Book Reviews

Marcus DÜWELL. *Bioethik. Methoden, Theorien und Bereiche*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2008. 276 pp.

Introductory books on bioethics are scarce, at least in the German language. The present volume Marcus Düwell, philosopher and ethicist at Utrecht University, provides a noteworthy exception. Both the concept and the methodology of this instructional book are quite unconventional. Only one third of the content is dedicated to specific areas like stem cell research, euthanasia or genetic diagnosis (176-247), while the other two thirds deal with meta-ethical and anthropological aspects, e.g. the relationship between moral philosophy and bioethics or the understanding of life and nature (25-175). The following aspects are worthy of note with respect to the book's methodological approach: the author uses very few footnotes, he repeatedly supplies helpful and short overviews of complex moral theories without losing himself in controversial theoretical debates, and last but not least, he always holds clear personal opinions without neglecting other findings and their insights. While maintaining a clear, cognitive and universalistic position concerning moral theory in line with the Kantian tradition of duty ethics in the theoretical part of the book, the author leaves many questions unanswered when he debates specific issues like physician assisted suicide, mentioning that he simply wants to offer an idea of the complexity of the debates. The introductory chapter on bioethics and its history (1-24) and the appendix including a bibliography, a subject index and an index of authors (249-276) are both very helpful.

The aim of the book, as specified by the author himself, is to provide an introduction to the broad spectrum of bioethical discussion, primarily by holding the different methodological and theoretical premises of the bioethical discourse up for discussion. In the first chapter (1-24), ethics in general is defined as philosophical reflection on practice (4), while bioethics in particular is understood as a specialized philosophical discipline dealing with normative questions generated in the fields of medicine, biosciences and related areas, including medical, animal and ecological ethics (23). According to the author, the final objective of doing bioethics consists in establishing criteria that help to analyze and justify difficult moral decisions (vii). The author discloses in the preface that he comes from the Kantian tradition and emphasises both human dignity and individual rights (viii). One has always to bear in mind that judgment, here understood as the *process* of the formation of an opinion, is always a case of 'mixed

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judgment' and therefore a product of interdisciplinary collaboration (8). Bioethical judgments such as 'human enhancement-technologies are morally acceptable' are always composed of descriptive and prescriptive parts. Hence bioethics is an interdisciplinary encounter and bioethicists have to cooperate with other disciplines, including the natural and social sciences. To arrive at a judgment on difficult and complex issues, it is important to accept that there are no 'objective or value-free facts' for the purpose of neutral foundation. Consequently, it is an important ethical task to uncover hidden value-assumptions. Furthermore, bioethics is often expected to deliver moral judgments without knowing all about the risks and possible consequences of new technologies, e.g. for future generations. This is why bioethics should be *a domain of struggling* for the convincing justification of difficult ethical judgments (21). In a certain sense, a situation of unity and consensus would be the end of bioethics.

On the first and the last page of the second chapter (25-99), the author stresses the *deep understanding* of the moral dimension of life sciences as an important goal of bioethics. While a better and deeper understanding of something is a hermeneutical endeavour (see also 58-59), the author never tires of underlining the importance of reasoning and the justification of moral claims (e.g. 28, 41, 60 and 99). Although most bioethicists try to avoid foundational debates, the author under review does exactly the opposite. One third of his book deals with meta-ethical questions, and he states in a quite cautionary manner: "Von jedem Bioethiker wird man erwarten können, dass er angibt, von welchen moralphilosophischen Annahmen die eigenen präskriptiven Urteile abhängen" (28). By defining central terms like intuition, virtue, deontology, axiology, normativity, and discussing important ethical methods and theories – and, by the way, providing a fine and helpful introduction into foundational ethics – he explains his own Kantian approach: the main idea of transcendentalism is the reflection on the presuppositions of morality and the justification of duties from this point of view (46). The author refuses to justify duties with non-moral goods such as happiness or interests and prefers to found them on an independent value with non-instrumental validity such as human dignity (74). Respect for human dignity is a constitutional principle to him and a condition for the validity of other moral principles such as autonomy or beneficence (78). He reconstructs the Kantian idea of human dignity with the aid of Alan Gewirth's argument concerning the presuppositions of human acting and their consequences for the justification of duties (85-87). Finally, he criticizes the 'coherentism' of Tom Beauchamp and James Childress as being only one possible moral theory and not the most convincing one (95). Even if I share some important critique of 'principlism', I wonder why the author bases his own argument on 'the constructive proposal' of Tristram Engelhardt (94), who, due to his extreme positions, is legitimately regarded as one of the most controversial contemporary bioethicists.

In the third chapter, the author turns away from meta-ethical issues towards anthropology, natural philosophy and so-called bioethical 'Querschnittsfragen' ('transversal questions') such as moral status, nature and life, human persons and culture, and new technologies and the scope of responsibility (100-175). These issues are related to back-

ground theories, including cultural contexts and human self-understanding, questions related to the meaning of life and to ontological problems with the 'Wesen' ('nature') of human beings, nonhuman beings and nature (the latter according to the natural sciences). The author is therefore obliged to look for hermeneutical approaches, which can be recognized in his references to experiences, intuitions, aesthetics, and in his use of terms and expressions such as 'Lebenswelt' (117, 122), 'the nature of the living beings' (120), 'Leiblichkeit' (121), 'Menschenbild' (130), 'the nature of human beings' (135), 'perception of the body' (141), 'Ideologiekritik' (147), 'reconstruction of meaning' (149), 'self-perception of involved people' (159), and finally by sensitivity for the language and the refusal of certain expressions such as 'dignity of the creature' (112) or 'reproductive autonomy' (145). Religion and theology are interpreted as driving forces of bioethical debates. According to the author's caveat, the relationship between secular bioethics and theology should be an issue of ongoing systematic reasoning, otherwise opaque confrontations, resentments and prejudices will bias the discourse in a sinister way (166).

Specific areas of bioethical deliberation are discussed in the fourth chapter, including clinical research and informed consent, euthanasia, transplantation, reproductive medicine, genetic diagnosis, animal and agricultural ethics (176–244). I have two brief observations to make with respect to these (almost too) short deliberations on complex and controversial debates. Firstly, the explanations frequently end in listing open questions and conditional statements (e.g. 'if for someone the value x is important, then assisted suicide might be an option'), and secondly, the author often underlines the meaning of evaluative judgments, intuitions and experiences, which qualifies the emphasis on normative reasoning claimed in his general concept of bioethics.

In his final remarks the author stresses for a last time the importance of reflecting and deliberating in contrast to preaching in bioethics (245-247).

When an author like Marcus Düwell writes so incisively and individually on bioethics, he provides critique and provokes questions. When it comes to a book intended for use in the classroom, however, this can be seen as a sign of quality rather than a disadvantage. Certainly, the strengths of the book are to be found in the main part on meta-ethical and anthropological aspects of bioethics, the weaknesses in the almost too short overviews in the final part. With respect of the author's meta-ethical ideas, I would like to conclude with one additional thought. Coming from the fact that evaluative judgments, axiological decisions and conceptions of the good and flourishing life become more important the more we discuss specific questions and cases, a concept of integrative ethics such as that proposed by Hans Krämer (40) might be a more plausible model than the strictly normative ethical concept suggested by Düwell. I highly recommend the present book to all people interested in bioethics. The author confronts us with important intellectual challenges and provides a great deal of fruitful insights into theoretical and practical reasoning in bioethics.

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Michael MACK. *Spinoza and the Specters of Modernity. The Hidden Enlightenment of Diversity from Spinoza to Freud*. New York: Continuum, 2010. 222 pp.

As is already clear from the subtitle, *The Hidden Enlightenment of Diversity from Spinoza to Freud*, this is a very ambitious book. It is ambitious in two ways. The author claims to uncover a hidden, or at least untold, story of 'true' Enlightenment (the line of Spinoza-Herder-Goethe-Freud) as opposed to the official, 'Christian', and 'hierarchical' Enlightenment (in the line of Kant and Hegel). The Enlightenment uncovered here is a 'truly universalistic' Enlightenment because it is compatible, and even requires, particularity and diversity. Secondly, in telling this story, the author claims to unfold a novel social and cultural theory in which intellectual history and cultural theory are blended in a new way. At the same time, this book offers a reinterpretation of Herder's thought. Herder's central notion of culture (in history) is explained through to its origin: it is supposed to be a creative development of Spinoza's notion of *conatus* here applied to history and culture. More than half of the book concerns the relationship between Spinoza and Herder and how in this context to understand Herder's remarkable 'non-exclusive, non-ideological, non-hierarchical, truly universalistic' form of Enlightenment. I will concentrate mainly on this part of the book, rather than on the chapters dealing with Franz Rosenzweig (on Spinoza and Goethe) and George Eliot and Spinoza.

