

Sumi Madhok, Anne Philips, and Kalpana Wilson, eds.
Gender, Agency, and Coercion
Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013, pp. ix + 280. Indexed.
ISBN: 978-0230300323

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Questions concerning gender, agency, and coercion are central to many discussions in political philosophy, applied ethics (especially bioethics), and feminist philosophy, so an anthology that focuses on the intersection of all three and applies them to practical discussions in which they play a central role is a consummation devoutly to be wished. *Gender, Agency, and Coercion* does not disappoint; although some of essays included are less than satisfying, many are subtle and nuanced and should contribute considerably to furthering and enriching the discussions of each of these three concepts.

Gender, Agency, and Coercion consists of thirteen original papers, together with an Introduction and an Afterword, both of which were written by the three editors. Although the editors have sensibly not divided the papers into subsections since their foci overlap in ways that preclude easy division, the editors note in their Introduction that the papers included "fall roughly into four categories" (9). The first four essays of this volume (by Kimberly Hutchings, Clare Hemmings and Amal Treacher Kabesh, Mary Evans, and Lois McNay) fall into the first of these categories. These essays explore the meaning and importance of agency, and the ways in which our understanding of this concept is shaped by the way in which it is framed. They address such issues as the relationship between responsibility and agency, the ways in which attributing agency to persons can sometimes undermine the recognition of inequalities that should be rectified, and the ways in which the acquisition of agency can lead to loss in other areas of human life. Although the editors have here followed the informal convention of anthologies to place the more theoretically oriented essays at the start of the volume, they note in their Introduction that these essays should not be taken to provide the theoretical foundation for those that follow, for all of the ensuing papers are also theoretically informed and trace the various ways in which gender, agency, and coercion intertwine. The next three essays (by Kalpana Wilson, Sumi Madhok, and Marsha Henry) focus on questions of agency and coercion in the context of discussions of development, where this is understood, in part, as the nexus of interactions between the "global South" and the "global North." Of particular interest here are the arguments, offered independently by Wilson and Henry, concerning the agential status of women in the global South and their consequent position within the discourse of development, either as being held to be devoid of agency, or as being held to be subjects to whom agency should be "granted" by developers.

The third group of essays (by Anne Philips, Heather Widdows, Emily Jackson, and Samantha Ashenden) addresses the nature and importance of agency (and the related concept of autonomy) in the context of questions concerning the morality of certain choices that persons could make concerning the uses of their bodies. In particular, the question of whether it is possible for a woman freely to choose to use her body commercially (such as by engaging in prostitution, selling her eggs, or entering into commercial surrogacy contracts) is explored, as is the related question of whether the choice (if it is indeed a free choice) to do so would legitimate the contract agreed to. The final two papers in the anthology, by Sadie Wearing, and Rosalind Gill and Ngaire Donaghue, engage with conceptions of agency in "post feminist" literature. Wearing considers how class considerations interact with understanding of female agency through examining how class, gender, and agency are profiled and explored in the British comedy-drama series *Misfits*. In the final paper in the collection, Gill and Donaghue address the "post feminist" approach of contemporary popular culture, outlining how this relates to certain ways in which feminists have promoted the value of agency, and the implications that this might have for feminist politics.

The most relevant of these papers to philosophers are those contained within the third group, which discuss the ethical import of human agency and autonomy within the context of the ethics of commodifying the human (especially female) body. Before engaging with some of the issues that these papers raise, it must be noted that this volume suffers from a myriad of typographical errors. The most egregious of these occurs in the Introduction, where the editors write of "'Marlborough man' ideals of the autonomous individual" (6) rather than "'Marlboro Man' ideals," referring to the iconic cowboy used to advertise that brand of cigarettes. For this error to go unnoticed by one editor may be regarded as a misfortune; for it to go unnoticed by three looks like carelessness. Other errors of proofreading abound, ranging from misplaced apostrophes and the use of plurals where singular terms should be, to more egregious errors, such as Heather Widdows incorrectly referring to Emily Jackson's contribution to this anthology as "The Perils of Paternalism" (the correct title is "Compensating Egg Donors"). Possibly the title Widdows used was an earlier version used by Jackson, but even if so it behooves her and the editors to make sure that the references are correct.

