

Uwe Meixner · Albert Newen (eds.)

# Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy

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## Philosophiegeschichte und logische Analyse


History of Ontology  
and a focus on Plato  
Geschichte der Ontologie  
und ein Schwerpunkt zu Platon

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## Book Reviews

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### Buchbesprechungen

Hugh LaFollette (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Practical Ethics*. (Series: Oxford Handbooks in Philosophy). Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, ISBN 0-19-824105-4; £ 75.00, EUR 114,90 (Hardback); 790 pages

Like other volumes in the Oxford Handbook series, this new collection on practical ethics is no small handbook. With some seven hundred pages and twenty-eight entries by thirty-three contributors, it is a substantial addition to an increasingly important sub-discipline of moral philosophy.

The articles are organised somewhat unusually under the headings: 1) Our Personal Lives, 2) Moral Status, 3) Equality, 4) The Just Society, 5) Justice and International Relations, and 6) Life and Death. Issues like abortion and euthanasia, which usually are grouped together in discussions of the doctrines of double effect and doing versus allowing, are segregated here under Moral Status and Life and Death respectively. The article on war by Henry Shue also appears in the Life and Death section and not, as might be expected, in the Justice and International Relations section. In his Introduction, editor Hugh LaFollette asks that not too much be read into the categorisation of articles since the purpose of his scheme is to highlight specific issues that must be considered in order to address a particular topic, though those issues may seem unrelated. But, LaFollette's choice of scheme downplays some absences. For example, no section is devoted to environmental ethics: there is but one article, by Kristin Shrader-Frechette, which outlines the debates in this area. Similarly, no section is dedicated to biomedical issues, though there is an article on reproductive technology by Robert Wachbroit and David Wasserman and another on euthanasia by Margaret P. Battin.

The collection is unusual not only for these omissions, but also for some inclusions. There is one article devoted to the issues of love, another to world hunger, a third to immigration, a fourth to family. Inclusion of these somewhat less debated topics in practical ethics well reflects LaFollette's approach. The definition of *practical ethics*, he says, 'of course, covers considerable conceptual turf. That is as it should be. We should not exclude important work from the realm of practical ethics on narrow ideological grounds, especially since, as a new sub-discipline, it is still defining itself. Like all new sub-disciplines, it defines itself more by how it is practiced than by bare self-description.' (3) Shaping the direction of that practice, and thereby the definition, seems to be one goal of this Handbook.

Though ambitious, that goal is not necessarily inappropriate given the quality of the contributions. Aimed at a postgraduate and professional audience, the articles offer not only detailed outlines of the relevant debates, but also original and thought-provoking arguments to further discussions on key issues. Constrained by space, I shall comment upon a sample of articles selected from the several sections.

In the article 'Family', Brenda Almond, first, outlines central issues concerning homosexuality, reproductive medicine, and the role of women, and then considers the impact that the evolving concept of *family* has upon children, who are implicitly connected with that concept, and yet whose interests and views are often subsumed in philosophical debates under the interests of parents and carers. Almond notes the importance of issues of children's rights and indeed children's responsibilities, perhaps to care for elderly parents. Family breakdown, abuse, and shallow relationships suggest that the responsibility to provide care increasingly lies with the state. The relation between the family and the state is highly com-

plex, she notes, as highlighted in conflicts between families and professionals over questions of education and medical treatment. Although Almond's discussion is relatively short compared to some of the other contributions, she succinctly presents the key issues on family, noting the marginalisation of this topic in practical philosophy and pointing out concerns for our future understanding of personal relationships and attachments.

An issue which throws the concerns of family into sharp relief is that of reproduction. Robert Wachbroit and David Wasserman begin their discussion of reproductive technology by noting not only the rapid technological advances of the last thirty years, from IVF to genetic testing and manipulation, but also the various moral issues which those advances have generated. Central concerns, they say, include not only the nature of the family and (more specifically) parental rights, autonomy and children's rights, but also the basis of personal identity, the impact of disease and disability on individuals and society, and the positive and negative possibilities of genetic enhancement. Wachbroit and Wasserman classify these issues under four headings: risk, the role of third parties, the uses of 'surplus' reproductive material, and the decisions of parents to have or to avoid having a particular kind of child. Wachbroit and Wasserman offer a thorough treatment of three developing technologies: gene selection, gene modification, and cloning, which can be assessed, they suggest, according to the product, the process, and the reasons for pursuing it. While the authors note concerns relevant to each of these methods of assessment, they refrain from either defending a definite position toward any of the technologies or adopting a prophetic stance toward future developments in this domain.