The originator of the form of Enlightenment uncovered here is Spinoza. Via his influence on Herder, Goethe and Freud, Spinozism is claimed to have forged a completely new intellectual outlook, presented in this book as an outlook on things and on ourselves that can guide us into the future. Not so long ago, Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment* (2001) already contended that Spinoza was the real source of (true) Enlightenment. Here it is claimed that in the Spinoza-Herder intellectual heritage we possess a form of Enlightenment thinking adapted to and needed for our globalistic, postcolonial, ecological and postmodern age. Spinoza's naturalistic view on human nature is extended, mainly by Herder, into a subtle naturalistic view of religion, history, literature, sexuality, in one word 'culture' in general. Not surprisingly, other Spinoza admirers like Althusser, Deleuze, Badiou, Negri, Zizek, are regularly mentioned or quoted in the book. This time, however, Spinoza does not anticipate Marx or Mao, but Herder and Freud.

It is a remarkable phenomenon that within the last fifty years or so, Spinoza's thought has been repeatedly asserted to be the basis for what is called a truly enlightened philosophy, capable of underpinning an ethics and politics in line with whatever the good causes to be defended might be ('real' democracy, anti-imperialism, ecology, you name it). Things started with Louis Althusser's discovery of Spinoza as a forerunner of Marx; then followed Pierre Macherey's Spinoza as the anti-Hegel, Antonio Negri's Spinoza as 'savage anomaly', etc. Today, anyone wanting to demonstrate being on the right, progressive side, invokes Spinoza as ancestor and inspiration. That this must lead to contradictory interpretations is inevitable. For example, Spinoza is seen at the same time as a radical secularist (Israel), and as a postmodern thinker who does take religion seriously (Mack, in the volume under review).

The popularity of Spinoza's thought is not necessarily a good thing when it comes to the study of Spinoza or the analysis of Modernity or Enlightenment. This book, however exciting its aims, is a case in point. The author's knowledge of Spinoza does not seem to be based on a serious study of Spinoza's texts, but on a restricted and one-sided reading of secondary literature. The development of his hidden form of Enlightenment remains sketchy and superficial, partly because the interpretation of the sources is sketchy and superficial. The same slogans and catchy phrases appear again and again, as if repetition can make up for analysis. All sorts of extravagant or suggestive theses are put forward, without being based on much analysis or argument. References to and (more or less obscure) quotes from other fashionable thinkers are often supposed to be sufficient evidence.

The author pays special attention to Spinoza's naturalistic understanding of the mind as the idea of the body. Herder supposedly applies this idea to history and culture, thus coming to a 'Spinozistic' understanding of the rich and positive diversity of cultures. In addition, Spinoza's critique of the anthropomorphic idea of divinity supposedly led Herder to question the political theology of sovereignty and hierarchy. Spinoza's idea of true self-preservation would mean that self-interest is at the same time interest for the other and for the environment. In Herder, this is supposed to lead to a 'non-uniform universalism', to the affirmation of "a monist plurality in which different entities interlink" (123). A general feature of this interpretation is that Spinoza's and Herder's naturalisms are presented as implying ideological messages (pro pluralism and diversity, etc.). Supposedly for Spinoza "the laws [of the world] are ethical and ontological" (128). Is this not to turn the said naturalism into the direct source of a moral and political programme? According to Herder, history is an aspect that "introduces a kind of quasi-Kantian 'ought' into Spinoza's one substance theory" (70). These views are completely at odds with Spinoza: the laws of nature are not ethical at all, they have nothing to do with notions like good or bad, they cannot be turned into quasi-Kantian 'oughts'. The suggestion that Spinoza would reject the notion of sovereignty is absurd; it is sufficient to read the opening chapters of the *Tractatus Politicus* to know this.

Generally speaking, it is not clear how precisely Herder obtains his specific insights from their sources in Spinoza. It is not sufficient to qualify certain insights as 'Spinozistic' – as happens on almost every page – for there to be a real link with Spinoza's thought. Very often central ideas of Spinoza are twisted around so that they seem to fit Herder's views. A fundamental epistemological insight of Spinoza would be that human knowing is always inadequate, 'perspectival'; only in combination with the views of others does an individual's thinking participate in the 'eternal hermeneutic framework'. Also, "[c]ontrary to the geometrical method the content of Spinoza's thought is filled with uncertainty" (6). How all this is compatible with Spinoza's claim that he possesses the true philosophy, or with his distinction between adequate and inadequate knowledge, is a mystery. A central thesis of Michael Mack is that Spinoza's view of the mind as the idea of the body is of central importance for Herder. But the way Mack interprets this view ("As the idea of the body, the mind is responsible for actions performed

within the external and material world of embodiment" [18]) is in flat contradiction to Spinoza's parallelism between mind and body. Spinoza's notion of *conatus*, supposedly another cornerstone of Herder's thought, is given meanings that are miles apart from what the *Ethics* says about it: "Spinoza's *conatus* describes the ways in which the particular participates in the universal" (8). And so we could go on.

Not only is it very often unclear how Spinoza's views would lead to Herder's 'Spinozistic' ideas, but when Herder's explicit views on Spinoza are presented, they turn out to be misinterpretations of Spinoza. According to Herder, Spinoza's God is the Idea of the World. In German idealism, a certain idea of God as the Soul of the World crops up again. However, Spinoza's God is not the Idea of the World; in Spinoza's metaphysics, the Idea of the World is the (absolutely) infinite Intellect of God, which is not God himself (itself), but an infinite mode of one of God's attributes.

The last chapter purports to analyse another shift in Spinozistic naturalism: Freud's questioning of the cultural resistance to a naturalistic understanding also of our psychic nature. Freud's thinking would once more demonstrate "the persistence of Spinoza's non-hierarchical vision" (192). Again one wonders how exactly Freud's naturalistic considerations are derived or derivable from Spinoza's, or whether they are even compatible. Another worry should be if Freud's views are really compatible with the idea of 'true' Enlightenment presented in this book.

All this is not to say that no case could be made for a Spinozistic form of Enlightenment, or that it is not worth trying to unravel what happened to Spinoza's legacy in figures like Herder or Goethe. What seems clear is that the novel cultural theory supposedly at work here did not succeed in either of these tasks. If Herder's philosophy is really the maturation of true Enlightenment, why not demonstrate this in full depth and detail. Why is it necessary to claim Spinoza as the origin of what one likes and wants to defend? Is there a kind of (Hegelian) teleology in nature (in the history of thought) after all? It looks as if it is very hard to think outside a church or movement of some kind.

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Daniel MARKOVITS. *A Modern Legal Ethics. Adversary Advocacy in a Democratic Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. 361 pp.

In his renowned article "Politik als Beruf", Max Weber drew attention to the fact that those who entered politics could be confronted by a situation in which they would have to sacrifice moral values. In the book under review, Markovits confronts lawyers with the fact that they too seem to be committed to abandon the well-trodden paths of common morality – which may be morality *tout court* – when they are engaged in the defence of a client. Lawyers seem less committed to the triumph of justice than to the victory of the client or the cause they are defending. This commitment sometimes leads them to use means common morality condemns, like cheating, manipulation, lying, etc.

Moreover, lawyers cannot help but be partial with respect to their clients, so that they do not conform to the norm of impartiality, which is so central to morality, be it Kantian or utilitarian. Lawyers, in a word, seem to be vicious creatures, and the vices they display do not just seem to be idiosyncratic character traits, but vices made necessary by the system of adversary advocacy.

Does this mean that lawyers cannot lead virtuous lives? That becoming a lawyer condemns you to abandon the idea of leading a good life? That you must choose between being either a good lawyer or being a good person? Markovits' answer to these questions is, one could say, philosophically optimistic and historically pessimistic.

Though he does not deny the fact that adversary advocacy requires the lawyer to deploy professional vices, Markovits nevertheless thinks that the lawyer's behaviour can be ethically justified, so as to leave open the possibility of being at the same time a good lawyer and a good person. But let us note that the author rejects a utilitarian justification. Lawyers should not assuage their consciences by saying to themselves that their lawyerly vices contribute to the virtuous results of the system as a whole – Markovits could have quoted Mandeville: private vices make public virtues. As the reader may already have guessed, Markovits is not so much interested in the virtues of the system as a whole, as in the virtuous behaviour of the individual lawyer. In Markovits' account, he does not want to sacrifice the moral integrity of the individual on the altar of the system because "persons also have a deep and distinctively ethical interest in living a life that can be seen, from the inside, as an appealing whole and, moreover, a whole that is authored by the person who lives it" (134).

It is only through a redescription of what they do that lawyers can hope to preserve their moral integrity. Lawyers, according to Markovits, should conceive of themselves as playing a specific role, viz. the role of client mouthpiece. Taking up the notion from the poet Keats, Markovits speaks of negative capability. Lawyers must not substitute their own judgment for that of their clients, but they must be as faithful as possible to their clients' interests. Their constant question should be: What would the client have said if he or she knew what *I* know about law? Only if the client has the impression that the lawyer has done what he or she could in matters of fidelity, will he or she accept the result of the process.

Only if lawyers see themselves as playing the role of a faithful mouthpiece for their clients will they be able to distance themselves from what they say in their clients' favour and they will at the same time display a role-virtue. Thus, lawyers win on both accounts: as persons they act viciously, as lawyers they act virtuously.

