

árabe y judía (especialmente Maimónides y Averroes) como un reconocimiento del valor de esta filosofía de cara a la constitución del patrimonio filosófico medieval. Asimismo, se trata más detenidamente la incipiente filosofía renacentista (Erasmus de Rotterdam, Luis Vives, Tomás Moro, Francisco de Vitoria) destacando un extenso epígrafe nuevo centrado a la figura de Domingo de Soto, haciendo justicia a sus aportaciones en el campo de la lógica siendo además uno de los precursores de la ciencia moderna. Es preciso destacar también, como novedades significativas, los párrafos dedicados a algunas escritoras medievales del siglo XII y XIII surgidas en los ámbitos culturales centroeuropeos.

Por lo demás, el último capítulo, que lleva por título "La Filosofía renacentista en vísperas de la Revolución moderna", es totalmente nuevo y nos traslada a la conjunción de la filosofía renacentista con la filosofía moderna: allí se encuentran tratados los grandes teólogos y filósofos del Barroco español, como Luis de Molina, Domingo Báñez y Francisco Suárez; se añaden también unos breves apuntes sobre Miguel Bayo,

Galileo Galilei y Juan de Santo Tomás entre otros autores.

En definitiva, sólo nos queda agradecer al profesor Saranyana esta nueva edición de un manual que, gracias a las nuevas correcciones y actualizaciones realizadas servirá sin duda para seguir conociendo cada vez mejor las raíces medievales del pensamiento moderno.

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J. B. SCHNEEWIND: *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, 624 pp.

The Invention of Autonomy is a superb book. The main goal of Schneewind's systematic reconstruction of the history of moral philosophy from Aquinas to Kant is to distinguish two rival understandings of morality—morality as obedience *versus* morality as self-governance—and to chronicle the emergence of the latter conception, which culminates in Kant's "invention" of autonomy. As we travel the long road leading from the *Summa Theologiae* to the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, we are introdu-

ced to a staggeringly large cast of characters, some of whom are household names, most of whom are recognizable but considerably less well-known, and a few of whom are positively obscure. All in all, more than forty thinkers —everyone from Duns Scotus to the Marquis de Sade— find a place in Schneewind's pages.

Given its ambitious scope, it might well be wondered how such a book could avoid being chaotically eclectic and appallingly superficial. However, there are no worries on that score here: we are in the hands of a master with a gift for lucid and disciplined exposition. The book falls neatly into four sections, in which a coherent and highly unified narrative slowly unfolds. Part I deals with natural law theories; Part II, with perfectionism; Part III, with the attempt to secure morality's independence from revealed religion; and Part IV, with Kant and his immediate predecessors. Let us now look briefly at each of these sections.

Part I ("The Rise and Fall of Modern Natural Law") centers around two topics. The first is the so-called "Grotian problematic", named after Hugo Grotius, the influential seventeenth

century theorist of natural law; the second, the gradual triumph of voluntarism over intellectualism.

The Grotian problematic starts off from the frank acknowledgement that there is an enduring tension between two facets of human nature: our deeply rooted selfishness, on the one hand, and, on the other, our need of society. According to Grotius, we can resolve this conflict between egoism and sociability by following natural law, whose prescriptions (i) are not innate or *a priori*, but empirically discoverable; and (ii) are not to be derived from a substantive conception of the highest good. Schneewind uses the framework of the Grotian problematic to illuminate the writings of some key figures in the modern natural law tradition (Suarez, Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Locke), as well as some dissenters and sceptics (Machiavelli and Montaigne).

The second thread running through Part I is the conflict between intellectualism and voluntarism. According to intellectualism, morality is not created by, or dependent upon, God; on the contrary, God is bound to acknowledge moral norms or standards that possess

validity independently of His will. According to voluntarism, however, God created morality and imposed it "by an arbitrary fiat of his will" (p. 8). Schneewind perceptively examines how the intellectualist account of natural law defended by Aquinas gradually lost ground to different versions of voluntarism (whose diverse array of defenders included Scotus, Ockham, Luther, Calvin, and Pufendorf). Voluntarism's defenders carried the day by arguing that only their doctrine was capable of preserving God's omnipotence, since it imposed no limitations or restrictions on the divine will. The result was a theory which understood morality primarily in terms of a humble and unquestioning submission to the arbitrary commands of a Supreme Being. Accordingly, then, the voluntarism that came to dominate the modern natural law tradition constituted a powerful formulation of the idea that morality is first and foremost a matter of obedience, as opposed to self-government.

