

explaining the mind in terms of computational cognitive science. Inference to the best explanation is a valid form of an argument. But it seems that an argument which has a form of an inference to the best explanation and is supported by a number of other inferences to the best explanation, which are supported by a number of other inferences to the best explanation, loses a little bit of plausibility with every inference to the best explanation provided in its support. Every particular inference is plausible, but in the end we are left with a weird feeling that we have accepted an argument which is not supported well-enough.

In the end, I would like to say that *The Centered Mind* is an excellent book and one of the best examples of efforts to explain the mind scientifically. The book is definitely not an introductory one, but I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in a scientific explanation of the stream of consciousness because Caruthers's clear writing and thorough referencing makes the book accessible even to beginners.

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Elvio Baccharini, *In a Better World: Public Reason and Biotechnologies* (Rijeka: University of Rijeka and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2015), 170 pp.

Many books have been published trying to determine the moral status of the use of some biotechnologies (e.g. genetic interventions, cloning, moral bioenhancement and the extension of human lifespan). Practical ethics has been trying to answer these and similar moral problems for more than a century, and all this time the central question has been “What is the *right* thing to do?”. In his recent book Elvio Baccharini does not address this question – well aware that in the conditions of reasonable pluralism of moral and religious doctrines we cannot publicly agree upon what should we do as a political community and which laws and policies are the right or the virtuous ones, he shifts the central question from the domain of practical ethics to the domain of political philosophy by asking “What is the *legitimate* thing

to do?”. Instead of an argument from a particular comprehensive doctrine (e.g. consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, Christian ethics), Baccharini tries to establish an argumentative strategy that can be supported by various reasonable moral and religious doctrines. We should not conclude, however, that his book has nothing to do with ethics – in fact, this book presents a number of moral arguments and evaluates them according to their ability to constitute the legitimacy of a particular decision. In other words, this book presents a selection device that helps us determine which moral arguments are, and which are not, appropriate for the justification of public laws and policies.

Baccarini endorses a form of Rawls’ *liberal principle of legitimacy* and argues that, in order to be legitimate, a law, public policy or political decision has to be justified by reasons all reasonable citizens, as free and equal, can be expected to endorse in the light of their common human reason. Though the author in the *first* chapter follows Rawls’ idea of public reason, there are still a few important differences between Baccharini’s and Rawls’ view. *First*, Baccharini extends the constrains of public reason to the justification of all political decisions, policies and laws, while Rawls applies these constrains only on the justification of constitutional essentials. Along with Quong and Williams, he accepts the substantive interpretation of public reason and rejects its procedural alternative, endorsed by Rawls, Estlund and Peter. This first distinction greatly shapes the entire book since Baccharini imposes more demanding legitimacy requirements than Rawls does, i.e. he applies the constrains of public reason to a wider scope of public issues. *Second*, he takes the three basic components of eligible conceptions of justice (some basic rights and liberties, their priority and the resources to use them) as a premise in public justification, instead of Rawls’ two lexically ordered principles of justice. Some might argue that this leads Baccharini towards a less egalitarian position than the one adopted by Rawls, especially in Rawls’ later works when he rejects capitalist welfare state and argues in favor of property-owning democracy and liberal socialism. This can be seen in the third chapter, where Baccharini discusses genetic interventions and distributive justice and, though he takes an egalitarian approach and takes into consideration questions of justice, he still emphasizes the maximal protection of individual freedoms. *Third*, unlike Rawls, Baccharini claims that the conclusions that are still contested and controversial within the scientific community can represent legitimate grounds (premises) for public justification. This move towards Kitcher’s position can be explained by Baccharini’s wider conception of public reason – since he applies the constrains of public reason on the debate on the use of some medical and biotechnological practices (and not only on the debate on constitutional essentials), he needs a broader set of eligible premises. Baccharini argues that, since all scientists generally accept the same scientific methods, and disagree

only regarding the final conclusions, these conclusions can be used in the process of public justification since they are grounded in (or produced by) scientific procedures all reasonable citizens (or scientists) can endorse.

In the rest of the first chapter Baccharini defends the idea of public reason from various objections put forward by David Miller, Colin Farrelly and Jonathan Wolff. He upgrades his position to make it better suited to answer these objections – since (unlike Rawls) he applies the constraints of public reason to all laws, public policies and political decisions, Baccharini has to demonstrate how could this procedure work in the real world (even more than Rawls has), but he also has to take into consideration the consequences (or costs) of changing some existing (possibly unjust) laws. By adjusting his position to answer the objections by Miller, Farrelly and especially Wolff, Baccharini makes it stronger and easier to apply on real life politics.