So much for the philosophical optimism of the answer. The philosopher's world is not the real world. According to Markovits, this real world is dominated by a culture that does not leave lawyers another choice but to see themselves as villains, and this despite the fact that professional codes of ethics have multiplied. Despite? One should rather say because: "[T]he increasingly formal character of the legal ethics codes has made the legal profession's most prominent collective ethical regime more cosmopolitan than insular, and therefore unable to sustain any distinctive first-personal ethical

creed" (233). Add to this the greater aggressiveness of lawyers and the fact that they tend more and more to have only one kind of client, and the probability for lawyers to consider themselves as moral heroes will dwindle. They are rather, as expressed by the title of the last chapter of the book, 'tragic villains'.

Though somewhat repetitive – the reader cannot miss the point of the book – Markovits' work is an intelligent and thorough investigation of the possibility for lawyers to escape the criticism that they are often serving injustice rather than justice (remember the famous joke: the lawyer gladly announces to his client: "Justice has won" and the client answers "Appeal!"). Whether negative capability and client fidelity suffice to render a lawyer's professional life worthy of commitment may, however, be doubted, at least if one supposes that ethical worthiness is more than just doing something excellently. If Markovits devotes the eighth chapter of his book to the link between negative capability and fidelity on the one hand and the legitimacy of the legal process on the other, he could be interpreted as implicitly saying that the final ethical vindication of the legal profession as a whole is only possible by pointing to something other than just the first-personal virtue of integrity.

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Martha C. NUSSBAUM. *Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 160 pp.

This excellently written book, by one of the most celebrated public intellectuals of our time, is a passionate plea for the importance of the liberal arts and the humanities at all levels of education. Until recently, the humanities were considered the cornerstone of a broadly humane and intellectual education. But the anxiety of individuals as well as public policy makers concerning the acquisition and augmentation of personal and/or collective wealth in times of worldwide economic competition, has produced a significant change of attitude, a short-sighted focus on profitable skills. It is as if the anxiety to which we refer has infected everybody in leadership and has brought about a slavish following of the same disastrous policy worldwide. Nussbaum warns the US educational authorities not to adopt the narrow-minded Thatcherian mindset vis-à-vis the humanities more and more prevalent in Europe (especially, but certainly not only, the UK) and also in countries like India.

Her major, but certainly not the only, argument in favour of a liberal arts education is that this kind of education is absolutely required in order to create citizens capable of sustaining democracy in a pluralistic, global society. As she puts it succinctly: "Knowledge is no guarantee of good [civic] behavior, but ignorance is a virtual guarantee for bad behavior" (81). What is central to such an education for democratic citizenship, is Socratic questioning, i.e. learning to think critically, as well as learning to sympathetically enter into the perspective of others, especially the marginalized and different. What is

badly needed for humanity to have a future, is not to rely on the growth based model, but to rely instead on the Human Development Paradigm (akin to Nussbaum's own capability approach). This approach aims at enhancing people's true growth potential, especially those often discarded into the margins of society and history. As Richard Sennett would say, there is no scarcity of talent; endless amounts of talent are at present unused because of narrowness of vision. The result of seeing knowledge acquisition only in terms of the furthering of the economy is this: "Distracted by the pursuit of wealth, we increasingly ask our schools to turn out useful profit-makers rather than thoughtful citizens" (141-142).

Although this book is a defence of the liberal arts at all levels of education, it also addresses the crisis of the humanities in the university. All colleges and universities, Nussbaum argues, should follow the lead of America's Catholic colleges and universities, which require at least two semesters of philosophy, in addition to whatever theology or religious courses are required. As to research, judging research in the humanities in terms of impact, particularly economic impact, is a sin against the spirit. According to Nussbaum, funding research in the humanities on the basis of grant applications for government agencies, can only lead to disastrous consequences for the depth, independence and innovation of this kind of research. Inevitably, all sorts of alien considerations will interfere with the freedom of this kind of research. This leads to an upside-down world: research being done in function of career or funding, instead of research for the sake of insight and knowledge itself. She explicitly says that "the system of applying for grant money, though it may work well for the sciences, is not suited to the humanities and tends to corrupt the mission of humanistic scholarship" (130).

Although I wholeheartedly agree with Nussbaum's manifesto to resist efforts to reduce education to a tool of the gross national product and to reconnect education instead to the humanities, there are some elements in her book that weaken her justified plea. The amount of things children and students are supposed to master and which in her plan are all essential parts of a liberal education is so vast, that the task appears Herculean: world history including the role of colonisation, the interdisciplinary study of world nations and cultures; economic understanding of globalisation, including alternative theories in this respect, study also of the role of foreign investment and international corporations, the working conditions of peoples, their education and labour relations; study of theories of social and global justice, understanding of the history of law (of different systems of law?) and of political systems; study of the world's many religious traditions; in addition to all this students are also required to participate in the arts, in foreign language instruction (of at least one foreign language), etc. There are other signs of a certain naivety, for example the idea that (formal) logic is an essential ingredient in the education of a critical mind (mathematics does not lead to critical thinking either, in spite of what some people think). It is also far from sure that philosophy for children and women's studies are indeed essential ingredients of a Socratic education; typically Nussbaum also expects a great deal from "a multinational program in which children learn to design solutions to global problems using critical thinking

and imagination (Future Problem Solving Program International)" (89). My disagreement has of course to do with the overall 'progressive' idea of pedagogy, which is at the background of this book and which draws inspiration from Rousseau, Dewey, and other 'progressive' thinkers and educators.

There are other worries of a deeper, philosophical kind, including Nussbaum's very debatable analysis of the fundamental emotions of shame and disgust as based on early experiences of lack of control and anxiety and her rejection of them as simply pernicious. Likewise her naïve celebration of diversity and multiculturalism, which seems to imply serious underestimation of the difficulties related to the inevitable 'incarnation' of meanings, including the meaning of self, in the particularities of bodies, localities, groups, etc. The idea that the study of the many religious traditions will contribute to real acceptance of diversity, seems to me to be overoptimistic.

In the end, there may be a serious problem for the sort of defence of a liberal education proposed by Nussbaum. This defence of the liberal arts and the humanities is based on the positive impact they are supposed to have upon young minds, which is good for democracy. This is again, after all, a pragmatic argument for a certain kind of education, this time not economical but political; an argument that, as pragmatic, leaves room for doubt. Of course, Nussbaum's concern for an education in the service of democracy does not exclude but goes together with a concern for the broader transmission of values and meaning. But should we not point out and defend with as much vigour that the humanities, as preservers and transmitters of these values and meanings, are valuable in themselves? Should we not point out the delight and richness participation in the humanities provides for the human mind, a delight and richness that cannot be obtained otherwise than as a by-product of the activity itself? What kind of world is it, in which only pragmatic considerations, whether economical or political, are considered to be valid? Nussbaum would undoubtedly agree with all this as is obvious from many passages in her book. But addressing a wider public, especially also policy makers, she obviously thinks that the pragmatic argument that a liberal education is good, or even indispensable for democracy, is politically speaking of primary importance at this moment.

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Dònal P. O'MATHUNA. *Nanoethics. Big Ethical Issues with Small Technology*. London: Continuum, 2009. 235 pp.

One of our most persistent dreams as human beings has been to be able to transform the world and everything in it according to our own image and likeness, in other words to 'improve' on creation. We succeeded to some extent by building houses, by cultivating crops and breeding livestock, by combining metals to form all sorts of new alloys. But imagine what it would be like if we could change the characteristics of material at

the molecular level. Indeed, on the nanoscale (between 1 and 100 nanometres) materials suddenly appear to exhibit unique features (quantum effects). What kind of world would we want or desire, and what kind of world would we wish to avoid? These are the questions posed by Dònal O'Mathuna, senior lecturer in Ethics, Decision-Making & Evidence at Dublin City University, and explained in a more than creditable way. He begins by referring to a series of films that have developments in nanotechnology as their theme. His filmography consists of almost thirty current titles.

The author shares his insights with the reader in the course of ten chapters. He sees it as his job to unlock the new buzzword for anyone who might be interested. In the foreword, he not only focuses his attention on ethical questions, but he also digs deeper, exploring the values and beliefs that lie at the basis of our fascination for (but also fear of?) this new technology. He immediately establishes a distinction between "normal nanotechnology' and 'futuristic nanotechnology". The former represents everything already known by scientists, engineers and business people who want to use it to introduce new products onto the market. While the latter is a consequence of normal developments, it remains in the realms of fantasy: the domain of 'nanobots' and 'nanites' that are the subject of science fiction. But being in the domain of science fiction need not imply that such developments should be excluded from ethical reflection. Based on the principle of precaution, we can reflect on the potentially detrimental consequences of certain developments. Films and literature have a contribution to make in this regard and can fire the imagination.

The first chapter endeavours to explain what nanotechnology and nanoscience is all about. Space travel called for extremely light materials, small-scale computers with large-scale memories, space suits that could be sealed sufficiently while still offering flexibility. The study of available materials lead to the development of new materials that could meet these demands. But the search continued: building materials, foodstuffs, medicines… in combination with insights from biotechnology, genetic engineering, information technology and the cognitive sciences. New and interesting possibilities emerged. No one had known before or even imagined that aluminium in the form of nanoparticles could be highly explosive and might thus offer an alternative to polluting fossil fuels; or that chewing gum combined with nanoparticles of platinum could slow down the processes of ageing; or indeed that it was possible to make chocolate flavoured chewing gum for that matter. In 2009 there were no less than 800 nanotechnology-based consumer products on the market, of which Apple's iPod nano is perhaps the best known. Thanks to nanotechnology, a self-cleansing and water-resistant coating exists – already being used in the construction industry – which obviates the need for washing the windows of large buildings. Nanotechnology has also helped lengthen the lives of our batteries. The public at large is not aware of these developments, in spite of the fact that nanotechnology poses ethical, legal, social and ecological questions, the latter being particularly poorly documented. Governments vie with one another to gain leadership in the field, while the public is left to pick up scraps of information from science-fiction films and literature. How do we bridge this situation with what is happening in reality?

