

# English summaries

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## ENGLISH SUMMARIES

- O. ABEL, F. DERMANGE, N. MAILLARD ROMAGNOLI, D. MÜLLER, C. PISTEUR, *Liminaire*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 99-106.

In this short introduction we 1) situate Ogien's book *L'éthique aujourd'hui* within the general context of his philosophical work; 2) summarize the contribution of each participant; and 3) indicate some issues regarding the theological and philosophical reception of Ogien's minimalist ethics.

- R. OGIEN, *What is minimal ethics?*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 107-118.

Minimal ethics affirms an asymmetric morality between the relation with oneself and relations with others. It affirms that we have moral obligations to others but not to ourselves, and that personal virtues have no moral value in themselves. By excluding self-relation from the domain of ethics, whether imperative or not, minimalist ethics goes against the long tradition of moral philosophy inspired by Kant and Aristotle. It raises many objections, to which some responses are proposed here.

- F. DERMANGE, *Is minimal ethics the best guarantee of freedom?*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 119-130.

In defending an extension of political liberalism to the field of morals, Ruwen Ogien makes a plea for freedom. But the assimilation of liberty to consent impoverishes the meaning of liberty, as does the supposed transparency of the subject to oneself. In this way, political liberalism as a formal structure runs in neutral, if it cannot depend on a debate concerning more substantial perspectives of liberty, of world visions, of ethics and convictions.

- A. DUMONT, *Questions of method*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 131-144.

In his approach to ethics, Ogien does something new in combining what we usually oppose: normative ethics, applied ethics and meta-ethics. His analytical starting-point leads him to distrust pretentious expressions. At the same time, his methodological attention to various possible formulations of the substantial principles of minimalist ethics leads him to question anew the links between Good and Right and therefore also the relationship between ethics and politics.

- C. PISTEUR, *From ethics to esthetics?*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 145-160.

Ruwen Ogien's *L'éthique aujourd'hui* is an invitation to think morals in a new way, through the opposition between a maximalist and a minimalist morality. This paper aims to show that the fundamental remedy to moral maximalism is not just moral minimalism, but a sort of "exit" from moralism. Ruwen Ogien's three moral principles seem to serve a fundamental intuition to be found more on an aesthetic level than on a moral one;

to wit, we are unique, incomparable – like works of art – and this singularity must be protected. Thus, Ruwen Ogien deeply modifies the meaning of moral discourse – also in its practical function – as well as the pretensions of reason.

O. ABEL, Minimal ethics or plural ethics, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 161-170.

The author goes over the ethical theory of Ricoeur with the fine-tooth comb of Ogien's minimalist approach, showing where they agree and where they diverge. Ricoeur's anthropology leads to the vision of a vulnerable subject, always exposed to the perverse effects of his own moral choices. Moral pluralism finds here its deepest justification.

N. MAILLARD ROMAGNOLI, The perfectionism of J. S. Mill and Ruwen Ogien's *L'Éthique aujourd'hui*, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 171-184.

In his *L'Éthique aujourd'hui. Maximalistes et minimalistes*, R. Ogien limits the moral field to injustices committed against others, what we do to ourselves being morally indifferent. His point of view is explicitly inspired by the social conception of morality defended by J. S. Mill in his essay *On Liberty*. We wish to show, however, that, if there is in Mill a restriction of the moral domain to wrongs committed against others, for him, the relation to oneself is not, as in the case of Ogien, "morally" indifferent. The Anglo-Saxon philosopher situates care for oneself in rather a different register - that of the "good life" - from what concerns relations to others.

D. MÜLLER, To what point is minimal ethics substantial? Questions and suggestions concerning the models of Ogien and Walzer, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 185-192.

The author asks if the question of minimal ethics is only a procedural one or if such a question does not presuppose a decision in favour of a minimum of substantial truth. He calls rather for a so-called optimal ethics, with Walzer and against Ogien. Such optimal ethics, besides having a truly philosophical orientation, maintains specific links with public theology and its contribution to philosophical and political debate.

S. CIMASONI, Minimalist ethics and authenticity of the agent, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 193-204.

Ruwen Ogien keeps his minimalist ethics explicitly aloof from any theory of the agent, in particular from authenticity. In this paper, I examine one of the theories of authenticity, namely that of Jean-Paul Sartre. I then describe my understanding of Ogien's ethics. I conclude that, far from being opposite, both theories meet, especially on the importance of recognizing the personal extension of responsibility.

G. WATERLOT, Self-concern as the minimal ethic condition of the humanisation of the subject, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 205-218.

In the view of Ruwen Ogien, what is human in each one of us is a fixed given which must be left, as much as possible, to free self-expression. We affirm, on the contrary, with Aristotle and Bergson, that our humanity is always in the process of being made

(or unmade) according to the attention we give ourselves. Briefly, we are constantly becoming human. In this perspective, self-concern is essential; all the more so when certain actions, seeming to concern only ourselves, have, in fact, unexpected or indirect ethical consequences on others and on social life. In this article we try to show this on the basis of examples that Ruwen Ogien gladly analyses in his work, notably masturbation and sado-masochism.

N. STRICKER, Protestant views of medically assisted procreation: between «moral panic» and ethic tragedy, RThPh 2008/II-III, 219-232.

To re-evaluate the ethical and theological implications of medically assisted procreation, this article takes as its basis the plurality of protestant positions in biomedical ethics and examines the extent to which they lay themselves open to the criticism of Ruwen Ogien. This reflection concentrates on three fundamental problems: the status of the embryo; what should be done with surplus embryos from medically assisted procreation; the social entity which welcomes the child thus conceived. The ethical and theological argumentation of the author pleads for legislation which would defend the right of the desired child and solve in a more liberal way the question of the right to have children.

S. HURST, Requirements and outlines of minimalist ethics in clinical practice, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 233-246.

Clinical ethics would seem to be the perfect candidate for some version of maximalism, at least according to the standard use of the term. This article tries to throw light on the implications, sometimes rather the lack of implications, of Ruwen Ogien's «minimalistic ethics,» should it be applied to the ethical difficulties met with in clinical practice. The fears such an application might cause at first glance are unfounded. Moreover, in some aspects, to apply Ruwen Ogien's ethics would entail strong requirements – everything except minimalist, as it is generally understood. If these aspects are in a minority, that is because «L'éthique aujourd'hui» simply does not approach, or only so in outline, the knots of ethical difficulties current in clinical practice.

A. BONDOLFI, Remarks on minimal ethics and bioethics: a reaction to Ruwen Ogien, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 247-254.

In this article we try to show that the theses of R. Ogien in his book *L'éthique aujourd'hui* cannot easily be applied to the moral and juridical conflicts which affect the sphere of biomedical research and practice. Without a minimum of reciprocal confidence, there can be no medical practice. While recognizing that Ogien's anti-paternal plea is in principle pertinent, all forms of argumentative monism must be avoided in applied ethics.

R. OGIEN, Commentaries on these essays, RThPh 2008/II-III, p. 255-280.

The questions put to minimalist ethics are of three types. First there are divergences in the interpretation of the authors of reference, notably of Kant and John Stuart Mill. Then there are conceptual objections to the minimalist criticism of moral obligations to oneself. Finally, there is opposition to the liberal commitments of minimalist ethics to, amongst others matters, bioethics. These comments aim essentially to eliminate certain misunderstandings and to evaluate the necessary modifications so that minimalist ethics would raise fewer objections.