Of course, an anthology's having typographical errors is little more than a venial sin in publishing, unless these errors change or cloud the affected authors' meaning---although the sheer number of them in this volume was distracting. The real question concerns the relative importance of the contributions the papers make to the discipline. Unfortunately, the most clearly philosophically relevant contributions to this volume are among the weakest in this respect. Consider, for example, Heather Widdows's arguments rejecting "the Choice Paradigm," to "rethink" "the Ethical Framework in Prostitution and Egg Sale Debates" (157). Widdows starts her paper by claiming that "[t]he focus on 'choice' has silenced other ethical concerns---in particular, concerns about the ethics of practices and about the content of choices---concerns which are far more ethically important than whether or not consent is valid" (157). Drawing on examples taken from the debate over the ethics of prostitution and the sale of human eggs, Widdows offers "five arguments to show that focusing on choice and consent is not sufficient to ensure ethical practice" (163). Unfortunately, it is not clear that anyone actually holds the view that Widdows is criticizing (that choosing to perform an act X will render X ethically acceptable)

and Widdows offers neither quotation nor citation to support her belief that this is a live position, let alone the dominant one. The closest she comes is to quote Julian Savulescu, who, arguing in favor of organ sales, writes "[i]f we should be allowed to sell our labour, why not sell the means to that labour? If we should be allowed to risk damaging our body for pleasure (by smoking or skiing) why not for money which we will use to realise other goods in life? To ban a market in organs is, paradoxically, to constrain what people can do with their own lives" (164). From this, Widdows concludes that for Savulescu "being chosen" is directly equated with "being autonomous," which in turn is directly equated with "being ethical." The assumptions of the choice model are overt and explicit in Savulescu's argument: first, autonomy is the primary, even only significant [sic], ethical value; and second, autonomy is protected if choice is ensured" (164). Yet despite Widdows's claim that the assumptions of the choice model are overt and explicit in Savulescu's argument, it is not even clear that they are present. Savulescu's argument is an analogical one: If we are allowed to do X, and X is analogous to Y, why should we not be allowed to do Y? There is no mention here of autonomy, and, indeed, Savulescu's argument could run without appealing to it. Consider, for example, this parsing of his argument, which avoids autonomy altogether: If we are allowed to do X because this would enhance our well-being, and X is analogous to Y, then why should we not be allowed to do Y to enhance our well-being also? Moreover, even if we construe Savulescu's argument as an autonomy-based argument, since it is couched in conditional form he is certainly not committed to the views that Widdows attributes to him: that autonomy is the primary ethical value, and that autonomy is protected if choice is ensured. To address the first of these issues, Savulescu's argument proceeds by identifying an act that is considered ethically acceptable and then holding that a contested act is relevantly similar. But this way of arguing is perfectly compatible with holding that there could be some autonomously chosen actions that would be unethical as their performance would conflict with other values. To address the second issue, Savulescu's argument is perfectly compatible with respect to autonomy precluding persons from making certain choices, such as the choice to sell oneself into slavery. If Savulescu is concerned with protecting people from having constraints placed upon their lives, it is possible that he could argue (although, note, he is not committed to this) that certain choices to be constrained in drastic ways would not be supported by the considerations that he adduces in favor of organ sales.

In criticizing the "Choice Paradigm," Widdows appears to be tilting at windmills. But let us be charitable and assume that there are some persons who believe in this paradigm as she has outlined it. But then we might ask---so what? One would be hard-pressed to find anyone prominent in debates in applied ethics who argues for pro-choice conclusions and who believes that autonomy is the only value of ethical import. And even if one could find such a person, one would be hard-pressed to find one who believes that a concern for autonomy implies that all chosen actions are equally ethical: Most obviously, some acts might infringe on the autonomy of others, or on the ability of one's future self to exercise her autonomy. Arguing against the choice paradigm is thus like arguing against Newtonian physics: There might be persons who hold the view one is rejecting, but rejecting it does nothing to advance the debate.