The glass processing industry has long been aware of the effects of adding certain substances in order to give glass certain characteristics. This evolved, however, through a process of trial and error. Scientific research in the domain started on the whole with Nobel Prize winner for physics R. P. Feynman, who presented his vision of small-scale manipulation in 1959: "Feynman asked why the entire 24 volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica could not be written on the head of a pin […and] noted that none of this would violate the laws of physics?" (16). He predicted that it would be possible to build machines 'atom by atom', designed for specific concrete applications. He also predicted, among other things, that it would be possible to introduce a tiny robot into the human body that had the capacity to repair dysfunctional organs in situ. The idea of 'nanobots' was thus born. But if we continue to reflect along the same lines: the said 'nanobots' would be able to collect information and pass on a more or less uninterrupted stream of medical data via appropriate reading devices detailing the health and condition of different organs and bodily functions, and this could be directly linked to the computer of our GP, allowing the latter to react immediately in the event of abnormalities. K.E. Drexler took things a step further: perhaps we will be able to learn from nature (biochemistry) how viruses and other minute organisms construct themselves and replicate. The development of the 'scanning tunnelling microscope' by G. Binnig and H. Rohrer, made it possible to 'see' these atoms and molecules. In 1989, researchers at IBM produced an individual xenon atom with the letters IBM 'printed' on it. Feynman's dream had become a reality. Chemists developed 1nm 'buckyballs' able to transport certain chemicals throughout the body, later employed in carbon nanotubes that were stronger than steel but only a quarter the weight, ideal for making bulletproof vests or for connecting spacecraft to the earth by cable… It seems conceivable that they will also possess important electrical characteristics able to transport energy or store it. Normal nanotechnology and science fiction merge at this juncture, profiting from each other to allow creative possibilities and ideas blossom.

Determining the appropriate and meaningful ethics in regard to these issues is a particularly interesting question. In chapter three, the author alludes explicitly to narrative possibilities: thanks to narratives, it may be possible to illuminate more about what good procedures might be than via purely rational argumentation. People generally 'know' what is good, although they often do the wrong thing. Rationality, after all, shares space with passions and emotions. "Narrative Ethics can slide towards relativism and the idea that whatever people choose, that is right for them, so long as it is consistent with their own life stories" (34). The author favours a cohesive approach. Narratives help us become aware of the moral dimensions of a situation, make situations more concrete, help clarify dilemmas, help us realise that there are several dimensions and aspects associated with any given situation. They reveal that certain choices or intentions are not value-neutral. It goes without saying that an ethical evaluation is necessary of the behaviour and character of the persons involved. Ethical reflection implies interpersonal dialogue in order to determine which image of the person, society and the world is at work and what values are being implied.

Chapter four explores how we might deal with the risks and uncertainties involved in these new developments. Should we allow people to fall prey to the fear certain science fiction narratives tend to inspire? Some authors fill their pages with apocalyptic images while others speak of paradise on earth. It is important, therefore, that communication on the state of play in this regard be clear and concrete in order not to lose the public trust. The risks after all are varied and not always of the same substance: the ecological impact of nanotechnology is not the same as that associate with changing human behaviour by implanting memory chips in the brain, for example. And is it not true to say that every form of technological development involves risks? It is evident, nevertheless, that questions can be raised as to whether the potential risks involved are the subject of serious research. Nanotechnology has found its way into the world of cosmetics, for example, in the form of titanium dioxide or zinc oxide in UV-blockers and anti-wrinkle creams. Research has shown, however, that the majority of consumers were not aware of this fact. Should products be obliged to carry such information on their labels? Should research be carried out on potential toxicity via the skin, the eyes, inhalation? Should such testing be done on animals? Insurance companies fearful of massive damage claims are particularly interested in such research. Research into the inappropriate use of antibiotics (which ultimately find their way into the environment and the food chain, leading to even greater resistance) or DDT and PCB's can be instructive for our understanding of the nanoparticles that we absorb into our bodies and then secrete. Furthermore, the carbon fibres used in the manufacture of tennis rackets and bicycles might evolve an asbestos-like toxicity with consequences for later generations.

This brings us to chapter five: the principle of precaution. Traditional technology allows us to conduct risk analyses using appropriate methods. This applies to the construction of nuclear installations as well as that of tunnels and bridges. But are such methods also appropriate for determining the risks associated with nanoparticles, for evaluating the pros and cons, the consequences in the short term and the long term, locally and globally? And how are the risks (justly?) distributed? Have we drawn sufficient conclusions from the use of asbestos, dioxins, nuclear energy? And to take asbestos as a specific example: how does one assess the many deaths that have resulted from asbestosis in light of the many lives that have been saved by the fire-resistant qualities of asbestos? The principle of precaution was included in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 and was recently applied in the REACH guidelines, which set out to identify and evaluate chemical products of every kind in terms of their potential harmfulness. In the USA, however, the principle is evidently less popular, in part because the concepts involved are not always clearly definable. In the USA, for example, nanoceuticals (diet supplements using nanoparticles) were introduced onto the market without government approval. The US government was obliged to prove that harmful character of such material, while the principle of precaution places the onus on the manufacturer, obliging the latter to prove that his or her product is safe. This is clearly akin to the classical deontological principle: do not harm. A utilitarian approach might be willing to

accept a number of disadvantages if the advantages are sufficiently convincing. But tell that to the victims of asbestos! The author concludes the chapter by observing that analysing substances in laboratory conditions is not the same as doing the same in complex, real-world circumstances.

Chapter six explores the question from a global perspective. Nanotechnology has the potential to make an enormous contribution to developing countries, where the need for clean water, better crops, cheaper energy and increased availability of sources of information is acute. New and established economic forces have already invested a great deal in nanoproducts and nanoprogrammes. At the same time, some developing countries have supplies of 'obsolete' raw materials, while others have supplies of 'new' raw materials that can have an enormous impact on the local economy. The demand for tantalum, lithium and tungsten has increased significantly in recent years. It is important that investors learn from the past and become aware that the presence of these new substances should not lead to a new form of exploitation but should contribute rather to national and regional development.

Is it fair to argue that the manufacture of nanoproducts is meeting humanity's most urgent needs when the top ten list of new nanoproducts includes the iPod nano, chewing gum, anti-wrinkle cream, odourless socks, air fresheners, self-cleaning glass…? One of the millennium development goals is the availability of drinking water. Thanks to nanotechnology, filters and membranes can be manufactured from carbon nanotubes or nanoporous ceramics. The same is true for the development of new medicines: is research focusing on the sicknesses common among the wealthy minority or among the poor majority? Are developing countries being used as nothing more than cheap testing laboratories, as films like *The Constant Gardener* (2005) and *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) suggest?

Chapters seven and eight explore the medical potential of nanotechnology, including the manufacture of better medicines, improved diagnostics, and the 'improvement' of human health by enhancing certain capacities. Inevitably, this invites us to question whether we are still dealing with 'normal' medicine in such instances, or with the creation of 'better' human beings, of the 'posthuman' human? Chapter nine explores this question in greater depth. The synergy between nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, cognitive science presents us with hitherto unknown possibilities to recreate the human person, improve memory operation, improve the body, improve (extend?) life. Who among us would object? But this gives rise to practical issues (can the earth sustain massive increases in population?) as well as more fundamental questions related to human dignity and human freedom. Are such developments for the privileged few? Is humanity playing God or Frankenstein?

The author has succeeded in sharing with the reader an assortment of practical information on the current state of affairs related to the fundamental questions concerning values and visions or humanity and society that have arisen in the context of developments in nanotechnology. O'Mathuna's book not only helps us understand the core of the various debates, it also provides a background of film and literature dealing

with the said theme. The twenty-five page bibliography testifies to the author's comprehensive familiarity with this material. *Nanoethics. Big Ethical Issues with Small Technology* can justifiably be described as a well-written book for scientists, policy makers and ethicists interested in exploring the issue at greater depth.

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Joaquim SILES I BORRÀS. *The Ethics of Husserl's Phenomenology. Responsibility and Ethical Life*. London: Continuum, 2010. 224 pp.

Siles i Borràs' *The Ethics of Husserl's Phenomenology: Responsibility and Ethical Life*, the published edition of his 2006 PhD dissertation, is an endeavour to ground ethical thinking in our idea of responsibility, derived from a study of Husserl's phenomenology in a universalist context. The author approaches this question in a fourfold manner. After establishing the early identification of the principle of presuppositionlessness or *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* with the question regarding *Evidenz* and *Intuition*, from which Husserl distils the idea of the *Intuition* as a first principle, a detailed analysis of the question of *Intentionalität* and inner-time-consciousness as an explicit grounding of the possibility of an intuitive given is presented. This exposes the need for a *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* and a consciousness of the need for self-reflection, thereby demonstrating that phenomenology is limited to a static field of consciousness and experience. The author then confronts the question of how we can research our own intention and motivation for/in the act of knowing. By also focusing on affectivity and the unconscious as a redefinition of the *Intentionalität* and time-consciousness, the author sets out to explore the formal limits of the acts of consciousness. Lastly there remains the question how *Selbstverantwortlichkeit* redefines the principle of *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* beyond the limits of the *Intuition*.

