

ably” (192). The extent he has in mind is that shame, in contrast to guilt, is focused on character traits, more precisely on weaknesses or shortcomings of an individual, while, for example, guilt is linked to an action or an act.

The third part of the book is “Conclusion” and has one chapter, “Emotions for Multicultures.” In that part, Flanagan summarizes what he wanted to achieve with the book, namely, to offer assistance for moral imagination about various moral possibilities and, thus, a mature attitude towards emotions.

In a gist, Flanagan’s idea is simple: we need to do emotions better because we can be better at feeling shame and anger, as well as many other emotions. There are possibilities for changing how we do emotions (5) and by recognizing them, we can experience emotions differently and live a better life. The basis of this is the understanding that emotions are the things we do (xiv). Emotions are under our control. Moral or disciplinary emotions are designed to produce bad feelings because the idea is to stop doing what we should not—that is their intention. The ultimate idea of rehabilitation regarding moral emotions is to achieve self-regulation or self-observation in terms of norms, values and ideals.

This book is a work of philosophical art, and this review cannot do justice to how engaging and valuable it is. It was so refreshing to read about emotion from a philosophical point of view and, at the same time, get such a dense and insightful look on moral emotions. Reading an author who can deliver a fascinating philosophical book written in plain language is always a privilege.\*

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*Frauke Albersmeier, The Concept of Moral Progress.  
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The phenomenon of moral progress has been attracting increasing interest in philosophy in recent years. Ever since the publication of Peter Singer’s book *Expanding Circle* in 1981, numerous authors have attempted to grasp the concept of moral progress and to answer the question of whether there is indeed progress in morality and how we should understand it. It is not surprising that, like many other philosophical concepts, there is not much consensus on the concept of moral progress. What is specific to this concept is that the attempt to understand it delves into the very heart of the question of how to understand morality itself. In order to arrive at a plausible concept of moral progress, it seems that we must address, if not resolve, a whole range of contentious questions that accompany ethical thinking. Frauke Albersmeier has embarked on such an attempt in her book *The Concept of Moral Progress*.

The book is a revised doctoral thesis the author defended in 2020 at the University of Düsseldorf. It consists of five main chapters in which the

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author provides an explication of the concept of moral progress. In the first chapter, which is dedicated to methodological explanations of the procedures she will apply in the rest of the book, the author rejects the method of conceptual analysis of moral progress. The conceptual analysis aims to identify a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a particular concept, with success being achieved if the proposed definition of the concept aligns with our intuitions about individual cases to which the concept should apply. However, as with the analysis of other concepts, our intuitions about what changes should be considered “clear instances” of moral progress vary greatly from person to person. By analyzing concepts, we can gain useful clarifications of the concept itself, but mere conceptual analysis will not take us far in understanding the concept of moral progress (12). As a better approach to exploring the concept of moral progress, the author chooses the method of explication, characterized by Carnap as “the process of replacing an inexact (pretheoretical) concept (or term) with a more exact one for the purposes of scientific theory-building” (14).

Explaining the concept of moral progress and establishing its meaning is the first step in its explication. Albersmeier undertakes it in the second chapter titled ‘Moral Progress: Conceptual Commitments, Pragmatic Expectations.’ Breaking down the various meanings of the term progress, the author categorizes moral progress as a form of improvement whereby it is “a *process of change* undergone by something that persists through this change and it is *directed*” (28, emphasis in original). Explaining the “moral” component of moral progress is much more challenging. Various ethical theories explain morality in very different ways, emphasizing different essential aspects of the phenomenon of morality. In an attempt to offer a portrayal of morality that would enable the explication of the phenomenon of moral progress, Albersmeier starts from the understanding of morality as a practice of making judgments. In our moral discourse, moral judgments seem to express certain beliefs and can be true or false (32). Setting aside some controversial characteristics of morality, such as categoricity, universality, intersubjectivity, or impartiality, the author singles out the connection to actions as another key characteristic of moral judgments. Additional insights into the phenomenon of morality are gained when we observe it in the light of moral agents, i.e., individuals who are sensitive to moral reasons even though they may not always act in accordance with them, and the recognition that the capacity for moral progress is often considered a condition for morality (37). In order for the explication of the concept of moral progress to be as widely acceptable as possible, the mentioned characteristics are selected to clarify the phenomenon of morality as precisely as possible without (excessively) relying on specific normative and metaethical theories.

