

paper is whether the observation that the aim of the university is to educate the elite is acceptable in our democratic age or not. There are some who instantly answer: the real aim of the university is not to instruct the elite, but to offer equal chances to study for everybody. Heller's answer to the question is democratic, and at the same time very practical: the BA level meets the basic demands of democracy, everybody gets the chance to study, the higher educational forms, however, MA and PhD studies are aimed at the education of the elite. She classifies the institutions for elite education in three categories: universities educating the social, cultural, or professional elite. She formulates the question once again from the point of view of a democratic system: which of the enumerated elites should be trained in university education? The answer to this question is in conformity with democratic values: the solution is the variety of university institutions. Besides emphasizing plurality Heller expresses her personal choice as well, according to which the goal should be the education of the cultural elite. She exemplifies her opinion with the history of the *New School of Social Research* in the USA. The character and spirit of this institution is still near to the University of Berlin organized by Humboldt: it gathers the best philosophers, psychologists, social scientists, and it grants freedom to every theory. Coming back to the university models in the age of Kant, Goethe, Fichte, Schelling, Humboldt – and the list could be continued –, we may assume that they were successful exactly because they considered the aim of education to be the training of the cultural elite.

I have highlighted the presented themes because I believe these prove the best that this Schellingiana-volume is not only a series of historical documents regarding the changes of university institutions, but a book which raises timely problems and often offers solutions. It points out the advantages and disadvantages of breaking with traditions in education, and it urges us to reconsider our views on education in general, on higher education, and within this, on the role of philosophy in university education.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

Thematizations in Applied Ethics – Feminist Perspectives
(Mihaela Frunză)
– Review –

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Mihaela Frunză's book, *Tematizări în eticile aplicate – perspective feministe* (Thematizations in Applied Ethics – Feminist Perspectives) published by Limes Publishing House in 2009 (ISBN 978-973-726-440-4) offers us the analysis of some important themes of applied ethics, adopting the perspective of feminist thinking. The

volume represents the second part of the author's doctoral dissertation entitled *Etică și ideologie în filosofia feministă contemporană* (Ethics and Ideology in Contemporary Feminist Philosophy), the first part of which, *Ideologie și feminism* (Ideology and Feminism) was issued in 2004 by Limes Publishing House.

The author motivates the joining of the two domains, applied ethics and feminism, by underlining the importance of feminist ethics within the field of ethics, as well as by pointing out the wide range of ethical issues raised by feminist thinking. Similarly, the ever increasing presence of applied ethical subjects in the contemporary ethical and philosophical discourse represents another justification for the choice of subject.

The volume consists of two main parts. In the first part the author outlines a synopsis on the domain of applied ethics, creating thus the necessary framework for the discussion of the characteristically feminist subject of the second part, namely the ethics of care and of abortion.

After a short introduction into the general subject of applied ethics and after an analysis of the different problems and conceptions which appear on a terminological level (we refer here to the discussions regarding the usage of the term "applied" or its substitutes: "professional", "problematic", etc.), the author expounds on the possible domains and classifications of applied ethics, as well as other aspects essential to the contact with the sphere of applied ethics, such as the relationship between theory and practice within applied ethics or between this field of study and philosophy.

Mihaela Frunză discusses two important points which in the end set the tone of her entire approach, creating the framework in which the relationship between feminism and applied ethics is analyzed. We refer to the analysis of two theories which leave their mark on both applied and feminist ethics: on the one hand, the theory of postmodern relativism, and, on the other hand, the universality of ethical values. This permanent oscillation constitutes the structure on which the entire volume is based, even if in certain chapters it appears in a different form, for example as the dichotomy of care and justice.

Different postmodern approaches to ethics are mentioned and discussed by Mihaela Frunză. Thus the philosophical background of the author is revealed by investigating the oscillations between the attempt to maintain the transcendental basis of ethics and the positive postmodern evaluations, which, although they deconstruct the claims of ethics to universality, rethink it "approaching it more to the possibilities and aspirations of the human being" (Foucault, Lyotard, Levinas). The variants of a "minimal ethics" proposed by three contemporary representatives of postmodern ethics, Gilles Lipovetsky, Zygmunt Bauman, and Gianni Vattimo are also analyzed.

Counterbalancing postmodern relativism, the author tackles the theory regarding the universality of ethical standards and values with reference to the problems raised by feminist thinking. Two forms of the universality of moral values are mentioned: a strong one, which states the incontestability of values, and a weak one, which proposes a minimum of values indispensable to the moral system. The universality of values is re-discussed in an attempt to evaluate the conception of some authors regarding its relationship with diversity, this being brought nearer, on a conceptual level, to other terms, such as intelligibility or human rights, which outlines a weak sense of universality.

Different standpoints referring to postmodern ethics and universality are analyzed by Mihaela Frunză with the goal of formulating a thesis which seems paradoxical at a first glance: “feminist theory cannot be at the same time (even if not in the same respect, in order to avoid a conflict with logical principles) postmodern and universalistic. Postmodern because the entire postmodern cultural context permitted and even facilitated the appearance and consolidation of feminist theories. Universalistic because, even if only hypothetically, these theories are addressed to a universal category – all women or women in general. (...) this double affiliation represents a duality difficult to sustain permanently.”