The books' first chapter deals with the question of the need for a firm and presuppositionless ground for the philosophical inquiry. For Husserl, a loss of the radical philosophical self-reflective character led to *factualization* of human existence. What is needed is a renaissance of the idea of science, and of human culture in general, both solidly founded on a radical self-reflecting philosophy. Phenomenology, founded on and defined by the performance of the methodological attitude of epoché, represents the foundation of this self-reflection. Epoché is not presupposed by any structure or principle other than the universal and unconditional responsible demand for autonomy that enables the phenomenological enquiry to uncover the rationality that structures the enquiry itself. It is only due to this epoché, as expression and exercise of the universal self-responsible demand for autonomy, that phenomenology can settle the limits of human experience and account for the frame within which phenomenology emerges and proceeds. Thus, the intent of phenomenology is always to reveal the pure forms of knowledge and laws by tracing them back to their origin in intuition (26).

If phenomenology is to be considered an ethical inquiry, this can only be due to the universal and unconditional demand for *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* that guides research and, in particular, to the expression and exercise of such a demand by means of epoché. For if phenomenology, and intuition in particular, can present us with a relation of co-existence and constitution between consciousness and world, rather than with one of construction and violence, this is relative to the ethical demand for autonomy and *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* effected by epoché.

In the second chapter, Siles i Borràs focuses on the act of intuition and the role it plays in rendering that which thought intended. Intuition can be defined as the act that makes thought authentically meaningful; a *rechtsquelle* for whatever knowledge presents itself in intuition. If perception reaches the thing intended and brings it to our intellectual gaze, intuition, categorial as well as eidetic, makes it thoughtful and meaningful for us. This categorial act sees through the material essences of the object and intuits the relationships that articulate these objects, thereby making the object *be* what it *is*, and *as* it is (61). Pure intuition, or rationality's understanding, is not simply perceiving the object in its flesh, its pure possibilities, seeing within the flesh of the object perceived, enquiring without presuppositions. *Vernunftlichkeit* functions by grasping the structure of the intuited object and positing it, thereby determining the ideal object as properly meaningful without specifically determining its meaningfulness.

The third chapter deals with how intentionality and intuition are a necessary part of any act of meaning. Since there can be no act of aiming without something being meant by it, the act of aiming at is not an activity detached from that which is meant by it and, therefore, the act does not precede that which is meant. Meaning is here also understood as feeling, sensing something, while the act of intentionality is the act of the life of consciousness, whereby the world is lived, either by judging it, wishing it, feeling it or sensing it… together with a multitude of other ways. The essence of the intentional act of consciousness, therefore, is the relationship between matter and quality, this relationship being that which allows the act of consciousness to be in an intentional relationship with the world. Experience is intrinsically grounded in the intentional act of consciousness and more precisely in its intentionality.

The element of time and how it relates and dictates consciousness is the topic of the fourth chapter. This correct understanding of time is fundamental to the act of knowing, because the individuality of an object of consciousness does not reside in its matter, but in the temporal positions in which the matters make it sound distinctively. The phenomenology of time-consciousness, therefore, makes manifest the ethical self-demand for self-grounding that defines phenomenology, insofar as its aim is the uncovering of the genesis of the acts of reflection, within phenomenal time as well as pre-phenomenal time, which are characteristic of the phenomenological enquiry. This awareness of time-consciousness is essential to understand *vergegenwärtigung* of the Other, which occurs as pre-reflective self-awareness within the pre-phenomenal time. The question of the Other is, therefore, not only important for the formation of subjectivity, but is also determinant in the formation of the ideal limits of experience as condition of possibility for a phenomenological objectivity.

The fifth and final chapter explains how a genetic phenomenology, opposed to a static phenomenology, can provide a foundation for self-reflective responsibility. Pure intuition regarding the Ideas of Space and Time is the continuous event of self-temporalization and embodiment, whereby consciousness is conceived or born over and over again as consciousness-of-something. Without it reflection would be impossible, since reflection ultimately cannot be grounded in an abstract self-awareness only. It needs to be grounded in the combination of the latter with an affective awareness of the pre-constituted-world. What a re-orientation from static to genetic phenomenology ultimately entails, when self-reflecting on the origin of its own beginnings, is the very truth that forms phenomenology as an infinite inquiry. In re-awakening this reflective responsibility, phenomenology is clearly showing the original spirit of philosophy, being the principle of *Voraussetzungslosigkeit*. Thus phenomenology has reactivated the ethical life that has lived at the heart of philosophy since Socrates and Plato, and this, in the first instance, is what motivates not just the principle of principles as well as the effecting of reduction and epoché, but even phenomenology itself as an (ethical) philosophical inquiry.

The Ethics of Husserl's Phenomenology is a thorough reading of the unity of Husserl's writings and an intriguing exploration of his phenomenological enquiries in a fundamentally universalistic framework, putting forward an absolute claim, both in terms of truth and of value. Being densely written, this book might be ideal for the advanced student of (ethical) philosophy in general and phenomenology in particular. Given its holistic explanation of the ethical dimension in Husserl's phenomenology, it will be particularly valuable for confronting readers with the scope and impact of Husserl's thought.

Siles i Borràs presents us here with a very phenomenological reading of Husserl's work. Instead of focussing on a particular ethical approach and confronting Husserl with one of his later critics, this study places all of Husserl's debtors and critics between brackets and focuses on the subject in all its givenness. The very notion of *Voraussetzungslosigkeit*, the richness of which the author not only tries to explain but also to live by, makes one almost forget all the viable criticism towards, among other things, the individuality of Husserl's idealistic ethical approach. In deliberately opting for a unified canon of Husserlian thinking and using the different meanings and accents present in the historical scope of his various works, the author places himself in a position that may be open to criticism, but in so doing he earns our respect for the consistency of his endeavour.

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Paul THAGARD. *The Brain and the Meaning of Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, 274 pp.

For the last twenty years, non-invasive techniques such as MRI and fMRI have increased our knowledge of the structure and functioning of the human brain. This burgeoning

understanding of what goes on in the brain while we think, feel and act has also sparked an interest in the practical consequences of this knowledge. There is, for instance, a growing body of literature on the implications of neuroscientific research, to which Thagard's book is a recent addition. As a philosopher and psychologist, he explores the relevance of neuroscience for some traditional existential and ethical issues, including the meaning of life.

Can neuroscience help us to solve such philosophical problems? Thagard thinks it can, but it is not immediately clear in what way, because he defends two claims in turn. The moderate claim holds that neuropsychology is "also valuable" for the investigation of what makes life worth living (228). In this view, science can "collaborate" with philosophy to establish epistemological and ethical theories. In other places, however, he talks about the 'Brain Revolution', which means that results from neuroscientific research will lead to the total "abandonment" of concepts such as soul, free will and immortality (xii). From the preface, in which Thagard explains how reading Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* transformed his life, one can infer that he sets out to defend his radical claim. I will discuss here whether he succeeds in doing so.

The ten chapter book can be divided roughly into three parts. In the first part (chapters 1 – 3), Thagard clarifies his own metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. He distinguishes between different sources of knowledge about the world, and claims that natural science gives us a far more reliable access to reality than religious faith or *a priori* reasoning. He even goes so far as to state that "reality is what science can discover" (9). In chapter 3, Thagard discusses the implications of his scientific worldview for philosophy and the concept of 'mind'. He rejects dualistic theories, and embraces an identity theory according to which the mind *is* the brain. In the second part of the book (chapters 4 – 6), Thagard describes how this mind-brain identification enables him to explain how we know reality (chapter 4), feel emotions (chapter 5) and make decisions (chapter 6). In the third part, he moves on to the question of what this information can tell us about the meaning of life (chapter 7), human needs and hopes (chapter 8), and caring for others (chapter 9). In the last chapter, Thagard summarizes the argument and explores the relevance of the neurosciences for questions like 'what kind of government should countries have?' or 'what is mathematical knowledge?'.

The chapters on how brains process emotion, knowledge and decision making are an interesting read for philosophers who want to know more about current discoveries in this domain. What might annoy such philosophers, however, is that Thagard barely acknowledges the controversial nature of the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions he makes. The reason for not discussing alternative views in more detail probably has something to do with the audience that Thagard has in mind: *The Brain and the Meaning of Life* is definitely geared towards a wider reading public. A good example of a controversial issue is Thagard's all too easy identification of the 'brain' and the 'mind'. A layperson could get the impression that this is a widely accepted view, which can be justified by results from natural scientific research. However, one could argue that the natural sciences cannot *prove* the non-existence of non-natural properties since this is

exactly what they *presuppose*. Scientists place their subject of inquiry within a framework of time, space and causality – this is the way in which they explain phenomena. So, either Thagard will have to justify the redundancy of concepts such as soul, free will and immortality on the basis of a philosophically contentious theory, or he must admit that there are other, non-scientific discourses whose value cannot be affected by science with such ease. As Thagard prefers the former, it is a pity that he does not defend his metaphysical ideas through a discussion of rival ideas.

