

## INTRODUCTION

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Issue Nr. 14 (1974) of this journal was devoted to the discussion of "Dimensions of Rationality". Most contributions to that issue treated some aspects or problems of cognitive or theoretical rationality, although the editors intended to include also a more profound discussion of the problem of ethical or value-rationality. We wrote that it would be necessary to demonstrate that rationality is not only possible and desirable on the cognitive level, but also on the level of values, norms, ideals, purposes, and goals of action. And we asked: "Is there such a thing as ETHICAL RATIONALITY, a rationality which need not only apply to our kind of thinking but which would enable us to organize our patterns of life, our actions, our economic, social and political structures in ways that could be objectively justified as "superior", or "better", or "most desirable"?" However, this problem was only marginally treated in that issue. Apart from my own contribution ("Some reflections about ethical rationality") the articles were primarily concerned with rationality on the cognitive level. The main reason was that most authors felt it much more difficult to conceive of a justifiable notion of ethical rationality than of one of theoretical rationality, and therefore focused on problems concerning the latter. As a result of that first attempt at defining rationality several questions remained open. So we asked ourselves: how do the proposals concerning theoretical rationality relate to each other, and how do they relate to the problem of ethical or value rationality? How can ethical rationality be conceived of, and which conceptual, epistemological and methodological difficulties arise in this connection? What is the very aim in trying to define ethical rationality, and what might be its practical relevance?

Informal discussions about these questions among the contributors of the 1974 issue led to a "Discussion group on ethical rationality"

(Contactgroep Ethische Rationaliteit), sponsored by the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research (Nationaal Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek), which up to now organised three working meetings with lectures and discussions on the problem. Some of the articles presented in this volume — those of D. BATENS, R. COMMERS, K. BOULLART and myself — are the first and provisional results of these meetings. The present volume contains furthermore contributions by J. AGASSI and J. R. WETTERSTEN and by W. CALLEBAUT, in which problems directly related to the topic of this volume are explicitly discussed, as well as critical essays by K. NIELSEN and R. COMMERS on Rawls's Theory of Justice, this theory being considered as an attempt at a rational determination and justification of the value of social justice and thus pertaining also directly to our main concern.

In bringing together these contributions we hope to present a volume which shows at least some kind of unity in the core of the problems discussed. But it soon will be clear to the reader that this unity does in no way imply a uniformity of approach. On the contrary, the authors differ considerably in the point of view from which they approach the problem, as well as in the provisional conclusions they arrive at.