



areas where views can be similar or overlap. What is important is what Moon, in the conclusion, calls perspectival pluralism; where traditions concentrate on reasonable disagreement and by so doing are perhaps more able to alter their own perspectives. Some traditions see this as their main point, but even those that are more comprehensive seem to have this potential built in (see, for example, the discussion of the role of conscience within Christianity). So there is hope, and the Ethikon Institute, under whose auspices the meeting which resulted in this book took place, is to be congratulated for facilitating this exchange.

All in all, these books are timely and essential reading for those who are interested in a civil and dispassionate, but nevertheless engaged look, at the problems of ethical and religious pluralism as they are presented today. They both make an excellent contribution.

Zenon Bankowski  
University of Edinburgh.

### **The Political Economy of New Slavery**

Christien van den Anker (ed.)

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This collection of essays on contemporary slavery arises out of a workshop conducted by the Centre for the Study of Global Ethics at Birmingham University in May 2002 that brought the practical knowledge of campaigners together with academic critique. The contributors range from seasoned academics like Nigel Dower and Jeroen Doomernik to practitioners working in the field; the NGO Anti-Slavery International (ASI) is a marked presence, with the Foreword to the volume provided by Mary Cunneen, the director of ASI. While giving a needed voice to campaigners, the diversity of expertise of the contributors also makes for a mixed bag in terms of the quality of analysis in the essays; the best are those that combine academic *nous* with concrete application.

Van den Anker's immediate concern in putting together this wide ranging-collection is to demonstrate the applicability of the unifying concept of slavery to a number of abusive practices which have been previously studied under discrete headings: child labour, debt bondage, forced prostitution, migrant



domestic work and others. The contributions are carefully managed around three discrete areas of inquiry, focusing on: analyses of the context of slavery (Christien van den Anker and Jeroen Doomernik), the diverse practices of slavery (Victoria Firmo-Fontan, Bridget Anderson, Krishna Upadhyaya, Rachel Nizan, Amanda Berlan), and the development of strategies for combating slavery (David Ould, Arne Dormaels *et al*, Nigel Dower, Emma Dowling, Ivan Manokha, Geraldine Van Bueren).

As far as the diverse practices of slavery are concerned, coverage is impressive; the different abusive practices of contemporary slavery that are discussed give depth to the standard superficial understanding of slavery as a unitary practice of cross-border trafficking, and challenge any conception that such practices are carried out by 'other people'. Instead, emphasis is laid on the structures, global and domestic, which perpetuate these forms of abuse. Van den Anker's general argument is compelling: although the structural factors do not necessarily overlap in all cases (for example, the conditions of debt-bondage in the Indian sub-continent predate the current form of economic globalization, which is labelled the main enemy to the stability of world markets and a significant contributor to world poverty), the forms of abuse that are considered are themselves formally similar in that they involve the forced labour of those with no other (or no prospect of a better) livelihood. In that sense, slavery is a term which can be (cautiously) used to mark out those violent abuses to which people are made vulnerable by poverty; in addition, general global frameworks that perpetuate those conditions of poverty can be identified.

But does labelling all these abusive practices 'slavery' in fact help to create the strategy for change that van den Anker hopes? For van den Anker is not only interested in demonstrating the formal connections between diverse forms of abuse, but in generating frameworks for change: 'The book's foremost aim is to contribute to ending contemporary slavery'. What I find missing from this volume as a strategy for ending slavery is a thoroughgoing critical reflective overview of the conceptual frameworks within which anti-slavery policies can be formulated.

In the final part of the collection individual practical strategies for combating slavery are considered, and the discussion of fair trade by Ivan Manokha is particularly welcome for its critical analysis of the conceptual premises of the practice of fair trade. In fact, many of the essays, if not all, incorporate a reflexive critique of the premises of particular ethical/practical 'correctives' to poverty and/or slavery that arises out of direct experience and/or targeted study. But this critical perspective is surprisingly not picked up by the editor, van den Anker, into a real reflexive critique of the overall framework for tackling slavery (considered as an umbrella term for the various abuses identified).



It is particularly noticeable that in her own contribution to the volume van den Anker identifies 'justice' as the conceptual framework for combating slavery, yet fails to consider the varying interpretations which may be attached to that concept. For example, van den Anker proposes the use of human rights instruments as essential to opposing slavery, yet does not open up for real debate the appropriateness of these human rights instruments in particular circumstances. This is a significant omission in view of the argument put forward convincingly by Amanda Berlan, that inflexible use of international human rights instruments may be counterproductive in the particular situation of child labour on Ghanaian cocoa plantations in terms of ensuring an 'optimal social benefit' to farmers. Pre-defined human rights models decided without reference to the responses of the individuals themselves concerned in the vicious circle of poverty and slavery may not be the best way of achieving this benefit.

This example highlights the way in which conceptual ethical models need themselves to be subjected to criticism as part of an effective engagement with actual practices, and with the persons who are themselves being subjected to slavery. This is a point well made by Nigel Dower who argues that concepts surrounding approaches to development (and slavery) need to be fully elucidated; in fact he singles out 'justice' as a concept for which discussion of its interpretations is crucial — to establish some form of moral consensus among those involved, but also to be able to prioritize effectively with regard to specific targets of policy, and I would add, to be able to evaluate their appropriateness for particular circumstances. One of the most fascinating issues for those who seek to remedy practices like slavery is surely the interaction between pre-given 'established' legal and ethical instruments like human rights, and the different conditions and responses of persons directly vulnerable to slave-like practices.

It may be that van den Anker is deliberately using a hands-off editorial approach to let the diverse accounts of slavery and the various indications of how to tackle it speak for themselves. However, the omission of a more critical conceptual overview is disappointing, given that the book attempts to balance academic with empirical and strategic analysis, and, presumably, to achieve insights based on this partnership. Nevertheless, the wealth of material contained in all the texts and the extensive coverage of the different aspects and contexts of slavery make it a thoroughly rewarding read.

Jessica Osborn  
Cardiff University, UK.