Thagard's claim that advances in the neurosciences will lead to the abandonment of concepts such as soul, free will and immortality seems too strong. But what is left of his more moderate claim? In chapter 7, Thagard argues that (i) the meaning of life for human beings is to lead a happy life, (ii) that happiness is a product of goal satisfaction, (iii) that 'love, work and play', a trio he takes from positive psychologist Martin Seligman, are goals that make humans satisfied, and (iv) that all other goals are subordinate to these three goals. His line of argument, however, is not based on neuroscientific research per se; for example, it could almost have been taken from the opening pages of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In fact, in this chapter, Thagard needs neuroscience to show what goes on in the brain while people feel happy.

We can conclude from Thagard's book that neuroscience can be valuable to the exploration of ethical and existential questions, because it reveals the brain mechanisms that underlie our feelings, beliefs and choices. This, in itself, is very interesting, but it will not be very helpful in answering people's existential or ethical questions.

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Peter ULRICH. *Integrative Economic Ethics. Foundations of a Civilized Market Economy*. Translated by James Fearns. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 484 pp.

In this English translation of *Integrative Wirtschaftsethik: Grundlagen einer lebensdienlichen Ökonomie* (third revised German edition, 2001), Peter Ulrich provides an impressive and elaborate view of economic ethics, which "differs fundamentally from existing international approaches" (ix). This thoroughgoing work will be of interest to those readers who are not satisfied with an Anglo-Saxon view of applied ethics, which merely provides a corrective role to economic rationality. German-speaking academics familiar with the discussion on 'moral economics', a functionalist reduction of ethics to economics, will find this book an intellectual challenge, questioning implicit assumptions. The central position defended in this work is that consideration for the legitimate demands of other moral beings should always have primacy over the self-interest of an economic actor. The coercive logic of the efficiency argument in dominant economic discourse is revealed as a concealed normative position, which all too often serves as a

legitimation for the acceptance of externalities. The integrative approach should be read as a critique of the logic of the free-market, which benefits a minority of the population, but deprives a large portion of current and future generations of a life that can be lived in dignity. Ulrich takes up the challenge to provide a rational foundation for modern economics, in order to save the ideal of a free and equal society from a logic that would subordinate human dignity to a mere means to achieve economic efficiency.

Throughout the work, the author gradually develops a comprehensive construction of an ethically integrated economic rationality. Interestingly enough, the entire first part deals with the fundamental concepts of modern ethics, as a means to construct a clear and precise elaboration of the concept of integrative economic ethics. Indeed, a precise stipulation of the denotation of ethics or morality is often lacking in the literature on economics or business ethics. Bearing in mind that these concepts are frequently used with very divergent meanings, clear specification is essential to grasp the normative aspects of economics theory and practice. Whereas morals are defined as social rules, ethos represents the personal attitude or set of convictions a human being adopts in shaping his or her idea of the good life. Ethics is defined as a "philosophical discipline" that provides a "qualified justification of moral claims" (29). This is the task that is taken up by the author: to develop a regulative idea for a rational justification of moral claims based on discourse ethics. Discourse ethics, developed by German philosophers such as Habermas and Appel, is an attempt to clarify the preconditions for applying the moral point of view in the communication process in the public arena. It does not provide practical guidelines, nor is it a practical procedure, but it "reflects on the normative conditions of the possibility of argumentative understanding processes" (69). The basic insight is that openness (that which can never be closed or institutionalised) or an unconstrained communication order should serve as a regulative guide for attaining rational politics. As such, the willingness of rational actors to take into account the concerns, needs, and demands of other autonomous actors is defended against a relativistic view that entrenches the moral actors in the ideas of their own culturally accepted value system. On the other hand, it does not rely on a pure reason that would dictate morality, or provide an unconditional deontological approach. One of the postulates in this approach is the willingness of both parties in the communication process to remain open to the demands of the other. Such an orientation towards understanding is contrasted with strategic action, i.e. action oriented to success, in which a person is focused on his or her private success and is primarily interested in influencing his or her opponent to his or her own ends. In the ideal orientation towards understanding, the other is not an opponent but a subject with his or her own needs that have to be taken into account. The form that should guide the communication is an open communicative process that should never be closed down; this means that the success of a consensus is not the final goal, but the regulative idea is the willingness to be open for argumentative criticism. The limitations of a 'theoretical' or 'too ideal' notion, however, remains perhaps one of the main challenges that this discourse ethics approach needs to overcome. It seems idealistic, too idealistic, to have to assume in an economic context that

an actor should not be focused on a positive outcome in his or her endeavours. In addition, in this approach the institutionalisation of norms is considered as a closure of the openness of the argumentative process, which should never be closed in the regulative ideal of discourse ethics. The author acknowledges, nonetheless, that this institutionalisation is inevitable in order to protect and preserve respect for the rights of free citizens in the public arena. The tension between openness of communication and the application of standards and rules is a precarious one, which appears to be among the primary challenges in this rational ethics.

In the second part of the book, a fundamental analysis is offered of 'economism'. In these chapters, one of the most interesting insights that is offered is how the notion of inherent necessities of market economy has become gradually ingrained and accepted as an inescapable truth in modern thought. Calvinist doctrine demanded a disciplined and purposeful life to increase the glory of God, and upheld that the success of our work was a sign that God's will had been fulfilled. It is but a short step from the divine hand to an invisible hand (in place of God's hand) that would serve as the naturalistic justification for a free market, which would serve by natural inclination for the good of human kind. Indeed, in contemporary thinking the replacement of the means with the goal – efficiency should serve human flourishing and not vice versa – is still widespread.

The dominance of market logic, the "serfdom in which material goods would gain an increasing and finally inexorable power over the lives of men" (214) would make the modern idea of freedom redundant. Economic activity should serve a just social life, and should serve as a way to secure the means of human subsistence and promote the abundance of human life. In the last part of his book, Ulrich goes on to defend his republican view of deliberative order politics, a view in which the foundation of a market economy can only be obtained in a public arena in which citizens take and share responsibility in order to contribute to the debate on the justness of politico-economic regulatory questions (342).

No work on economic ethics is complete without an exploration of the ethics of corporate behaviour. In recent literature on business ethics, the case of corporate social responsibility has received considerable attention. The argument goes that investing in the environment and in adequately managing human rights and labour rights will improve the profitability of a given corporation in long term. As Ulrich points out, this idea faces the serious limitation that profit-driven behaviour will continue to have priority over the legitimate needs and rights of affected stakeholders. As a counterbalance, Ulrich points out the need to revise the concept along Kantian lines, a shift in thinking he also observes in the work of R.E. Freeman, the notorious founder of the stakeholder approach. "The consequence for Freeman is also the categorical corporate-ethical *legitimacy proviso*, […] management may not violate the moral rights of others in the measures it undertakes to secure the existence and the success of a corporation" (423). In the institutional perspective, Ulrich sums up the elements of an integrative ethics programme for corporations. A corporation should endeavour to engage in meaningful corporate value creation with binding business principles. The corporation should

guarantee stakeholder rights and should open sites of corporate ethical discourse in developing a discursive infrastructure. The corporation should work on the development of ethical competence, and should implement ethically consistent management systems. It is interesting to note that Ulrich sees the need for management systems and a code of ethics in order to implement and uphold the ethical programme in the company. On the other hand, the author stresses the importance of granting priority to spaces of communication, or the opening of opportunities for ethical-critical argumentation (440). As remarked above, the tension between openness and closedness remains precarious. An authoritative approach would undermine the moral capability of responsibility by employees at all levels, while too much openness would create ample room for moral free-riders, or unscrupulous opportunists.

This highly academic work defends the idea that economic ethics can only be understood as political economics, and does so in a profound and convincing manner. Civic rationality and civic virtue are indispensible for building a framework in which regulate an economy that is worthy of a society where human dignity can flourish. While the majority of the quoted authors are of German speaking origin, the debate is also highly relevant for the Anglo-Saxon reader. At the same time, however, the work is perhaps too theoretical on occasion. Its persuasive power would have be reinforced if the challenge to implement discourse ethics in daily business conduct had been illustrated on the basis of a number of case studies designed to clarify the possibility of resolving some challenging dilemmas. Nevertheless, this work has the potential to significantly enrich the debate economic ethics, as it provides us with a treasure-trove of arguments for criticising a one-sided ideal of economic efficiency.

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Alex VOORHOEVE. *Conversations on Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 259 pp.

In *Conversations on Ethics*, Alex Voorhoeve bundles together a selection of his interviews with some of the world's leading theorists in the field of ethics. This collection provides a good way to get acquainted with the work of the best moral philosophers of our times, including Alasdair MacIntyre, T.M. Scanlon, Peter Singer and Bernard Williams. In addition, a number of highly respected 'outsiders', such as evolutionary theorist Ken Binmore and psychologist Daniel Kahneman, demonstrate that other sciences also have the potential to shed an illuminating light on ethical issues. Thanks to Voorhoeve's engaging interviewing style, the reader finds out what moves these authors to tackle questions surrounding the good life, the status of moral intuitions and the possibility of basing ethical theories on a single set of moral principles. It makes for an interesting read, especially for those already acquainted with ethics who either want to know more about the individuals behind the books they have read or are eager to learn more on (perhaps familiar) ethical issues from other (perhaps less familiar) points of view.

