

Fassin, Didier and Samuel Lézé (eds.). 2014. *Moral Anthropology. A Critical Reader*. London and New York: Routledge. 388 pp. Pb.: £32.99. ISBN: 9780415627276.

It seems that nowadays everybody is talking about morality, using words and images relating to it. Didier Fassin and Samuel Lézé provide their readers with the opportunity to dwell on the topic of moral anthropology with their anthology ranging from works dating to previous centuries and up to very recent papers. In this reader, anthropological and philosophical engagements with morality are combined, in which philosophy is crucial as a discipline that has long been reflecting on the topic and which has inspired many anthropological works. With their anthology, Fassin and Lézé attempt a critique of moral anthropology while simultaneously demonstrating how intensively morality emerges in the field of anthropology. Despite targeting a mainly scientific audience, the book is also relevant to a general audience interested in moral or ethical questions.

The book is divided into five main parts, with an additional introduction by Didier Fassin and a conclusion by Samuel Lézé. Each main part has an introduction, which provides the reader with a general overview of the articles presented in it. Significantly, it links the content of each part with the anthology as a whole. This puts the selection of the articles and their placement in the anthology into a contextual relationship.

Each paper is accompanied by a biography and bibliography of the author with a synopsis of the main content of the article. This omnipresent guidance by Fassin and Lézé facilitates the navigation and understanding of the book and allows the reader to be selective.

The first part, *Foundations*, is divided into two sections: *Legacies of moral philosophies* and *Premises of a science of morality*. In the first section, influential works from moral philosophy on anthropology are presented. The spectrum ranges from Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*, offering general basics concerning ethics and morality, to Michel Foucault's *Morality and practice of the self*, which examines morality on three levels: morality as a 'moral code', as 'the morality of behaviors' and as 'the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject' (p. 41). In the second part, the groundwork of social science on ethics and morality is presented, including amongst others works by Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Bronislaw Malinowski, which elaborate the interrelations between morality and society, politics, religion and law.

Positions is the second section of the anthology. In the attached introduction, Fassin states that there are three principle anthropological and philosophical ways to look at morality, namely the "relativist", "universalist" and "pragmatist" positions (p. 87–8). Two main questions are posed here, which are central for anthropologists interested in morality: 'What is morality?' and 'What should be made of the diversity of morality?' (p. 87). The first question is the main topic of the following subchapter *The location of the moral*, where different definitions of morality and ethics are explained. The second question inspired the selection of the papers for the subchapter *Ethical relativism in question*, where the debate between Clyde Kluckhohn and Clifford Geertz over relativism is presented. Furthermore, with works by Bradd Shore and Steven Lukes, new approaches to this debate are examined relating to morality and moral diversity.

The third part of the book revolves around the title *Descriptions*. Fassin states in his introduction that anthropologists have always been dealing with morality, although the use of the term itself is a new trend, producing new works on the phenomenon. Two of them are the content and title of the included subchapters: *Local ethics* and *Moral economies*. The first part mainly comprises authors who preceded the aforementioned development, such as Lila Abu-Lughod and Michael Herzfeld, revealing their roles as pioneers on the subject and indicating something about the progression of an anthropology of morality. The second part is influenced by the fact that the concept of moral economies is highly diverse and differently interpreted. In order to capture this, the editors present two different theoretical approaches, which were developed by historians and complement them with articles, which are influenced by the particular tendency.

The fourth part is called *Confrontations* and addresses the topic of moral confrontations, as indicated by the title. These confrontations arise in the encounters between the anthropologist and the studied, the so-called “other”. Such confrontation can also be experienced by the anthropologist when he or she studies his or her ‘own’ society, or in the interaction with other anthropologists. There is another side to moral confrontations, the one where war and charity projects meet or development projects and traditional morality encounter each other. Fassin and Lézé cover these topics in the subchapters *Critical situations* and *Practical tensions*.

The fifth and final part of the anthology is called *Prescriptions* and is guided by two main questions: ‘What moral stances do they [anthropologists] adopt?’ and ‘What ethical practice can we expect from the discipline?’ (p. 298). The chapter is divided into two parts: one called *Moralising the world?* the other *Codifying the discipline?* These include works by Nancy Sheper-Hughes, Didier Fassin and David Price, and also include the ethical code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA).

The summary of the main chapters of Lézés and Fassin’s anthology on moral anthropology demonstrates how carefully the editors have chosen the papers for the reader. Beginning with Kant and Nietzsche and arriving at the AAA’s ethical code from 2012 they reveal the historic depth and recent evolution of the anthropology of morality. This variety of articles offers a great introduction to moral anthropology. However, each of the 44 articles or extracts of articles are only a few pages long, thus enabling the reader can only quickly dive into the particular topic before being forwarded to the next paper. However, this also makes the anthology an excellent summary of the whole field, and it provides a sound starting point for research on moral anthropology.

KARLA DÜMMLER
University of Hamburg (Germany)