

Reviews

The Person and the Challenges
Volume 8 (2018) Number 1, p. 237–239
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.2439>

Maria Świątkiewicz-Mośny
Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

Review

**„Leksykon socjologii moralności.
Podstawy-teoria-badania-perspektywy”,
(A Lexicon of the Sociology of Morality.
Grounds – theories – research – perspectives)
edited by Janusz Mariański, NOMOS 2015
Language: Polish**

The Lexicon of the Sociology of Morality is 975 pages of text, over 200 entries, nearly 90 authors representing all academic centres in Poland. The Lexicon is dedicated to Prof. Maria Ossowska, regarded as a mother of the Sociology of Morality in Poland. Her work „Podstawy nauki o moralności” (“The Grounds of the Science of Morality”) can be treated as a fundamental piece, and her merits in the field of the Sociology of Morality cannot be overestimated.

M. Ossowska was given a lot of space in the Lexicon (one of the most extensive entries). Krzysztof Kiciński discusses the most important works of Prof. M. Ossowska, but also, importantly, shows the historical and socio-political context in which they were created.

In the Lexicon of Sociology of Morality, there are also biographies of other researchers dealing with the subject of morality, including both Polish and

foreign authors, authors of classic works in the field of sociology of morality and their contemporaries. The Lexicon records their works on the issues of morality, which certainly facilitates orientation in the sub-discipline and allows for a reconstruction of its history.

Sociology of Morality is a subdiscipline of sociology dealing with the study of morality through the prism of its social formation and functioning. It is defined, among others, by such notions as morality, values, norms, moral evaluations, and ethical ideals. The interpretation of moral phenomena is provided by concepts such as, for example, moral absolutism, permissivism and moral relativism, anomie, trust, and evil. All these concepts, of course, were included in the Lexicon. They were developed concisely (according to the lexicon concept), but always presented as cross-sectionally as possible, taking into account the historical background.

The collection features also some entries related to moral theories and methodological assumptions, like the Christian theory of morality, the Marxist theory of morality, models of morality research, etc. This gives grounds for understanding many perspectives and contexts of the issue of morality.

Among the several hundred entries included in the Lexicon my attention has been drawn to those which are very strongly connected with the present. They describe social life through the prism of morality and serve as a kind of a compendium of knowledge useful for understanding important issues currently under discussion, sometimes very exciting ones, e.g. medical discourse (related to euthanasia, body, socio-biology), economic discourse (financialization) or the one related to security (issues of terrorism, migration).

The choice of some entries did not seem obvious. One such surprising example was 'event and morality'. Agnieszka Zdunak, on several pages, shows how an event can be interpreted and understood in a wider theoretical sociological context, and what are its functions and types are. Examples of events are, among others, papal pilgrimages, or marches in defence of life, inspired by moral values and supposed to contribute to the renewal of the social order.

Among the entries that clearly refer to the present day we can, of course, find those related to broadly understood politics (e.g. politics, morality, social participation, and morality, civic society, and morality, globalization, and morality), or the economy. Each area of social life can be described in the context of morality, including a reflection on the character of moral judgments and their genesis.

The entries found in the Lexicon were prepared by nearly 90 authors, mainly sociologists, but also representatives of other disciplines, among others psychologists, theologians, pedagogues, religious scholars, and philosophers. The Editor, Prof. Janusz Marianski, writes in the Preface that „they differ both in terms of the research workshop, adopted theories, defining basic concepts, interpretation and explanation of complex moral phenomena” (p. 13). Such a selection of authors allowed to build a multi-faceted and multidisciplinary lexicon. According to Editor’s intention, the Lexicon is not a closed set. It seems, however, that it covers a broad spectrum of issues discussing both those terms „traditionally” related to the issue of morality, repeatedly described and analysed, as well as those that are strongly rooted in modernity, everyday life and popular culture (event). A valuable advantage of the Lexicon is also the fact that each entry can be treated as a guide with tips, where the knowledge can be broadened and explored.

The rich work of M. Ossowska opens up a number of possibilities for the development of the discipline and may serve as an abounding source of inspiration. This is how I understand the choice of entries included in the Lexicon – as a collection resulting from the inspiration and fascination with the work of Prof. M. Ossowska. The issues elaborated will certainly be of interest to those who take up issues related to morality in their scientific deliberations. The Lexicon will help people who are scientifically interested in morality. It can also be a good guide for those seeking knowledge needed to analyse and interpret everyday experiences and current media discourses.