The book has five parts, each comprising of two or three interviews, which centre around – or at least explore – that part's unifying topic. The first part focuses on the role of moral intuitions in ethics. Should we basically trust our intuitive moral judgments and try to systematize and justify them, as Frances Kamm would have it? Or are Peter Singer and Daniel Kahneman right in stressing their wholly unreliable character? Furthermore, to what extent can we expect people to revise their moral intuitions, for example through ethical reasoning and theorizing? In the second part, Voorhoeve brings together two prominent scholars in the field of virtue ethics. Philippa Foot and Alasdair MacIntyre both discuss what the fundamental ends in human life are and how they relate to our functioning as human beings. The third part addresses the evolutionary origins and functions of basic moral sentiments such as altruism, fairness and guilt. While Ken Binmore draws rather disenchanting conclusions from these evolutionary insights, Alan Gibbard explains how he derives from evolutionary theory a guilt-based ethics that stresses the importance of normative discussions between members of a social group. In the fourth part, the central question is whether it is possible to provide coherent, unified answers to fundamental questions in ethics. T.M. Scanlon elaborates on his overarching claim that actions are morally permissible only if they are based on principles that no one could reasonably reject. While Bernard Williams is more critical about attempts to provide a single theoretical view of what morality consists of, he surprisingly welcomes Scanlon's formulation. In his view, Scanlon is right in not further specifying what it is that people can or cannot reasonably reject. In the fifth and last part, Harry Frankfurt and David Velleman agree to disagree on the meaning of love and its relation to morality. Whereas Frankfurt thinks that love provides both the justificatory and motivational basis for moral and non-moral considerations alike, Velleman argues that love crucially relates to morality primarily because it focuses on people's capacity for the good. Velleman understands love as similar to respect in that it is about seeing people's capacity to take others as an end: "So it is through being loved and loving in return that we become moral agents" (254).

Voorhoeve allows his interviewees to delve into moral, ethical and meta-ethical topics that are at the centre of their philosophical or scientific attention. While some of the authors only need a brief hint to go into the details of their views at great length, others need a little bit more encouragement. Nonetheless, as the book's title promises, each interview turns into a genuine conversation between both participants. The dialogue is often smooth and always insightful. In addition, Voorhoeve's way of introducing the authors and summarizing their views at the beginning of each chapter and at relevant times during the interview is highly enlightening. He manages to take his readers on an intellectual enterprise in which he delivers the information required to understand what is being said at the appropriate moments. This makes the book as a whole both accessible and understandable. Beware, however, that the book is not introductory or easy. This is not because the authors examine all kinds of technicalities (in the few places they do, Voorhoeve provides explanatory footnotes), but because the conversations are

seldom superficial. Voorhoeve and his conversation partners quickly cut to the heart of the philosophical issues at stake and do not shun sophisticated arguments if these are needed to advance insight. In this respect, some familiarity with (moral) philosophy is no luxury when reading the book.

As such, the book should not be read as an introduction to ethics. It also does not really (aim to) serve as an introduction to the works of the philosophers and scientists in question, partly because of the theoretical focus of its different parts. The conversation with Peter Singer, for example, only touches upon his well-known views on animal treatment and world poverty. Instead, a large part focuses on the role basic intuitions play in moral reasoning. In Singer's view, intuitive judgments can form an unreliable basis for ethics because they can derive from prejudices and other untrustworthy sources. This is why Singer devotes his academic work to the quest for basic and immediately appealing principles that each rational being has to accept. He stresses the principle that every sentient being's interests should count equally from a moral point of view and that each of us should therefore weigh each interest as if it was our own. According to Singer, "when we think of things in this way, we are not just reporting our intuitions, but rather a reasoned response to things that we recognize are of value" (51). If we are really convinced that suffering is bad and should be avoided, for example, then we should revise our intuitions and take sentient non-human beings into account when evaluating the morality of our actions and their consequences.

Singer's views are contrasted in the book with those of Frances Kamm, who disagrees with Singer on two levels. Firstly, Kamm believes that individual human beings are characterized by a kind of inherent inviolability, which goes directly against Singer's dismissal of the sanctity of human life. While Kamm, like Singer, searches for deeper principles that underlie our moral intuitions, she stresses their remarkably non-consequentialist nature. This brings us to the second point of contention, namely the meta-ethical issue surrounding the relationship between everyday intuitions and ethical theorizing. In contrast with Singer, Kamm does not interpret these principles as fixed premises in purely rational arguments that can lead to counterintuitive conclusions. Instead, she aims to find a set of principles – which relates to a specific conception of personhood – that underlies the ways in which people's intuitions respond to moral dilemmas. These principles constitute the rigid structure of morality that has to be analyzed as a whole rather than reconstructed and revised on the basis of some of its parts: "It's a package deal. It's like a theory of grammar. Once you have the core, everything else follows […] It is not something we put together, or fool around with" (38).

As is often the case in real-life conversations, the interviewees in the book are much friendlier towards one another than they are when writing their articles and books. Interestingly, both Singer and Kamm, for example, reveal explicit signs of intellectual modesty. Whereas Singer claims he is "not sure that there are such principles" (51) which each rational being has to accept, but puts his money on the ones he has been writing on for decades now, Kamm admits that she has not yet succeeded in uncovering the deep structure of morality that lies embedded in the notion of personhood:

"I believe that given a certain conception of the person, the rest of it follows […] I don't know what it is yet. I have it. I have it. There is no doubt about that, because I must have it, since I have the intuitions that express it" (37). In these passages, the interviewees turn out to be genuine philosophers, diligent and enormously intelligent but nevertheless struggling and fallible. The value of Voorhoeve's book is that it shows not only how great minds come to adopt their ideas and come to disagree on fundamental theoretical issues, like Singer's defence of consequentialism and Kamm's justification of inviolable human rights. In addition, the conversations reveal how they understand the kinds of moral deliberations and ethical theorizing in which they engage.

From time to time, Voorhoeve's questions and interludes are able to single out specific aspects of an author's theory that are controversial or troublesome. Again, the authors often magnanimously agree that they are wrestling with these issues themselves. In one passage, Voorhoeve explains how Frankfurt views a person's identity as being constituted by the second-order desires he or she (wholeheartedly) endorses. He asks Frankfurt what he thinks about people who identify themselves with desires they would rather be without. Frankfurt admits the problem and states that his notion of 'endorsement' has been a misleading one: "The term 'endorsement' suggests approval […] I never meant that. What I meant was something like acceptance of what I really am" (222). In this sense, people can perfectly identify with their weakness of will, contrary to what Frankfurt's theory has always suggested.

At other times, Voorhoeve's critical questions simply provide a polite excuse for the interviewees to make their point more clearly and convincingly. Again in the interview with Frankfurt, Voorhoeve aims to question his claim that it is impossible for people to ask whether they should care about the things they do care about. Voorhoeve refers to Sartre's example "in which a young man must decide whether to join the resistance against the German occupation or stay with his mother, who needs him close by" (227). In his answer, Frankfurt clarifies things in a forceful way: "Well, the young man cannot be creating his values *ex nihilo*. So if that is what the idea of 'radical choice' means, then it is confused. As for the young man's decision: all he can do is try to find out which means more to him" (227). And he can only perform this search, of course, on the basis of those things he (already) cares about.

In addition to these and other insightful and thought-provoking exchanges, Voorhoeve ends each of the chapters with some suggestions for further reading. Moreover, the book and its cover are embellished with excellent photographs of the interviewees by Steve Pyke. Given of its ability to bring its protagonists to life, I can recommend Voorhoeve's book to anyone who wants to delve deeper into ethics without necessarily having to read the latest issue of the top academic journal in the field.

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Cary WOLFE. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. 357 pp.

What Is Posthumanism? is not the introductory work to different forms of posthumanism that one might expect when reading the title. Instead, the objective is to develop a mode of thought that is able to *really* think beyond humanism – to leave behind the anthropocentric prejudices and dichotomies (such as subject/object, body/mind, organic/technological and above all: human/animal) that even many theories that strive to overcome them still maintain. For, although many humanist values (e.g. equality and respect for others) are admirable, they often "reproduce the very kind of normative subjectivity" (xvii) that grounds the violation of these values.

The stakes are not only ethical or ontological, but also disciplinary and institutional. The new, posthumanist approach should lead to a new form of practising the humanities, especially literary and cultural studies, as well as the so-called 'animal studies'. A suitable disciplinary name would be 'Posthumanities', in line with the book series edited by Wolfe of which this is the eighth volume (earlier volumes were written by Donna J. Haraway and Michel Serres, among others).

Wolfe's heroes are Jacques Derrida and Niklas Luhmann. A 'crossarticulation' of the former's deconstructive approach and the latter's systems theory should provide the basis for the kind of theory Wolfe is after, which he develops in the first part of the book. The second section applies (and extends) the theory by means of 'posthumanist readings' of various cultural artefacts and artistic practices, from paintings and architecture to poetry and music.