This difficult connection – postmodern/universalistic – is present throughout the book, creating the frame for the analysis proposed by the author from Cluj.

At the end of the volume’s first part the classifications, issues, and key concepts of feminist ethics are presented, thus the transition is made to the second part of the book, which discusses two of the main domains of feminist ethics: the ethics of care and the ethics of abortion.

The ethics of care, says Mihaela Frunză, constitutes probably the most important and most original chapter of feminist ethics. Starting from Carol Gilligan, the author who had the greatest role in the formulation of a feminist approach to the ethics of care, Mihaela Frunză demonstrates that on a conceptual and philosophical level the ethics of care and applied ethics are related. The well-known work, *In a Different Voice* formulates the theory of care as a distinct feminine domain in opposition to the masculine theory of justice. This polarity, care–justice, can be found in the entire analysis undertaken by Frunză.

She considers that the evolution of the philosophical concept of care has been strongly influenced by two of its essential characteristics. The first characteristic is its duality, the fact that it can be both a negative term, being in this case a burden or a problem, and a positive one, signifying attention, sympathy, and solicitude. The second characteristic refers to the centrality of the care concept for the human being. In the analysis of the philosophical concept of care, Mihaela Frunză appeals to several authors: from Michel Foucault with the theme of the “care of the self” to Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. Referring to Heidegger, Frunză mentions several attempts to extend the Heideggerian project to an ethical level; however she formulates reserves with respect to them. The analysis directed to Kant’s moral theory and to the attempts to reevaluate, place, and apply this in the context of the feminist ethics of care is also very interesting.

As we have mentioned, the ethical concept of care is built on its complex relationship with the theory of justice, presented in an exhaustive manner in the subchapter *The Ethics of Care versus the Ethics of Justice: Incompatible Paradigms or Complementary Theories?*, and also in the analysis of the relationship between two major feminist currents, namely the ethics of care and liberal ethics.

Beyond this radical separation between care and justice, Mihaela Frunză expounds on some more or less viable attempts to formulate an “integrative model” with the explicitly mentioned goal “to articulate a common view on the ethics of care as a liberal (applied) ethics”. The mentioned main theoretical models are: the one proposed by Margaret Moore, which sustains a reciprocity of the two values; Chris Crittenden’s proposal to encompass the main universal principles and rights in an ethics of care; the reformulation by Daryl Koehn of the ethics of care as a dialogical ethics; or the solution

suggested by Joan Tronto, which combines the liberal ethics of rights with the political ethics of care.

Beyond the weak points of the feminist ethics of care (rejection of universalism, of principles, contextualism), Frunză underlines the role played by the ethics of care within applied ethics, where, she affirms mentioning Beauchamps' and Childress' standpoints, it is rather a perspective than a separate chapter.

In the face of the scepticism regarding the possibility of the feminist ethics of care becoming the option of a majority, Mihaela Frunză suggests the variant of the care for the other close one, which "should take shape in a set of well regulated practices".

The last chapter of the book has for its subject the ethics of abortion, a field of study situated at the intersection between applied ethics, the ethics of reproduction, legal ethics, and feminist ethics. The author points out the delicate character of the ethics of abortion and tackles the main concepts and problems which constitute in fact the crucial points of the discussion. Out of these the debate regarding the person of the foetus plays an essential role, being one of the basic criteria in the classification of the standpoints referring to abortion: the conservative (anti-abortion or pro-life), the liberal (pro-abortion or pro-choice), and the intermediary standpoints. Mihaela Frunză analyses each view, showing the complexity of feminist problems and conceptions – we refer here especially to the liberal ones – and presenting the main representatives, ways of argumentation, as well as the possible critiques to be found in the specialized literature or developed by the author of this book herself.

In the wider context of the discussion regarding abortion, other, similarly delicate and problematic aspects, such as the disabilities which may affect the foetus, sexual selection, or the medicalization of pregnancy are also tackled.

An extremely interesting point is also the subchapter which discusses the standpoints referring to abortion in feminist phenomenology, which came as a reaction to the deficiencies of the view directed to rights, more precisely on the duality of the foetus' rights–the woman's rights, focusing to a greater extent on the unique and special relationship between the woman and the foetus.

The author considers that the example of abortion represents a paradigmatic situation for applied ethics, since in this, more than in the case of any other subjects, the dangers which threaten applied ethical reflection in general can be observed. Thus, on the one hand, the tendency to generalize, useful in the case of classical philosophical discussions, represents a danger due to the importance of particular cases and contexts in applied ethics. On the other hand, the author says, a "radically conciliatory particularism" must also be avoided. Returning to the dichotomy of universalism–relativism discussed in the previous chapters, Mihaela Frunză considers that "it is preferable to seek those islands of universalism accepted even in a postmodern society (such as the general human abilities or human rights, discussed in part I) which would offer a minimal basis for a dialogue or even for a debate."

Besides the importance and timeliness of the subject discussed by Mihaela Frunză in her book entitled *Thematizations in Applied Ethics – Feminist Perspectives*, which need not be emphasized, we consider that what makes this work an extremely interesting reading and an useful instrument for those interested in the subject of applied ethics and/or of feminist thinking is the *analysis* made by the author. Her moderate and objective voice presents to us the various nuances and standpoints which characterize the novelty and complexity of this book.

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