

Steven M. CAHN. *Exploring Ethics. An Introductory Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 476 pp.

Anyone who has to teach an undergraduate course on ethics to students who aren't philosophy majors and wants to structure the class around readings on moral philosophy will find this anthology an extremely useful ally. Even more so if the ethics class is being taught somewhere in the United States. The professor will also have invaluable extra support when organizing the class sessions and planning the assigned work with A Companion Website ([www.oup.com/us/cahn](http://www.oup.com/us/cahn)), which offers an Instructor's Manual that contains resources like "a Textbank of objective questions, key terms with definitions, reading summaries, and Power Point-based lecture slides" (xii).

As the title indicates, this is the third edition of an anthology designed to help beginners explore, if not everything, at least a thought-provoking part of the geography of philosophical-moral reflection. New readings have been added to this edition, as the editor discusses in the preface, and other text included in earlier versions of the book have been replaced. The standards, however, remains the same: to provide relevant texts that help students think about core theories and issues that the editor believes cover a rich and balanced spectrum of moral philosophy.

When Cahn sees fit he carefully edits the texts to ensure that they are exceptionally understandable to students who might be required to cover the fifty readings in this over 500-page book over the course of the semester...

Anyone who agrees with this review –depending on the type of student who would ordinarily come across it– should reserve judgement with respect to expectations as optimistic as the ones Cahn seems to imply. Not without asserting, at the same time, that this way of structuring a subject –where primacy seems to be given to quantity as opposed to the systematic assimilation of certain key issues– is perfectly valid and commendable, despite not always being possible, provided that the objective conditions and the students' engagement make this type of class a viable option.

In fact, it is unquestionably a thought-provoking and educational method, since it gives students the opportunity to directly engage with the most famous authors in the history of philosophy, including Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hobbes, and John Stuart Mill; with social reformers who had widespread impact, like Martin Luther King, Jr.; with contemporary and classic philosophers, including William K. Frankena, Peter Singer, and John Rawls; with current and predominantly Anglo-Saxon thinkers and academics who are experts in the field, many of whom are still active, from Don Marquis to Onora O'Neill; the editor himself, Steven M. Cahn, professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center, who contributes several of his own works; and emeritus –Virginia Held, Judith Jarvis Thompson– alongside others who have recently passed, like John Arthur, Mary Anne Warren and Louis P. Pojman...

Each of the fifty chapters has the same structure: the title of the chapter and the author's name is followed by a note by the editor that provides a brief background, both in terms of the

author of the text and the tenor of the reading, which has a different font in a slightly larger size to clearly distinguish it from the editor's epigraph. Four Study Questions are included at the end of each reading. Each of these questions has been carefully crafted by Cahn and as a whole prove to be an excellent resource for helping the reader think independently about the text, justify those thoughts and ultimately learn philosophy by doing philosophy.

While both the table of contents and the editor insist on talking about the selections being divided into three parts, it seems to me that it would be better divided into four. The first section, the "Introduction", covers the first four chapters and serves to focus on the reality of ethics as a moral behavior, a departure point for making sense of moral thought, moral philosophy, ethics as a philosophical reflection. In my opinion, the second major block of the book, which the editor calls "Part I: Challenges to Morality", includes chapters 5 through 11 and covers topics like cultural relativism and ethics, morality and God, and the nature of disagreements in ethical matters. The third section, according to my count ("Part II: Moral Theories" according to Steven M. Cahn) covers chapters 12 through 20. In this section readers will find Kant's deontological ethics, "The Categorical Imperative" in Kant's own words, on pp. 98-110; utilitarian consequentialism, in John Stuart Mill's "Utilitarianism", pp. 114-126; and an introduction to Aristotle's ethics with nine pages dedicated to "The Nature of Virtue", an excerpt from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This block is supplemented with readings from other authors, like Hobbes and Rawls. The final section presents the reader with "Moral Problems": abortion (chapters 21 to 24), euthanasia (25 and 26), world hunger (27 and 28), terrorism (29 and 30), torture (32), capital punishment (33 and 34), animal rights (35-37), the environment (38 and 39), affirmative action (40-42), academia (43 and 44), life and death (45 to 47) and, finally, the meaning of life (chapters 48, 49 and 50).

Several corollaries can be deduced from this description. First, that all the topics covered in the last section are certainly complex and interesting issues of moral debate; but since the list is by no means exhaustive, certain justification of the criterion applied on part of the editor when choosing the topics is missing. Cahn included the topics he included, but they're not the only ones that could have been selected. And so the question remains: Why were these ones covered (and others not)?

For example, the heterogeneity of the selection of some issues and the absence of others which, at least to me, seem to be more relevant, is striking. I'm thinking, for example, of chapter 43, written by Leslie Pickering Francis under the suggestive title of "Consensual Sex on Campus" (pp. 410-420). I wonder if this is a truly controversial issue, one serious enough in the North American context to fill an entire chapter in an introductory anthology to an ethics course. If it is, so be it, and in that case it makes all the sense in the world. I would have liked to have seen Cahn include topics like political ethics, economic ethics, business ethics and the ethics of technology...perhaps, however, these issues I propose are less glamorous. But I consider them even more relevant. I would suggest that the editing team review the selection criteria for readings when compiling the anthology's fourth edition.

In short, it is an excellent introduction to moral philosophy through readings. A way, as I said before, of teaching philosophy, exposing the reader directly to works by well-known thinkers and teaching students to engage with these texts by doing philosophy.

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