

LARA DENIS AND OLIVER SENSEN (EDS.), *Kant's Lectures on Ethics: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015 («Cambridge Critical Guides»), pp. vii-289.

The various lecture notes transcribed by students in Kant's classroom have become an invaluable resource for scholars working in all areas of Kant's philosophy. Although various editions of the notes have been in existence in German for, in some cases, almost two centuries, the collection of the notes within Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* in the second half of the twentieth century, and the translation of a selection as part of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant has all but assigned them the status of core texts within Kant's corpus. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find an instance in recent scholarship where reference is not made to the notes in one way or another. At the same time, in the contemporary literature one rarely finds scholarship that takes the lecture notes as the primary object of investigation; albeit for good reason, the notes are most often used as supporting material. This volume takes a different approach. Part of Cambridge's *Critical Guide* series, the book is an excellent and expansive discussion of a variety of issues raised in Kant's lectures on moral philosophy and promises to strengthen discussion of their content in the future. In the following, after briefly discussing the introduction and the structure of the book, I summarize the main argument of each of its 15 contributions and I conclude with a few critical remarks.

The first and most important thing to note about this volume is that it restricts itself to the four sets of lecture notes contained in the Cambridge translation of Kant's *Lectures on Ethics*, namely Herder, Collins, Mrongovius II, and Vigilantius. With some important qualifications (which I discuss at the end of this review), this is not necessarily a negative limitation of the volume: these four sets of notes were chosen for the Cambridge translation because they stem from four different time periods - the 1760s (Herder), the 1770s (Collins), the 1780s (Mrongovius II), and the 1790s (Vigilantius) - and therefore uniquely illuminate the various stages of the development of Kant's moral philosophy.

The chapters are organized into three parts, each containing five essays. Part I fulfills the promise of the book being a 'guide' to Kant's lectures. A reader inexperienced with the notes will have questions about their reliability, their origin, their authors, etc. and these chapters clarify all such questions. In the first chapter, *Kant's lectures on ethics and Baumgarten's moral philosophy*, Stefano Bacin argues that the two textbooks Kant used as the basis for his lectures on moral philosophy, Alexander Baumgarten's *Initia philosophiae practicae primae* and *Ethica Philosophica*, illuminate the structure and progression of Kant's discussion in his lectures, even in those places where it is not obvious that Baumgarten is under discussion. Bacin also suggests that some of Kant's terminology comes from Baumgarten, for example the concept of «constraint» (*coactio* or *Zwang*) (p. 19). Bacin illustrates that an important contrast between Kant and Baumgarten concerns the foundation of morality, which for Baumgarten is ultimately based on natural theology, as well as their systems of ethical obligations, where for Baumgarten duties to God have priority (see p. 29f.). Bacin's chapter is essential reading for those seeking to understand the context of Kant's lectures and is one of the best in the volume.

The next four chapters are each devoted to one of the four sets of lecture notes translated in the Cambridge edition. Patrick Frierson's chapter, *Herder: religion and moral motivation*, is an excellent illustration of how reading the lectures can help illuminate Kant's development. Frierson shows that during the 1760s, Kant's understanding of the role of religion in moral motivation was significantly different from his Critical position. For example, although even at this time Kant thinks that the moral motive must be «pure», religion can be an aid to acting

morally, and in fact motivation is not as perfect as it could be if the religious motive is not also present. As such, Frierson argues that at this time Kant endorsed the possibility of mixed motives. Although there are many topics in the Herder notes that still to be explored, for example Kant's argument for the existence of disinterested benevolence (see 27:3ff.), this chapter provides an excellent example of how Kant's early ethics are different from his mature views.

Manfred Kuehn's chapter, *Collins: Kant's proto-critical position*, begins with a nice overview of some issues with using this set of notes over the Kaehler notes from the same period, an issue I return to at the end of this review. He then argues, similar to Frierson, that in Collins religion plays a different role in Kant's early period, namely as a possible source of moral motivation. Kuehn then illustrates how reading Collins is useful for understanding the later *Doctrine of Virtue*. Kuehn shows, for example, that Kant gradually came to view duties to self as more important than duties to others. Collins also classifies the duty of truthfulness as a duty to others, not as a duty to self as it is in Kant's later work. Kuehn includes an important discussion of Kant's conception of the principle of morality in these notes. While he had not yet discovered the categorical imperative, Kuehn points out that even during the mid 1770s, Kant believed the principle must be objective and necessary, even though he describes it as neither «categorical» nor «unconditional».

The aim of Jens Timmermann's article, *Mrongovius II: a supplement to the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, is to show that many central ideas in the *Groundwork* are present in the Mrongovius II notes. Examples include the idea of the good will as unconditionally valuable, the notion of imperatives, the contrast between the value of moral action and the value of happiness, the problem with contradictory maxims, and the role of autonomy. Continuing with the a theme of the previous two chapters, Timmermann also points out that religion is meant to reassure agents that virtue is rewarded with happiness in the next life. This set of notes is important because it likely stems from the Winter of 1784/5, i.e. around the same time as the *Groundwork*, and Timmermann does an excellent job illustrating how the notes clarify and expand on portions of Kant's published thought.

