

Christopher Arroyo. *Kant's Ethics and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate: An Introduction.* Springer 2017. 184 pp. \$109.99 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9783319557311).

In the current ethics of sexuality, Immanuel Kant is definitely not a philosopher of the first choice. Nor is he in the same-sex ethics debate, because while in the first mentioned branch his vision of sexuality, gender and society is quite outdated, in the latter, his normative ethics is strictly against same-sex activities, and so the politically liberal ideas of Rawls or the utilitarian ideas of Mill are most commonly used there. That is why this book by Christopher Arroyo looks like an interesting surprise. Although it is not the only attempt to use Kant in this field (see for example M.C. Altman, 'Kant on Sex and Marriage: The Implications for the Same-Sex Marriage Debate,' *Kant-Studien* 101: 3, 2010, 309-30), yet it is one of the few books connecting Kant and same-sex marriage debate in a positive way.

Although the book is supposed to be an introduction to the problem, it requires knowledge of Kant's philosophy and at least a general awareness of the same-sex debate. Though a reader can find a list of common arguments for and against, Kant's moral philosophy is not outlined first. The reader must jump right into two possible readings of Kant's conception of moral obligation: one by E. Anscombe and the other by C. Arroyo. Even an informed reader can be surprised by the author's idea of how to use Kant's philosophy in support of same-sex marriage rights. There are three recurrent arguments against it: the definition of marriage as a union of one woman and one man, the relationship of marriage to procreation, and the necessary relation of sex and marriage.

The work is divided in two parts, with the first giving an overview of the same-sex debate and the second proceeding with an explanation of Kant's views of sexual ethics, love, and friendship, so as to show in the conclusion how Kantian ethics can answer typical arguments appearing in the debate. The whole work is well written, which makes this difficult subject quite accessible. Each chapter contains a summary and an outlook for the next chapter, which definitely helps the reader not get lost in the topic. What may work against this structure is the short abstract at the beginning of each chapter; it makes the book look like a set of journal articles and prevents the reader from smoothly moving through the text. Despite this inconvenience, the book provides a good contribution to the same-sex debate. Though it is aimed mainly at philosophers, all LGBT people familiar with the typical arguments of Kantian philosophy may enjoy the author's way of using them to support its main aim: to persuade us that Kant's ethical theory can be viable.

However, it is viable only if we clear up all the misunderstandings which come from basing the whole Kant's theory of morality solely on his *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* and omitting the rest of his writings. Arroyo does not make such a mistake and so his interpretation is based on Kant's normative ethical theory together with his philosophical anthropology, avoiding (but firstly explaining) the above mentioned Anscombian reading. Elisabeth Anscombe argues in her 'Modern Moral Philosophy' (*Philosophy* 33, 1958, 124: 1-19) that Kant's moral obligation springs from divine command ethics, which we no longer accept, but which seems senseless and sometimes even harmful without a divine legislator. Such a view has been very influential, but according to the author, it is wrong. He explains that 1) the legislator does not necessarily have to be the author of the moral laws (39-42) because they have not arisen from choice but are practically necessary. 2) Kant's view of moral obligation must be related to his view of humans as imperfect rational beings who in sexuality strongly incline to use the others as mere objects for satisfaction, but who have reason which requires them to treat sexual partners with respect. 3) People have a predisposition to unsocial sociability, in other words a will to individualize and at the same time to socialize.

For Arroyo's explanation of Kant's sexual morality all these points are important. He does not see Kant as a rigorist but as a rationalist whose ethics is deeply dependent on his neglected

anthropology. That is exactly the weakest point of the book because on the one hand Kant's anthropology can help escape Anscombian reading and save his ethics, but on the other hand, his visions of gender (character of sexes in Kantian terminology), of sexuality as the whole, or of marriage, are completely unacceptable. Can we accept that sexual appetite is just the desire for sexual organs of the others and that sex is shameful because we only present ourselves as objects to somebody's sexual passion? Is not Kant inescapably misogynistic, as Allen Wood (*Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2008) suggests? And what about Kant's distinction between carnal crimes that accord with nature but are contrary to sound reason (incest, adultery, prostitution and concubinage) and carnal crimes against nature (masturbation, same-sex activity and bestiality)? Kant even famously said in his *Lectures on Ethics* (ed. J. B. Schneewind and P. Heath, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 27:391) that a person engaging in the same-sex activities degrades herself below the level of beasts.

To reconcile anthropology and ethics containing such hard condemnations of same-sex activities with same-sex marriage debate is certainly difficult, but Arroyo deals with it interestingly and boldly. He addresses all its weak points, though, not all with the same conclusiveness. He condemns Kant's vision of gender as misogynist, though he uses Kant's vision of marriage to support the necessity of allowing same-sex marriage. His argument goes like this: 1) According to Kant sexuality outside marriage is cannibalistic (two lovers just consume the sexual organs of each other), yet Kant never condemned sexual desire in principle as immoral; his concern is devoted to natural inclinations free from the autonomy of practical reason. A coexistence of natural desire and humanity is possible by the cultivation of our sexual impulses; they must take place within the context that guarantees that the partners respect each other as ends in themselves. 2) Procreation does not promote my self-perfection since it is a biological end, which I cannot develop, nor does it help me act more autonomously. Thus, there is no 'moral obligation to engage only in procreative sex' (168). 3) According to Kant, marriage is not natural but legal and happens only in society, so it does not have to be marriage of one man and one woman; the institution of marriage is changeable. 4) Passionate sex can threaten my self-respect and objectify me but this happens to the same extent in opposite-sex couples too. And since Kant thought that marriage is a legal protection of the spouses with respect to sexual objectification, 'same-sex marriage is something that should be made legal' (170). 5) Marriage does not solve the tendency of sexual appetite to objectify people. The context in which two people can engage in sexual activity is provided by moral friendship, in which we find some balance between our unsociability (the need to mock people and reveal their secrets) and sociability (the need to reveal our secrets to somebody and to trust them).

Overall the book is an excellent and well-written example of how to use Kant's ethics and quite homophobic anthropology to support same-sex marriage. However, a reader can hardly get rid of a feeling that it twists Kant's thought too much in some parts. On top of that, such a reading raises questions. First of all, one has to ask whether the author does not exaggerate the role of personality in sexuality. One must also doubt that human beings can fuse in marriage in a way Kant describes. (And this has been doubted: see I. Singer, *The Nature of Love: The Modern World*. University of Chicago Press, 1987). The question is whether an acceptance of the other person and mutual sharing is not closer to reality. Finally, there is the fact that Kant's conception of moral obligation is problematic and criticism of it started with Hegel and Schopenhauer. But that may be why the book is supposed to be only an introduction to the problem. It does not solve everything, but shows the way that is not blocked by prejudices against same-sex activities anymore.

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