Part II ("Perfectionism and Rationality") We have seen that the modern natural law tradition was largely defined by its acceptance of the Grotian proble-

matic. Perfectionists understood our predicament quite differently, however. Instead of viewing the central problems of morality as resulting from civil strife *à la* Grotius, they were inclined to see the root of the problem as epistemological, inasmuch as they insisted that "ignorance and error resulting from failure to use our reason properly are what stand between us and a life of harmony and virtue" (p. 169). Furthermore, whereas natural law theorists directed their attention to resolving problems in the community at large, perfectionists tended to focus on how an individual moral agent can achieve a state of tranquility and peace. Finally, perfectionism eschewed the empiricism of the natural law tradition in favour of rationalism. Perfectionists maintained, in other words, that the first principles of morality are to be found by examining the human mind (especially its relation to the divine intellect), not by relying on observation and experience.

In Part II Schneewind insightfully discusses these and other leading themes of perfectionism, especially as they are articulated by the Christian neo-Stoicism of the sixteenth century, by the

Cambridge Platonists, as well as by Spinoza and Malebranche. But arguably the most intriguing thing here is the treatment of the neglected moral philosophies of Descartes and Leibniz. Schneewind offers a fascinating account of how the former drew heavily (but selectively) on Stoic ideas to articulate a morality of self-governance, and how the latter sought to refute voluntarism without denying that God was central to morality.

Part III ("Toward a World on its Own"). For the most part, both the defenders of natural law and the champions of perfectionism tended to link morality with religion, typically by affirming that morally good conduct was a necessary condition of salvation. However, this set of assumptions eventually came under fire.

Surprisingly enough, the assault came primarily not from unbelievers, but from thinkers who were far from hostile to the cause of religion: Pascal, Nicole, Gassendi, Clarke, Hutcheson, Butler, and Reid, among others. These philosophers, who sought to secure morality's independence from religion, are the subject of Part III. Since this is the longest (and, to be frank, the most tedious) section of the

book, I trust the reader will forgive me if I mention only two of the many topics explored in it.

First, there was a growing controversy over whether the foundation of morality lies in sentiment or in reason. Hume famously argued that the distinction between right and wrong was derived not from reason but from sentiment, so that morality is "more properly felt than judg'd of" (cfr. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Book III, Part I, Section II). His simple but powerful argument—that morals must affect our conduct; but reason, being inert, cannot do so—seemed a clincher. However, the rationalism championed by the perfectionists and by Clarke did not fade away: it received new formulations at the hands of Price and Reid, both of whom were staunch defenders of intuitionism.

Secondly, we witness the rise of a novel idea: that of morality as self-governance. The attempts to understand morality in its own terms, without divine commands or supernatural sanctions, resulted in the conception of morality as obedience losing its stranglehold on the philosophical imagination. This tendency is nicely exemplified in the writings of Shaftesbury, who

denied that we needed to look outside ourselves to some external authority for moral guidance; and it culminates in Hume, for whom "morality calls for nothing that transcends the natural world in which we live; and within it, our common human nature makes us all self-governing" (p. 369).

Part IV ("Autonomy and Divine Order") deals with two main topics, the first of which is Kant's considerable indebtedness to his predecessors. As Schneewind points out, the Kantian conception of morality as autonomy "was not invented just out of the blue" (p. 509), but drew heavily on ideas articulated by others. So here we learn how Kant's moral thought was shaped by the Grotian problematic; by the British Moralists' conception of morality as self-governance; by the Wolffian idea that it is knowledge that makes us self-governing; by Crusius's conviction that people should be seen not as means, but as ends; by the sentimentalism of Hutcheson and Hume; and, most of all, by Rousseau, whose understanding of freedom as "obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself" influenced Kant deeply.

The second main issue in Part IV concerns Kant's originality: the so-called "invention of autonomy". Although Kant was unquestionably influenced by the ideas of others, Schneewind urges that his conception of morality as autonomy—his thesis, that is, "that morality centers on a law that human beings impose on themselves, necessarily providing themselves, in doing so, with a motive to obey" (p. 483)—represents a creative achievement of the first order. For Kant thought that replacing the time-honoured idea of morality as obedience with his development of the idea of morality as rational self-governance would resolve some problems that had long vexed and perplexed his predecessors.

How so? Oversimplifying im- pardonably, we might sum up things as follows. Kant's formidable defence of rationalism—the thesis that only reason can serve as the foundation of a universally valid morality—underrated, in one fell swoop, both Humean sentimentalism and theological voluntarism (whose morality of abject servility—the most influential embodiment of the conception of morality of obedience—Kant

found positively abhorrent). To be sure, there were rationalists before Kant (just as there were brave men living before Agamemnon); but what made Kant's stance so strikingly novel was his willingness to question what earlier, more traditional critics of sentimentalism (such as Price and Reid) had never doubted—namely, the assumption that we do not give ourselves the moral principles we are to follow. This Kant absolutely rejects: under the influence of Hume and Rousseau, both of whom urged that morality is a human creation, he broke with the idea that morality meant conformity to an external order that is independent of our reason. Instead, the moral law is something we make and freely impose on ourselves: it is a construction of reason, not something given to us by an external authority. As a result, Kantian moral agents are not merely self-governing but fully autonomous (self-legislating) as well.