Having established how the political decisions should be justified in order to be legitimate, Baccharini starts by applying this model to some biotechnologies whose moral permissibility is (still) a subject of a vivid debate. He starts the *second* chapter by applying the constraints of public reason to the debate on genetic interventions. This is a very demanding task since genetic interventions will predominantly be done to human embryos, and not to adult citizens. Baccharini argues from the liberal standpoint and assumes that these interventions will be done by the parents (and not by the state), so the central question becomes when is it legitimate for parents to intervene in the genetic code of their children. Though Baccharini argues from the liberal standpoint, he follows Mill and Barry and endorses the idea that, though parents usually are the best caretakers for their children, they do not have the right to treat children as their private property, but should instead treat them as prospective agents and future free and equal persons. Consequently, the only legitimate genetic interventions are those that could be reasonably accepted by future persons as free and equal. Interventions that remove some generally recognized disabilities or add some talents without removing others are therefore legitimate, and Baccharini ends up accepting a form of well-known bioethical *primum non nocere* principle. Adding some new talents for the cost of removing others might thus be seen as harming a child, since a prospective agent might reasonably argue that he or she was wronged when some of the talents were removed, presumably those that could help in leading a good life according to his or her conception of the good. Baccharini carefully weighs and evaluates many other different arguments and objections rooted deep in the discussion on genetic interventions before moving to the new challenge and the family of objections claiming that genetic interventions are unjust.

Since freedom is not the only value we care about, some argue that genetic interventions could be rejected because they encourage and increase

social and economic inequalities. Therefore, allowing genetic interventions that could give some (future) citizens, mostly those who are already rich since their parents were able to afford them these expensive treatments, an additional increase of their talents and abilities, might lead to the increase of existing inequalities. In the *third* chapter Baccarini argues that such scenarios should be allowed as long as they meet *the difference principle*: genetic interventions that improve someone's talents and abilities are legitimate (and just!) as long as the resulting unequal distribution of resources is to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society. He dismisses the worries that the use of genetic enhancement will decrease the social solidarity, as well as that these biotechnologies could lead to the accumulation of great political power in the hands of a (rich and genetically enhanced) minority. It seems that his view here (at least partly) diverges from the later Rawlsian position, turning out to be a little less egalitarian than later Rawls.

The full strength of Baccarini's approach is probably best seen in the *fourth* and the *fifth* chapter, where he discusses cloning and the extension of human lifespan. Many positions that oppose these practices offer arguments by appealing to controversial moral doctrines and conceptions of the good, like the idea that human reproduction has a particular natural order which has a normative power, or the idea that by indefinitely extending our lifespan and becoming virtually immortal we would lose our human nature and human identity. These arguments are unable to fit within the constraints of the public reason (i.e. they cannot be accepted by all reasonable citizens) and therefore cannot constitute a legitimate reason for banning human cloning and the extension of human lifespan. Of course, Baccarini argues, there might be other arguments against these biotechnologies that can be introduced as public reasons. Worrying that cloning practices might damage the dignity of future persons by jeopardizing their uniqueness, as well as claiming that virtual immortality might lead to overpopulation problems, are public ways of arguing against these biotechnologies. However, Baccarini argues that, although these reasons might have public form and be free of the influence of contested comprehensive doctrines, they still represent bad public reasons. Namely, since we do not think of twins as those whose human dignity has been damaged because they are not genetically unique, we have no reason to think that clones will face the same problem. Similarly, we can enact laws that make people choose whether they want to reproduce or to extend their lifespan, thus removing the threat of overpopulation. Baccarini discusses these and other similar arguments in detail and defends both cloning and extension of human lifespan as freedoms that should be protected.

The *sixth* and final chapter discusses whether the state can legitimately require people to undergo certain procedures that will improve their moral reasoning. This is related to the recent work of Persson and Savulescu, who

argue that the rapid development of technology has enabled us to harm other people more efficiently and in many different ways, but has also developed weapons and instruments that could lead to the Ultimate Harm, i.e. the destruction of conditions that permit a valuable life (e.g. nuclear weapons or climate change). Since our moral reasoning has been evolving rather slowly, we are subject to many biases that cannot be removed by moral education – we need moral bioenhancement to cope with moral challenges caused by the rapid technological growth. Baccharini discusses several arguments by John Harris and Robert Sparrow, and ends up agreeing that there are valid public reasons in favour of moral bioenhancement. This does not imply, however, that these are conclusive reasons that everyone can see as sufficient for the legitimacy of state's coercive power regarding moral bioenhancement. Baccharini himself, in the final parts of the chapter, argues in favour of less coercive measures.

This book represents the cornerstone of an ambitious project that analyses important moral issues from the standpoint of political philosophy. It represents a valuable read for bioethicists and moral and political philosophers, but also for politicians and policy-makers. While recognizing the importance of this project and the value of the book, some Rawlsians might, however, argue that Baccharini's approach is overly focused on the maximal protection of (non-basic) freedoms, thus jeopardizing some other important values and principles, like the fair equality of opportunity.

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