The final essay in Part I, Robert Louden's *Vigilantius: morality for humans*, argues that as opposed to the pure moral philosophy we are familiar with from Kant's main published works, *Vigilantius* takes a direct interest in humanity, an approach distinct from even the *Metaphysics of Morals* where pure morality is *applied* to human beings. Louden illustrates that *Vigilantius* discusses the life of virtue as one of struggle, where morality must trump desire even though humanity can never be rid of desire. Louden therefore sees Kant as offering an alternative to Schiller here that is clearer than in the published works: rather than virtue consisting in the alignment of morality and desire, Kant claims that an essential part of being human is to have this conflict between morality and desire. Were this conflict to be overcome, as Schiller proposes, we would lose the human condition. Louden also points out that in these notes morality leads to religion and not vice versa, and at this point in his development there is no place for duties to God.

The remaining chapters of the volume engage with a theme or topic rather than a single set of notes. In *Ancient insights in Kant's conception of the highest good*, Stephen Engstrom argues that Kant's notion of the highest good is closer to that of the ancients than Kant leads us to believe. In particular, referring primarily to the Collins notes Engstrom argues that Kant's conception of the highest good reveals that he reserved an important place for happiness in his moral philosophy, even during the pre-Critical period. Engstrom also makes the notable

observation that Kant's discussion of the good will in the *Groundwork* corresponds to the discussion of the highest good in Collins.

Allen Wood's essay *Kant's history of ethics* continues the theme of the previous essay and argues that, especially in his lectures, Kant understood his approach to ethics largely in relation to his historical predecessors. After an interesting section suggesting that Kant's philosophy is less ahistorical than we often assume, Wood argues that Kant viewed modern ethics as one of principles, as opposed to the ancient ethics of being. He shows that Kant thought that all modern approaches to the principle of morality are nonetheless false in that they are heteronomous, as is clear from Kant's tables in the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*. Wood points out that Kant criticizes both ancient and Christian ethics in the lectures for proposing an ideal; for Kant this is a mistake because it risks human beings adapting, i.e. weakening, the commands of morality to suit inherent human weakness.

In *Moral obligation and free will* Oliver Sensen illustrates that the concept of obligation is fundamental to Kant's moral philosophy, and he argues this is especially clear in Kant's various lecture notes. Sensen illustrates that obligation, for Kant, is a kind of necessitation in that it implies constraint and compulsion. This kind of necessitation is distinct from (pre-) determination, however, and this is how such necessitation is compatible with freedom, which Sensen argues must be understood in the sense that human beings are first causes, i.e. self-moved movers. Sensen also offers a comprehensive discussion of the reason why Kant views his autonomous moral theory as distinct from all other heteronomous version, namely because all heteronomous theories in their own way view obligation as dependent upon desires external to the will. Sensen even provides an analysis of whether Kant's classification of moral theories is exhaustive from a contemporary point of view: Sensen argues that it is, and therefore that Kant's moral theory is unique among the contemporary options of moral realism, naturalism, and others.

The last two articles of Part II, B. Sharon Byrd's *The elusive story of Kant's permissive laws* and Joachim Hruschka's *On the logic of imputation in the Vigilantius lecture notes*, speak to the volume's comprehensiveness in that they discuss topics related to the *Doctrine of Right* rather than Kant's moral philosophy proper, but which are nonetheless present in the lectures on moral philosophy (and primarily in Vigilantius). Byrd argues that there are no more than three kinds of permissive laws in Kant's philosophy, namely those describing exceptions to prohibitions, exceptions to prescriptions, and those capturing power-conferring norms. She gives reason to suggest these three kinds have roots in Achenwall, and claims that they can all be found in both the lectures and the published writings, contrary to what some commentators suggest. Byrd does an excellent job explaining what each kind of permissive law amounts to, but most importantly she finds examples in various places in Kant's writings, which immensely help elucidate the three kinds. Hruschka then discusses the distinction between imputation of an act (*imputatio facti*), i.e. «the judgement through which someone is seen as the author of a certain act», and imputation of the law (*imputatio legis*), i.e. «the application of the law to this act, or the subsumption of the act under the law» (p. 170-1). He shows that Kant's discussion of imputation falls in a tradition started by Pufendorf and continued by Baumgarten and Achenwall, where there is a difference between a deed and an act, such that only a deed is considered the effect of an author as a free cause, and therefore can be imputed to an author. The essay also makes the important contribution of explaining why imputation of the law drops out of Kant's mature conception of imputation, namely because Kant considers it to be only a small, special case of imputation more generally.

The five essays in Part III deal with topics in normative ethics and therefore correspond most closely to the subjects of the *Doctrine of Virtue*. In the first essay of this part, *Freedom, ends, and the derivation of duties in the Vigilantius notes*, Paul Guyer argues that in Vigilantius in particular, «all classes of duty», i.e. both negative and positive duties to self and others, «can all be derived from the concept of freedom combined with some basic facts about the human condition that bear on the realization of freedom» (p. 190). On Guyer's reading, negative duties avoid the restriction of freedom and positive duties expand freedom. His essay closes with the suggestion that friendship and marriage involve the promotion of freedom, an interesting view that merits further discussion.