The first two chapters thoroughly explain how Derrida's and Luhmann's theories can be combined to provide the desired posthumanist perspective. Derrida's approach deconstructs the traditional humanist notion of logos, that is: language as a uniquely human capacity. Instead, all signifying processes should be understood as marked by 'iterability' (repeatability), as a 'trace' of meanings that are continuously changing and acquire their signification with reference to – and by way of their difference with – all other past, present, and future significations. The point is that such a dynamic trace is, "properly understood, fundamentally ahuman or even antihuman" (6). It does not 'belong' to some conscious or rational (humanist) subject, on the contrary: "it extends beyond the human to nonhuman animals and indeed exceeds […] the boundary between the living and the mechanical or technical" (6).

According to Luhmann's 'second-order' systems theory, societies as well as individual consciousnesses should be understood as *systems* that work 'autopoietically' – they are self-creating and regenerating. Using this term (coined by the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela), he emphasises that systems can only reproduce themselves in virtue of the difference, interaction, and communication with their environment, which is characterised by an immensely higher degree of complexity. To reduce this environmental complexity, the system makes distinctions and selections that also enable it to increase its own internal complexity. This is what Wolfe calls 'openness from closure'.

Luhmann arrives at a similar posthumanist conclusion to that of Derrida, albeit from a different direction: considered as systems, humans are nothing more (or less) than 'nonhuman animals' – or machines, for that matter. Nor is meaning specifically or uniquely human, because communication likewise works as an independent system. This means that we cannot give the human an exceptional ontological status because of language, let alone deduce from it a special *moral* status.

In the third chapter, Wolfe criticises bioethics, which still sees the human/animal divide as a given and therefore implicitly grants the different species a different moral status. Further, he develops the idea of our shared finitude, relying mostly on Derrida. Finitude, in the broad sense of 'vulnerability', or 'not being able', makes all species 'fellow creatures'. It connects us humans with 'the other' in two ways: first, our physical vulnerability ties us to all other living creatures; second, we experience finitude "in our subjection to a radically ahuman technicity or mechanicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are" (89). This dependence on an external, semiotic or communicative system makes us – like any creature that communicates – inherently 'prosthetic' in our being. It makes us passive, vulnerable and *other*, instead of being the free, independent, controlling consciousness that we are in the humanist picture.

The next two chapters investigate the interdisciplinary fields of animal and disability studies, and the challenge they can pose to other disciplines such as 'historicist' literary and cultural studies. The latter still rely on a kind of subjectivity that is modelled on the liberal democratic picture of the human as the autonomous, knowing agent. Without realising it, however, often the former disciplines do the same. For instance, the argument that we should give animals the same rights as humans is to keep on thinking from a *human* point of view and therefore still discriminate, to be 'speciesist', as Wolfe calls it. Once again, he stresses the need for "a more ambitious and more profound ethical project" (137), one based on our common vulnerability, "a shared trans-species being-in-the-world constituted by complex relations of trust, respect, dependence, and communication" (141).

The second part of the book further develops and extends Wolfe's theory by means of posthumanist interpretations of art. He believes that art, just like theory, can be posthumanist in its ethical standpoint towards the human/animal divide, while still reproducing a humanist view by way of its representational strategy. Someone who *does* present his art in a double posthumanist way is Eduardo Kac, who created – among other things – a living, glow-in-the-dark rabbit. Wolfe argues that Kac 'subverts' the humanist centrality of vision: by appealing so obviously to our contemporary, human 'visual appetite', he tries to emphasise what we *cannot* see. He underscores the viewer's "'finitude' and 'humanness' […], in the specifically posthumanist sense that the field of meaning and experience is no longer thought to be exhausted by the self-reference of a particularly, even acutely, human visuality" (166). Lars von Trier's movie *Dancer in the Dark* makes a similar point. After having considered in detail different argumentations by Stanley Cavell and Slavoj Žižek, among others, Wolfe concludes that the film is concerned with the "fundamental prosthetics of subjectivity" (186): when Selma, the main character, loses her sight, sound, voice and music become much more important

for her experience of the world. Further, the movie shows Selma's musical-like fantasies in vivid colour, while 'reality' (outside her fantasy) is presented in "washed-out sepia tones" (187). This way, according to Wolfe, the movie makes the posthumanist points that first, our 'representations' and sensations (and therefore our subjectivity) are always mediated (that is, prosthetic) by language, for example, or visuality, and second, we cannot say what the world looks like *as such*, for "it is the subject's very fantasy itself that bars her from "what is really going on" in the world itself, which obeys its own laws and doesn't "look like" the subject's desire (or anybody else's)" (190). The ethical force of the film, however, does not revolve around a critique of the human/animal or normal/disabled dichotomy. Wolfe analyses the movie in psychoanalytic terms: Selma's passivity in face of her condemnation (death by hanging) should be understood as an example of "the act as feminine", exposing "the utter injustice and contingency of the Law" (193).

The last four chapters, which focus mostly on the concept of contingency, each extensively analyse the posthumanist significations of a work of architecture (Diller + Scofidio), philosophy (R.W. Emerson), poetry (W. Stevens), and music (Byrne and Eno) respectively. Wolfe explains Diller and Scofidio's *Blur* 'building' – a manufactured cloud hovering over a lake – as a fundamentally posthumanist work that emphasises our visual dependency and deconstructs humanist boundaries like natural/artificial, subject/object, etc. Emerson's seemingly confusing and contradictory proclamations like "I am nothing, I see all", should be interpreted as articulations of the "paradoxical dynamics and consequences of observation" (251). Wallace Stevens' poetry insists that we recognise this fact. The fewer traditionally 'poetic' devices he uses, such as rhyme etc, the more he emphasises the function of art's form, which should not be sought in what is directly perceivable. Like *Blur*, his poetry shows how art is uniquely able to, in Luhmann's words, "overcome its own contingency" (273). The final chapter returns to Derrida, analysing David Byrne and Brian Eno's record *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1981). The record's uncanniness is due to its 'spectrality': the iterability and repeatability of the record, of *any* media actually, haunts us because it makes us realise our finitude. It will still be there in our absence and as such in a sense forecasts our death, which makes us aware of our embeddedness in time and dependence on the environment. Nevertheless, it is precisely this embeddedness, our subjection to the "alterity and radical otherness of time" (298), which makes the future possible to begin with.

What Is Posthumanism? is an intelligent, extensively argued and challenging work. It challenges humanism, anthropocentrism, disciplines and even claiming-to-be-posthumanist theories. It challenges the reader, who is asked time and again to try and step over the anthropocentrism that his or her prejudiced, *human* observation of the world is barely capable of letting go. Wolfe makes us wonder whether our language and beliefs do indeed take the human/animal divide for granted, implicitly assigning these beings a different moral status. However, his alternative to the divide remains extremely abstract. Even if we manage to autopoietically communicate with animals, how exactly should we give form to the "ethical pluralism" he desires? To a "shared trans-species being-in-

the-world"? How do we recognise animals as "fellow creatures"? The whole book suffers from this high level of abstraction. Moreover, his style is to work his way through a large amount of theories – perhaps trying to be 'open' in his 'closure' – before arriving at what he considers to be the right view at the end of the chapter. This has the unfortunate disadvantage of being rather demanding for those who read the book.

Another related problem is that in several of the chapters on cultural artefacts he lets himself get carried away by his analytic, deconstructive/systems theoretical enthusiasm before he has thoroughly described what the artefact in question is like. In chapter 10, for instance, one has to work through 12 pages of Luhmann's theory of art and others' theories *on* the poet Stevens before finally getting an example of his poetry. The artefact itself is almost completely omitted as he jumps headfirst into the conceptual analysis of the object.

An extra difficulty is that Wolfe has a tendency not to paraphrase the theorists he uses, but rather to let them speak for themselves in their own terminology. Whether it is because he tries to put Derrida's iterability in practice, or because nearly all chapters were (partly) published elsewhere before, merely quoting the same passages again and again is not necessarily enlightening.

In conclusion, this is an intelligent but difficult book – meticulous while lacking concreteness. It nevertheless poses an interesting ethical question about our attitude towards other creatures, urging us to investigate and question the moral judgements implicit in our language, ontological beliefs, and institutions, even when our intentions are good. In general, I do not find his central claim unconvincing, but I also do not think it is watertight. In the introduction, Wolfe strongly distances himself from the kind of posthumanism transhumanists support. The latter strive towards a new, posthuman, healthier and finally even immortal species. As it is still extremely anthropocentric, Wolfe argues that their account is rather an intensification of humanism than posthumanist (in his sense), which seems logical. However, what is striking is that *if* the transhumanist mission were ever accomplished, these creatures themselves would not fit Wolfe's posthumanism. Though perhaps still dependent on a semiotic system, because of their immunity to disease or even mortality they would not share the same vulnerability and finitude he so passionately claims makes us all 'fellow creatures'. Consequently, a new dichotomy would arise, separating creatures on the basis of a vulnerable/non-vulnerable divide. Since vulnerability provides the basis for moral equality, this would assign them a different moral status. Strangely enough, following his own theory, Wolfe's posthumanism would be guilty of 'speciesism' towards posthumans.

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