The exploration of how normative and metaethical theories influence the concept of moral progress is presented in the third chapter titled “Ethics and the Idea of Moral Progress.” In this section, Albersmeier compares the attempt to define moral progress to the challenge of addressing moral problems in the domain of applied ethics, where solutions must be found without relying too heavily on normative theories. Assuming such a pluralism of normative and metaethical viewpoints, the search is for a solution that

would explain the phenomenon of moral progress in a manner acceptable to different theories (45-46). Each normative ethical theory naturally has its own vision of what moral progress should be, but it is understandable that the targeted explication of the concept of moral progress cannot benefit from such “narrowly” defined understandings. The reason for addressing different normative viewpoints is that each of them emphasizes different elements in our understanding of moral progress. An adequate concept of moral progress can benefit from considering various theoretical perspectives on the discussed phenomenon.

Although consequentialism, due to its emphasis on inclusivity (e.g., Singer’s “expanding circle”), is considered an ethical theory closely associated with the idea of moral progress, the author believes that the idea of inclusivity, despite being widely accepted, cannot be used in explicating the concept of moral progress due to its normative charge. Namely, one can imagine theories that see moral progress in the exclusivity of taking into moral consideration. Additionally, the problem lies in the consequentialist focus on outcomes, which, in one sense, sidelines moral agents in the process of moral judgment. In global consequentialism, what is morally valued is not only actions, rules, and motives but also everything else that influences the outcomes. However, it seems problematic to consider an improvement in the state of the world that is not linked to an improvement in the moral practices of agents as an example of moral progress. Acknowledging the fact that improvements in the state of affairs are an integral part of moral progress, the author concludes that such improvements require the constant involvement of moral agents (57). Many authors writing about moral progress believe that people are somehow capable of improving their practices. Ethical reflections inspired by Kant warn us, however, that this does not necessarily mean it is moral progress. Starting from the premise that we can consider morally valuable only those actions done from right motives, philosophers inspired by Kantian ethics believe that an increase in the number of morally good actions and the resulting morally good effects says nothing about their moral worth. This is the main lesson from this tradition of ethical reflection that the author adopts for her explication of the concept of moral progress (62-63). When we talk about moral progress, we are not only discussing the state of affairs and the type of actions but also the moral agents themselves. We expect them to be morally better. This is precisely the area where virtue ethics has something to say. Like in the case of other normative theories, the author points out why appealing to some of the substantive ethical doctrines of this ethical theory would hinder a widely acceptable concept of moral progress. However, as a significant contribution from this theory, she adopts the perspective that what matters for a moral agent is the disposition to act well (66). From the domain of political philosophy, inspired by Mill’s thinking, Albersmeier draws a warning that with the proliferation of moral beliefs comes the threat of loss of ethical understanding and consequently the threat of moral regression (78). Nevertheless, metaethics is the key challenge for any theory of moral progress. Since moral progress is often portrayed as a process of approaching moral truth, it seems as if moral progress presupposes the truth of moral realism, the claims that there exists an order of moral facts independent of us. In this segment of her research, the author demon-

strates that this connection between moral progress and moral realism is not necessary, given the weakness of the arguments put forward in favor of the claim that moral progress proves the truth of moral realism (transcendental argument from progress and abductive argument from progress).

After positioning the concept of moral progress in relation to normative and meta-ethical theories, the fourth chapter, "The Phenomenon of Moral Progress," presents "a proposal of how we should come to think of different types of moral progress, based on considerations that go beyond our initial conceptual intuitions" (99). When discussing dimensions of moral progress, it is common to talk about differences between individual versus collective and local versus global progress. Albersmeier, in her discussion, does not exclude the possibility of collective moral progress but considers that the clearest examples of moral progress can still be found at the individual level, with progress at the collective level being explained by progress at the individual level. Regarding the temporal dimension of moral progress, the author believes that moral progress does not necessarily have to represent an epochal and permanent change but still needs to demonstrate a certain durability that does not dissipate as soon as it appears. Moreover, it can be said that moral progress does not have to be global but may occur only in one domain of morality. Therefore, special attention is devoted to the possibility of moral progress in our beliefs (in theory) and moral progress in our practices.