In *Proper self-esteem and duties to oneself*, Lara Denis looks at Collins, Vigilantius, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* and distinguishes between five senses of self-esteem in Kant: «a way of estimating one's worth; an opinion ... of one's worth; a feeling of worth; and a principle and an attitude concerning one's worth» (p. 206), her analysis of the last being particularly illuminating. Her main argument is that there is an instructive, though inessential, link between self-esteem and duties to oneself: perfect duties to oneself can be construed as preserving both a proper estimation of oneself and a respect for the humanity in our own person, and imperfect duties to oneself as increasing our perfection and therefore expressing our esteem for ourselves. Denis closes with the interesting suggestion that Kant links these two concepts and emphasizes self-esteem as a feeling more in the lecture notes primarily because he is there concerned with the moral education of his audience.

Anne Margaret Baxley, in her essay *Virtue, self-mastery, and the autocracy of practical reason*, argues that virtue, for Kant, is not mere continence or prudential self-control, but is moral strength of will in the sense of the capacity to withstand temptation to transgression of the moral law. Virtue is therefore a kind of self-mastery, and in line with her excellent book (see Baxley 2010) Baxley argues that virtue is also best understood as autocracy, i.e. the executive power to choose what duty requires despite impediments. In line with Louden's article, Baxley also insists that conflict or struggle is an essential aspect of the virtuous life, according to Kant.

In *Love*, Jeanine Grenberg argues that Kant assigns a larger if not more important role to love in the lectures notes than he does in the Critical works. She illustrates that, according to Kant, we can only love others once we love ourselves, i.e. take care of our own well-being. She also notes how Kant advocates a degree of indifference, rather than love, towards others. This is because love of others makes us prone to be more concerned with the judgement of others rather than with how we view ourselves in our own eyes. Grenberg also discusses Kant's analysis of the religious injunction to love one's neighbour as oneself, and claims that, for Kant, this does not command us to simply have a particular feeling or desire, but rather to actually do things of practical benefit for others. However, Grenberg's article contains a curious error: she claims that the Collins notes «come mostly from 1784» (p. 248), even though as both Kuehn (p. 51) and the editors themselves explain (p. 3-4), the notes were only transcribed around this time and likely stem from around 1775.

In the last essay of the volume, *Love of honour, emulation, and the psychology of the devilish vices*, Houstien Smit and Mark Timmons seek to explain the nature of the devilish vices, i.e. ingratitude, envy, and Schadenfreude, and how individuals succumb to them. They illustrate that each vice in its own way arises from our inborn tendency to be opposed to the superiority of others, and they tentatively suggest that the vices are psychologically unified in the sense that they each involve other-directed hatred. This is a rich article and other interesting sections are

Smit and Timmons' discussion of Kant's distinction between true love of honour and the desire of honour, as well as their account of Kant's discussion of emulation.

I conclude with two remarks. First, as a number of the contributors rightly point out (see p. xiv, 2, 52) Collins is no longer taken to be the most accurate set of notes belonging to the group of similar notes stemming from the mid-1770s. Most reliable are the Kaehler notes (see Stark 2004), which Werner Stark has persuasively argued is superior to Collins in a variety of respects (see Stark 1999). For this reason, the contributors to this volume often refer to Kaehler instead of Collins. The Collins notes therefore have a somewhat ambivalent status in this volume: they are both a central focus of many essays and are at the same time regarded by most of the contributors as somewhat unreliable. Collins remains a central focus of this volume, of course, because they and not Kaehler are translated in the Cambridge edition of Kant's *Lectures on Ethics*. Thus, despite the overall impression one gets from the volume of Collins' reliability, as well as J.B. Schneewind's reassurance in the *Forward* that «readers who do not use Kaehler can use Collins ... to get as good an idea as we can have of what Kant told his students» (p. xv), readers should take seriously the reservations many contributors have for relying too heavily on Collins. It is worth mentioning, however, that the editors made the excellent decision of having Kuehn write the essay on Collins, for Kuehn himself wrote the introduction to German edition of the Kaehler notes (see Kuehn 2004)

My second and final remark concerns Mrongovius II. Timmerman's article in this volume is indispensable for anyone wishing to read this set of notes – whether in translation or from the academy edition – because he points out a number of transcription errors in the Academy edition and which therefore bleed over into the Cambridge translation (see p. 68-9, especially notes 3 and 5). In fact, after reading Timmermann's contribution, one is tempted to not bother reading Mrongovius II at all, especially in translation. As Timmermann says in a footnote: «If you are interested in what Mrongovius has to say, sell your copy of the *Lectures on Ethics* and spend the money on a ticket to Gdansk» (p. 69n), which is where the lecture transcripts are preserved. Timmerman himself uses his own copy of the notes, thus one can at least trust the analysis given in his chapter. Indeed, these two remarks should not negatively reflect on the volume as a whole. On the contrary, that there are issues with the notes that form the basis of the Cambridge translations only makes this volume that much more indispensable: without it, readers are at risk of failing to appreciate both the philological and philosophical issues surrounding Kant's lectures on moral philosophy.

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