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**REVISTA DE LIBROS/BOOK REVIEWS**

*Shaping the Normative Landscape*, de D. OWENS, OXFORD, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2012, pp. 260

Along the pages of *Shaping the Normative Landscape*, David Owens tries to focus on our interested obligations, that is to say, those ‘obligations whose existence is to be explained [...] by reference to our interest in [their] existence’ [pp. 2-3]. Furthermore, he argues that most of our obligations depend on our choices and he classifies the relationship between choices and obligations in four grades: null grade obligations, i.e. obligations whose existence is independent of choice; first grade obligations, where you acquire the obligation by taking a choice independently of your awareness of the consequent obligation. The following is an example: imagine you choose to drive a car. Then, you acquire the obligation not to get drunk, and you incur this obligation whether or not you are aware of the obligation you incur by doing so. Next, there are second grade obligations, which exist only if the choice you make puts you under an obligation if and only if you know the obligation you will acquire by taking such a decision. The canonical examples of this kind of choice-dependence are relations of involvement such as friendship, in which you acquire certain obligations with your friends only provided that you know the obligations you acquire. Finally, Owens talks about a third grade of choice-dependence, which includes promises, consents or commands. These require the existence of a normative power, i.e. when what someone is obliged to do (hence, the normative situation) can be changed by intentionally communicating the intention of hereby doing so. According to Owens, each grade of choice-dependence entails a specific interest. For instance, in the case of the second grade, which involves actions such as forgiveness, remissive interest and deontic interest are at work. On the other hand, in the case of the third grade, these obligations serve both an authority and a permissive interest.

Given such a ‘dissection’ of the normative landscape, the book is divided in three parts: in the first part Owens considers the interests which are

involved in our choices; in part two he studies our normative power, specially the case of the practice of promising, to which he dedicates part three.

After arguing that that our choices serve several interests, Owens turns to explain what those interests are. First of all, he mentions blame and guilt. Imagine that Smith is your friend. By being your friend, he incurs certain obligations towards you, such as helping you if you are in trouble. Imagine that you need help because you have an important exam and Smith is an expert on the subject. If he does not help you, provided that he has enough time to do so, he is wronging you, so you can blame him (blame is here understood as anger and, according to Owens, a wrong tends to render blame apt [p. 45]). In such a case your reaction to Smith's action is apt, and now it is within your reach to forgive him for his action. Therefore, given the relationship that exists between Smith and you, blame is an appropriate reaction to several actions that either of you can take. In Owens' opinion, and this I think is one of his more important theses, being able to blame (and forgive) someone is good for us, because it serves our interest in controlling the normative situation, so the possibility of blaming and forgiving is the best explanation of relationships such as friendship, which entail involvement. But not only do breaches of obligation (and their consequent counterpart: wronging and blame) make sense of the way in which we act, but obligations themselves do. Owens argues that obligations entail a constraint in our deliberations [p. 99], and as far as this can be good for us in many cases, obligations can also help in explaining our behaviour.

Now, turning to promises, to which Owens dedicates most of his book, it is his claim that they entail exercising a normative power, that is to say, they exist because someone, say you, has communicated the intention of hereby imposing (or acquiring) that obligation. Promises are the paradigmatic example of performative utterances, as Austin pointed out, i.e. utterances that create an obligation in the person so uttering. According to Owens, by uttering them promises create an obligation in the promisor, and the breach of such an obligation can wrong the promisee. Therefore, promises make blame an apt reaction to breaches of them, and so serve our authority interest, i.e. 'our interest in having the right to oblige others to do certain things' [p. 146]. Imagine the following situation: Brown has promised you he will go to your party on Friday. By means of such a promise, he has given you the right to blame him in case he finally does not go. Friday arrives and he does not turn up at your party. Now Brown will need a good explanation for justifying why he did not turn up and, in case he lacks one, you have the right to blame him, a right you would not have if he had not promised [p. 203]. This said, we can wonder why promises exist, if they make blame apt and nobody wants to be blamed. Owens maintains that they exist because it is good for us to have authority over others, so it is this interest that makes sense of our practice of promising and the like.

In conclusion, we can say that Owens has presented a theory to explain the obligations which we incur by means of our interests. In this vein, he maintains that every obligation we acquire depends on our personal choices and we take such choices because we are interested in the power we attain by their means. Therefore, the explanation of why we have friends and relationships such as friendship, or why we make and accept promises, lies in the interests they serve.

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*On Leibniz* (Expanded Edition), de NICHOLAS RESCHER, PITTSBURGH, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS, 2013, 416 pp.

Diez años después de su primera publicación, ve la luz una segunda edición del trabajo *On Leibniz* a manos de Nicholas Rescher, reconocido experto sobre la obra del genio alemán del siglo XVII, al haberse ocupado con ella durante más de cinco décadas. La segunda edición es una versión expandida de la anterior: dobla en cantidad de artículos (y casi de páginas) las magnitudes de la primera edición. En este ejemplar se reúnen, así, artículos redactados entre 1977 y (presumiblemente) 2013, sobre la vida y obra de G. W. Leibniz y su recepción actual. Frente a la primera edición, en esta se incluyen diez artículos inéditos, de los cuales solo uno (“Leibniz and Issues of Eternal Recurrence”) es una reelaboración de tesis anteriormente publicadas por su autor, en este caso en un capítulo de su trabajo de 2006: *Studies in Leibniz’s Cosmology*.

En los primeros cuatro artículos que recopila el libro se pregunta Rescher por algunas cuestiones de la ontología leibniziana, en especial en asuntos donde se vinculan las esferas de la lógica, epistemología y metafísica. En los artículos que van del quinto al undécimo, las dificultades son de corte epistémico y metodológico, como, entre otras, el concepto de sistema y de razonamiento inductivo. En los artículos quince y dieciséis se hace un esfuerzo por seguir la recepción e influjo de la filosofía leibniziana en la filosofía