

M. SIE, M. SLORS, B. VAN DEN BRINK (eds.), *Reasons of One's Own*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, ix – 210 p.

Review Katrien Schaubroeck, *Ethical Perspectives* 2005 12:2

This collection of articles - which were all presented at the conference 'Reasons of One's Own' at Utrecht University, April 2001 - covers a wide range of topics related to the notion of 'reasons of one's own'. It is difficult to give a convincing theoretical account of 'reasons of one's own', although in daily practice we accept the existence of such reasons as evident. What exactly do we mean, however, when we suggest the existence of first-person-oughts in utterances such as "I believe that for him it was the right thing to do, but for me it wouldn't have been". Especially nowadays, the topic of reasons of one's own deserves discussion, since the increasing individualism and pluralism in western modern society require people to create reasons of their own. "Because this is what my father/my religion wants me to do" is no longer considered sufficient to justify an action or a choice. One may regret the loss of a shared authoritative semantic and moral horizon, but that is not what worries the authors of this book. They approach the phenomenon of 'reasons of one's own' as challenging the classical theories about reasons and encouraging philosophers to build a new conceptual framework.

The problems concerning reasons of one's own are not confined to the domain of moral psychology. Other disciplines that have a bearing on this issue are political philosophy, philosophy of education, philosophy of personal identity, philosophy of mind and action theory. The complexity of the theme is reflected in the diversity of contributions to *Reasons of One's Own*. Fortunately, the structure of the volume is well explained in the introduction written by the editors.

The ten articles in the volume are organized according to the difference between motivating and normative reasons, which is a common distinction to make in moral psychology. Motivating reasons are psychological states that explain the actions they cause. Normative reasons need not be psychological states because they have to justify instead of explain actions.

The first six chapters of the book cover the problems connected with *normative* reasons of one's own, mainly going back to the tension between private reasons and normativity understood as public justifiability. Whereas Kirsten Endres, Maureen Sie, Theo van Willigenburg and Albert Musschenga elaborate on the intelligibility of first-person-oughts in general, Bert van den Brink and Jan Bransen shed light on the difficult integration of private reasons in respectively democratic reasoning and education. In the sixth article, Marya Schechtman returns to the theoretical approach in examining self-interest as an empowering source of reasons of one's own. In particular, Schechtman develops a concept of personal identity that does not fall prey to Parfit's argument against personal identity over time.

In the last four chapters, the focus shifts to problems related to the notion of a *motivating* reason of one's own, problems which center around the concept of 'ownership'. Lynne Rudder Baker seemingly undermines the constitutive concern of this volume in arguing that reasons cannot be but reasons of one's own in order to succeed in motivating someone. In his contribution, Graham Macdonald widens the scope of the volume by discussing the difference between motivating reasons (in general) and mental causes. In the penultimate chapter, Cynthia Macdonald examines the epistemology of reasons of one's own

from the viewpoint of self-knowledge. Macdonald's account, being inspired by the first-person perspective, matches well with the closing article. There, Marc Slors addresses the question how reasons of one's own can be recognized and behavior predicted, not from a first-person but from a third-person point of view.

Only meant as a first onset of debate, *Reasons of One's Own* offers a lot of interesting, thoughtful approaches to the intriguing concept of a private reason and the problems it gives rise to. Although too fragmentary to provide a powerful argument, this volume will prove extremely useful to those who wish to enter the difficult but increasingly important discussion on reasons of one's own.

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