Some issues noted by Wachbroit and Wasserman are teased out more fully in Anita Silvers's article 'People with Disabilities'. Silvers first examines the historical social exclusion of disabled people, an exclusion not lessened by mainstream civil rights groups who regarded the recognition of disability rights as a threat to the anti-discrimination laws they sought. She then demonstrates how our view toward concerns of inclusion, quality of life, and disability rights depends in part upon our conceptual understanding of *disability*. Unlike the medical model, which construes disability in terms of deviation from normal species-functioning, the social model understands disability in terms of hostile social arrangements which disadvantage an oppressed minority. Silvers analyses these models in relation to different interpretations of disability rights as participatory or compensatory, and as individual or collective. One concern for practical ethics, she notes, is 'to clarify the implications not only of various construals of disability rights, but also of theories on which the pursuit of certain goods, or the cultivation of certain virtues, eclipses proposals to address the social exclusion of disabled people through recognition of their rights.' (324).

Another article that considers how people relate to their society and the state is R. A. Duff's 'Punishment'. After outlining the familiar theories of consequentialism and retributivism, Duff considers the increasing interest in a variant of retributivism, the communicative theory of punishment, according to which lawmakers use punishment to engage with offenders in a moral dialogue. The aim of the dialogue is to lead offenders to appreciate the wrong they have done and thereby to repent their actions, to reform their conduct, and to recompense those whom they have injured. In his discussion, Duff considers the relative merits of formal punishment and hard treatment as well as related questions about sentencing, severity and proportionality. Although Duff's discussion offers both an excellent survey of current positions on punishment and a useful guide to further reading, his article does somewhat less than might be expected to further debates on this topic.

Also in the Just Society section of the Handbook is Patricia H. Werhane and R. Edward Freeman's article 'Corporate Responsibility', which begins by offering for analysis two case-studies of good corporate conduct. This empirical approach is in keeping with LaFollette's claim in the Introduction that one cannot undertake practical ethics without taking into

account empirical data. After briefly explicating the legal notion of a *corporation* as a fictional person, the authors consider in what respects corporations, like individuals, have moral responsibility. Werhane and Freeman argue that corporations are moral agents, but not moral persons. Although corporations, like individuals, can be held morally responsible for their actions, corporations are not intentional agents: ‘... corporations exhibit intentional behaviour, engage in reciprocal accountability relationships, are subject to rights, and are said to act. But their so-called intentions, their accountability relationships, and their ‘actions’ are the collective result of decisions made by individual persons.’ (522) The notion of *collective action* is useful, say Werhane and Freeman, in understanding why one typically holds a corporation and not merely its managers and agents responsible for its ‘actions’. Each individual input becomes transformed both as it mixes with other inputs and as managerial directives are interpreted. The result often is a collective action that differs from the actions of its constituents. Thus, in principle, there could be a questionable outcome of corporate decision-making that results from blameless individual actions. This can result in moral blindness on the part of the individual members of the corporation, who do not feel responsible for the questionable practices of their corporation. Nevertheless, corporations as collectives are made up of persons who are morally responsible. Moral blindness, say Werhane and Freeman, ‘does not excuse a corporation from moral responsibility, just as it does not excuse rational free individual moral agents.’ (525). Werhane and Freeman conclude their discussion by showing the extent to which corporations can do good works.

The articles I have highlighted here are a representative sample of the collection. Each offers detailed treatment of central concerns in practical ethics; and in most cases this analysis is combined with thoughtful and original contributions to ongoing debates. Although not written for a general audience, the collection is sufficiently accessible to be of interest to non-specialists concerned with practical ethical issues. With its mix of theoretical discussion and empirical study, this Handbook, like others in the Oxford series, is a valuable resource for professional philosophers, lawyers, and policymakers.

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Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer (eds): *Nietzsche and Science*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2004, ISBN: 0-7546-3402-7; £ 49.95, EUR 87,50 (Hardback); 233 pages

‘To what extent was Nietzsche influenced by the overwhelmingly scientific culture of his day? What is its significance for his philosophy?’ Posed by Gregory Moore on p.9 of his excellent introductory survey, these questions set the tone for the latest and in many respects groundbreaking essay collection on Nietzsche and science. The book’s overall orientation is thus predominantly historical, which is also reflected in the editors’ affiliation to departments of German studies and the history of ideas. Occasioned by the 2001 conference of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society, the ten papers collected here are announced as focussing less on ‘Nietzsche’s critique of modern science in general’ than ‘the issue of his familiarity with, and relationship to, particular scientific disciplines’ (12). By doing so, as Moore explains in laudable detail, they help to fill a distorting ‘vacuum’ in the scholarship on the subject, which so far could merely boast sophisticated commentaries on Nietzsche’s relation to Darwinism, scientific concepts of time, and Freudian psychoanalysis (9–12). However, despite the declared emphasis of the book, and although Nietzsche’s ‘critique of modern science in general’ has indeed already been the subject of several recent studies (by, as Moore notes himself, George J. Stack, Christoph Cox, and Babette E. Babich), the latter, too, is repeatedly thematised in *Nietzsche and Science*. As a consequence – in what looks like a strenuous effort to accommodate the papers of three unruly contributors (Babich, Acam-