This, then, is the story of *The Invention of Autonomy*, and it is a tale splendidly told. After more than 550 pages, we find ourselves in a much better position to understand Kant's conception of morality as autonomy, and to

admire his creative achievement (though it goes without saying that sympathetic appreciation need not breed agreement). We also learn to look on the work of Kant's most illustrious predecessors—Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Smith, Rousseau, Bentham—in a different way: we see them wrestling with problems they inherited from each other as well as from lesser-known figures who were influential in their day. The result is profoundly illuminating.

This is not to say that the book does not have some minor shortcomings, two of which I shall mention briefly. (1) Schneewind thinks that we need to understand Kantian ethics better than we do, not merely in order to keep the historical (or exegetical) record straight, but because Kant's conception of morality as autonomy "provides a better place to start working out a contemporary philosophical understanding of morality than anything we can get from other past philosophers" (p. xiv). But Schneewind never explains why he regards Kantian ethics as a live option, but feels entitled to dismiss the three other approaches discussed as exploded or *passé*. (This would include natural law theory, which has expe-

rienced something of a renaissance in the writings of John Finnis and Germain Grisez). His silence on this point is surprising, especially in light of the recent critiques of Kantian moral philosophy advanced by Bernard Williams, Martha Nussbaum, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others. (2) Nor is there any mention of autonomy's history after Kant. What about existentialists such as Nietzsche and Sartre, who urged that the unconstrained will creates values freely and arbitrarily? Surely the influence of the Kantian notion of self-legislation can be discerned here (though no doubt Kant would have rightly disowned their views as an irrationalist perversion of his own ideas). This radical notion of self-governance—autonomy run wild—can be formulated only if certain Kantian presuppositions are dropped; but which and why? What made this shift possible? It is a shame Schneewind does not consider these questions, since his answers would no doubt have further enhanced our understanding of Kant's moral theory.

But these are relatively minor complaints, and in no way obscure the fact that there is a great deal to admire in this book. In-

deed, one of the most appealing features of *The Invention of Autonomy* is Schneewind's willingness to ask why we ought to bother studying the history of philosophy at all. Having led us through five centuries of moral thought, he is refreshingly unafraid to ponder what we have gained from following him on his journey. His answer, roughly, is that history yields a meta-philosophical moral—namely, that there are really no perennial problems in moral philosophy, since what counts as a problem is very much a function of changing cultural and historical conditions. What the study of history reveals, Schneewind suggests, is that the history of moral philosophy is *not* the story of different solutions to the same fixed set of stock or 'eternal' problems. Instead, it is the story of how new problems about morality emerge—often because of political, social, or religious crises—and come to dominate the philosophical agenda for a time, before they eventually drift to the periphery, and get replaced by more urgent concerns.

The moral Schneewind wants to draw from this is obvious: we should drop the assumption that

everyone from Socrates (or Pythagoras —it depends whom you ask) to Habermas has been trying to address the same basic core of issues. He makes this point clearly and powerfully in a lengthy passage worth citing in full: "If we look historically at what moral philosophers have said they were trying to do, we do not come up with a single aim uniting them all. Compare, for instance, Aristotle's claim that moral philosophy should improve the lives of those who study it with Sidgwick's belief that 'a desire to edify has impeded the real progress of ethical science'. Recall the Stoic aim of finding the way to personal tranquility; Hobbes's aim of stabilizing a society put in danger by religious fanaticism; Bentham's aim of locating a principle to show everyone the need for major political, social, and moral reform; Parfit's aim of developing a new, wholly secular, scientific understanding of morality. Unless we leave the statement of the aim quite vague, it will be difficult to find one on which these thinkers agree. If we are more definite, then it seems that we will be required to say that anyone not sharing the favored aim is not really doing moral philosophy.

Whatever the single aim assigned to the enterprise, we would be forced to deny the status of moral philosopher to many thinkers usually included in the category (p. 549).

Schneewind's goal is clear: he wants to navigate between the Scylla of a radical anti-historicism (as if the history of moral philosophy were simply the story of increasingly sophisticated answers to the same old problems) and the Charybdis of an extreme historicism (as if the history of moral philosophy were chaos incarnate, utterly devoid of continuity). On his view, there are continuities as well as discontinuities in the history of moral philosophy; and neither must be exaggerated at the expense of the other. This sane and generous moderation —this desire to avoid unpalatable extremes without ignoring what is valid in them— is one of the many things that makes *The Invention of Autonomy* such a remarkable achievement and so deserving of a wide audience. In its way, it is a felicitous illustration of the dictum that only the exhaustive can be truly interesting.

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