possibilities as well as the limitations in contemporary philosophical and applied ethics in some of their forms, and the promise is fulfilled. Last but not least, the presented book is an excellent example of progress in the field of ethics and the way it can be achieved.

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