Although she does not tilt at windmills, Emily Jackson's paper also suffers from argumentative lacunas. Jackson addresses the question of when "it might be acceptable for women who donate their eggs for the treatment of others to receive money in return," arguing that "regulated payments which compensate women for the inconvenience of donation" (182) should be the

preferred model, rather than outright prohibition on a market for human eggs. Although her responses to those who support an outright ban are reasonable, her objections to markets are much weaker. The first is that a free market would "exacerbate and reinforce existing health inequalities by ensuring that healthy tissues move from poor donors to rich recipients" (185). This is a puzzling claim in the context of a discussion of markets in human eggs, for the recipients would lack healthy eggs whereas the vendors would have (in their own eyes) an oversupply. Rather than exacerbating health inequalities, then (which here would be to the detriment of the rich would-be buyers), markets would actually tend toward equalizing them. Similarly puzzling is Jackson's claim that a market "would value some women's eggs more highly than others" (185). No, it would not---for markets, understood merely as social institutions, value nothing. To be sure, the would-be buyers in a market would value some eggs more than others---but they do this anyway, independently of whether a market for eggs exists or not. Jackson might hold that they should not be allowed to act on these preferences---but that would require an argument that is absent here. Finally, Jackson holds that a free market would allow women to provide eggs more frequently than her preferred regulated system would, and that this would not be ethically preferable, as tissue-donation should not be "a career option" (186). Perhaps it should not be---but no argument for this assertion is provided.

Although some of the philosophical contributions to this anthology are weak, other contributions that have clear philosophical import more than make up for them. Of particular note here is Sadie Wearing's discussion of *Misfits*, a British television series in which persons caught in a freak storm acquire supernatural powers that reflect either an aspect of their personality or their primary interests. The series focuses on five "young offenders" who were caught in the storm. Wearing notes that some of the powers that are acquired function as constraints. The sexual activity of the character Alicia, for example, is curtailed when her touch renders her the target of violent sexual attraction, and the character Kelly's ability to function socially is adversely affected when she becomes telepathic. Although Wearing does not develop this point, it has the philosophical implication that there could be situations in which the ability to choose could itself undermine the value of that ability. This point is clearly of relevance to existentialist approaches to ethics---but, more practically (and more germane to this volume), it echoes the point made above in response to Widdows, that one who values autonomy might hold that fewer choices are better than more. Wearing also does not pursue another question that is directly related to her concern with gender in *Misfits*: Why is it that the three main male characters have powers that are valuable to them (becoming invisible at will, traveling back in time at will, and immortality), whereas the powers granted to the female leads are constraining? Noting that Wearing did not pursue these lines of inquiry is not a criticism, but merely an observation that there remains more to be explored here.

The stimulus to further exploration that Wearing's paper provides is also provided by many of the other papers in this volume. Mary Evans's discussion of the gendering of agency and the contradictions that can be seen in traditional Western valuations of autonomy, and Wilson's concerns with the ways in which neoliberal agency could impinge upon women in the global South, for example, should stimulate contemporary theorists who hold autonomy to be a political ideal to explore the implications of their conceptions of this concept. The same could be said for many of the other essays in the first, second, and final groups of papers in this volume.

In their "Afterword," the editors observe both that "we have not yet arrived at the stage where we can stop stressing the agency of those presumed to lack it," and also that the essays in their volume show why feminism should not merely be content with recognizing and asserting women's agency (258). This is an apt note to conclude on, capturing as it does the sense that this anthology is part of a flourishing and interconnecting set of research projects---projects that this anthology will, despite its shortcomings, contribute to and enrich.