Determining whether moral progress requires progress in both of these domains proves to be a key task of this chapter. If someone has achieved moral progress in theory (Albersmeier in this case uses the term ethical progress), it means that they have advanced their beliefs, desires, or judgments. Ethical progress does not necessarily have to be accompanied by progress in our moral behavior. Of course, such a situation is deeply problematic, and we could not consider it an example of moral progress. Albersmeier argues that moral progress must manifest itself in the practical domain of morality. By using examples in which a person changes their beliefs and/or behaviors in different circumstances, the author demonstrates that we can indeed speak of moral progress even in situations where there is no outwardly observable action in line with improved moral beliefs. What is crucial for us to consider it as a case of moral progress is that the person changes their dispositions for acting in a moral way. Changing dispositions is moral progress because, under favorable circumstances, it gives us confidence that the person will act in a morally correct manner. Albersmeier refers to this type of moral progress as dispositional moral progress. For the author, this is a genuine type of moral progress because its practical relevance lies in the fact that "theoretical change is required to impact moral performance as the occasion for the relevant type of action arises" (174).

In contrast to dispositional, real moral progress is "the improvement in the moral agent's moral performance over a certain period of time" (146). It is worth noting that real moral progress cannot happen "by fluke." For the progress to be considered real moral progress, the author believes there must be a moral agent involved who possesses at least a minimal moral consciousness that their actions are morally correct. Although she argues that there is no moral progress without ethical progress, the author acknowl-

edges that in some cases, it is difficult to distinguish between examples where behavioral change occurred with moral awareness and those where it did not (but happened for reasons unrelated to morality). However, she believes it is important to establish this conceptual distinction because unlike cases of moral progress, these other cases resemble “morally desirable non-agential changes” (161). In the case of dispositional moral progress, however, it is still considered moral progress because dispositions do not entirely fit into the standard division into the theoretical and practical parts of morality.

Considering that Albersmeier starts from the premise that it concerns individual moral progress, changes in moral behavior, even when they reach the point where they can be qualified as real moral progress, do not necessarily reflect broader societal moral character changes, which are usually considered examples of moral progress. The term encompassing this dimension of moral progress phenomenon is *impactful moral progress*. It is “actual moral progress that brings about an improvement in states of affairs” (175). Summarizing her explication of the concept, the author concludes the chapter with the assertion that “*moral progress is (a) durable change for the better in moral performance, (b) on given occasions, (c) that is sufficiently suited to effect change for the better in states of affairs*” (177, emphasis in the original).

In the final chapter entitled “Moral Progress and Moral Motivation: Improvement as a Fetish?” the author explores whether moral progress can motivate our actions. There seems to be something suspect in the idea that someone would act based on an abstract ideal simply because it is the right thing to do (*de dicto*), rather than wanting to perform a particular act that they consider right in a given situation (*de re*). The objection here is that acting on very general moral principles turns morality into a fetish. In rejecting this objection, Albersmeier points out that moral progress should only serve as a motivation for our actions in cases where we have reasonable belief that improvement is necessary (which includes it being possible and appropriate), effective, and optimal.

While most contemporary discussions on moral progress primarily consider this phenomenon at the level of broader social processes, the virtue of this book lies in its focus on moral progress at the individual level. Frauke Albersmeier provides a detailed insight into the various ways we can observe moral changes in individuals—in their desires, the content of their beliefs, the development of dispositions, and their actions—while also pointing out the ways these changes have broader social impacts. Therefore, we can conclude that this book makes a significant contribution to understanding the complex dynamics of the process of moral progress, especially regarding the relationship between moral progress at the individual and collective levels.\*

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