

Kant on the doctrines of virtue and right

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Review of: Jeffrey Edwards, *Autonomy, Moral Worth, and Right. Kant on Obligatory Ends, Respect for Law, and Original Acquisition*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2018, pp 353. ISBN 978-3-11-051606-7

A new book by Jeffrey Edwards - Associate Professor of Philosophy, Stony Brook University (State University of New York) - entitled *Autonomy, in Moral Worth, and Right. Kant on Obligatory Ends, Respect for Law, and Original Acquisition* has been published this year in the excellent Kantstudien-Ergänzungshefte series. The book incorporates some published materials from Edwards' previous articles and anthology chapters but, at the same time, it makes a coherent unity aimed at investigation of the problems related to Kant's practical philosophy and its relation to the history of modern ethics. The analysis of Kant's last major work on ethics, *Metaphysics of Morals* of 1797, which forms the basis of that research, allows Edwards to unveil new implications and consequences of Kant's theory of practical reason's obligatory ends and his juridical theories of right and property.

The book has got a clear structure of contents and is divided into four main parts: each one has got detailed divisions with introduction and conclusion sections. What is visible at first glance is a very organized and logical way of analyses and presenting their results, which is absolutely essential when examining Kant's philosophy. In his introduction, Edwards briefly shows the complexity of thematic contents for each part, as well as the way of argumentation presented in his dissertation.

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In the first part, *Obligatory Ends, Material Practical Principles, and Practical Law in Kant's Doctrine of Morals*, Edwards investigates the theory of obligatory ends presented by Kant in his introduction to the *Doctrine of Virtue* of 1797 and proves the concept of an end that is also a duty (Chapters 1-3). According to Edwards the key problem is that these obligatory ends of morally practical reason are mutually supportive: both acting from inclination and acting from duty ('dualistic theory of obligatory ends'). He also shows how it influences understanding of the empirical and non-empirical grounds of maxims (Chapter 2) and explains a relationship between empirically conditioned and pure practical reason (Chapter 3). That leads him to acknowledge the consequentialist interpretation of a practical law that presents a duty of virtue.

The second part, *Moral Worth and Motivation in Kant and Hume*, focuses on two issues: the question how the theory of obligatory ends leads to Kant's theory of moral worth of actions (Chapter 4) and the comparison of Kant's ideas to a diametrically opposing view - sentimentalism, as presented by David Hume in his theory of morals (Chapters 4-5).

The third part of the book, *Kant's Juridical Theory of Right and the Foundation of Property Law*, is related to the first part of *Metaphysics of Morals*: the Doctrine of Right. Here, Edwards focuses on a transition from the theory of obligatory ends to the theory of juridical lawgiving, which differs from ethical lawgiving (p.123). He also explains the relationship between the matter and the form, which applies to the division between the private and public right, leading directly to Kant's theory of the property law foundation and concepts of possession and acquisition of external goods (Chapter 6). Edwards presents Kant's theory of acquisition in relation to early modern natural law theory by Hugo Grotius and John Selden (Chapter 7) pointing that Kant's *theory of the normative basis of property must incorporate formal principle of material equality that applies to the acquisition of usable things if it is to be consistent with his account of freedom as the innate right of human beings* (pp. 165-169, 192-193, 294).

In the fourth part of the monography, Kant's place in the history of modern moral philosophy is presented. Edwards stresses the importance of historical investigations, which in this context, is substantial to demonstrate his new, in some points-revolutionary, interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy. This is the longest part of the monography and, from my perspective, also an extremely important one. What can be noticed here, is the link between moral philosophers, especially modern ones, and Kant - to be precise, how Kant viewed his precursors of moral philosophy in relation to his foundation of moral doctrine. Edwards starts from describing Kant strategy of classification which can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he compares Francis Hutcheson's sentimentalism and classic Stoic perfectionism (Chapter 8). Then, he also analyses Hutcheson and Rousseau's role in the development of Kant's doctrine of morals (Chapter 9), Hutcheson's theory of benevolence and obligations presented by that Scottish philosopher in his *Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil* (Chapter 10), and the role that the Stoic idea of *honestum* played in eighteenth-century sentimentalist and rationalist ethics (Chapter 11) -

all of these in relation to Kant's practical philosophy. The last chapter, Chapter 12, of that 'historical' section is devoted to exposing the background of Kant's theory of possession already discussed in part three. Also, some references to Grotius, Ockham, Hobbes can be noticed there. It is worth emphasizing how important the emotivism theories in Edwards studies are. Hume's sentimentalist conception is discussed (Chapters 4 and 11), as well as several analyses of the consequences of Hutcheson's theory of benevolence (Chapters 8-10). Hutcheson's presence in that monography is particularly valuable: not many publications related to Kant's reflections of Hutcheson theory of virtue have been published, not to mention publications emphasizing the role that Hutcheson played in shaping Kant's moral philosophy.

The last part of that monography draws some conclusions from the studies. The first aim of the Conclusion part is to demonstrate a concept of consequentialism in Kant's ethics as the doctrine of virtue and theory of obligatory ends. What is stressed here is that notion of Kantian consequentialism is limited only to doctrine of virtue and not applied to his doctrine of right. The second aim of the Conclusion is to clarify the significance of Kantian principle of material equality in original acquisition. That refers Edwards to examine a relationship between Kant's formal principle of distributive equality in acquisition and Marx's distinction between the means of consumption and the means of production, as well as Marx's banner-inscribed (twofold) principle (pp.307-321).

What makes an additional value of this outstanding monography is a numerous, updated, and adequate bibliography and references. It allows the reader to reach a multitude of primary sources in both English and German.

The monographs published in the Kantstudien-Ergänzungshefte series are innovative and present a new approach to understanding Kant's philosophy. Definitely, the same can be said about this monography. As the publisher emphasizes, Jeffrey Edwards' in-depth research into Kant's practical philosophy sheds new light on Kant's place in modern moral philosophy. It seems that for those who study the history of modern philosophy that publication should be just indispensable.

