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Aviad E. Raz
Silke Schicktanz

Comparative Empirical Bioethics: Dilemmas of Genetic Testing and Euthanasia in Israel and Germany

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Aviad Raz and Silke Schicktanz were the PIs who jointly conceptualized and wrote the research proposals, conceptualized and substantially led the final analysis and structure of all the papers which are used in this book. Parts of Chapter 5 have greatly benefitted from suggestions made by Barbara Prainsack, Gabriele Werner-Felmayer, Yael Hashiloni-Dolev and Carmel Shalev. Felix Hagenström’s support was of great help in copy editing the manuscript.

Writing this book was a long process that took place in most of 2014 and 2015. We reviewed the data produced in our previous studies, reflecting on the common denominators and emerging insights that we were now aware of in retrospect. The book endeavors to locate this project in a broader context, presenting what is hopefully a more clear and general crystallization of our work on socio-empirical bioethics and the “Israeli” and “German,” “religious” and “secular,” “affected” and “non-affected” narratives of responsibility. Large portions from the following papers are reprinted in this book by permission of the publishers: Schicktanz S, Schweda M (2012) The diversity of responsibility: The value of explication and pluralization. *Medicine Studies* 3:131–145; Raz A, Rimon-Zarfaty N, Inthorn J, Schicktanz S (2014) Making responsible life plans: Cultural differences in lay attitudes toward predictive genetic testing for late-onset diseases. In: Prainsack B, Schicktanz S, Werner-Felmayer G (eds) *Genetics as social practice*. Ashgate, Farnham, pp 181–198; Schicktanz S, Raz A, Shalev C (2010) The cultural context of patient’s autonomy and doctor’s duty: Passive euthanasia and advance directives in Germany and Israel. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 13(4):363–369.

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The authors' names appear in alphabetical order; however, the contents of this book are our mutual responsibility.

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Contents

1 Introduction: Engaging in Comparative Bioethics	1
1.1 One World, One Bioethics?	2
1.2 The Location of Bioethical Culture	4
1.3 Beyond the Academic Sphere	4
1.4 Comparative Bioethics: Some Reasons for the Juxtaposition of Germany and Israel	5
1.5 The Book's Composition	8
References	9
2 Setting the Methodological Scene: The Value of Explication and Pluralization of Moral Grammars	13
2.1 Cultural Scripts Between Generalization and Enacting	14
2.2 Methodological Engagements: From Cultural Scripts to Narrative Investigation (and Back Again)	16
References	19
3 Applying the Theoretical Tools: Being Affected, Responsibility, and Risk	21
3.1 The Participative Turn: From the Expert to the Affected Person	21
3.2 The Normative Turn: Re-Considering "Responsibility" to Analyze Moral Grammars.	23
3.3 Current Theoretical Challenges of "Responsibility"	26
3.4 The Structure of "Responsibility": A Relational Concept of Moral Agency.	27
3.5 The Epistemic Turn: The Meaning of Risk	38
References	40

4	Contextualizing the Cultural and Medico-Legal Debate on Adult Genetic Testing	45
4.1	The Script of “Genetic Responsibility”	45
4.2	The Practice of Adult Genetic Testing in Germany and Israel	47
4.3	Two Paradigmatic Cases of Predictive Genetic Testing for Late-Onset Diseases: Huntington’s Disease and Colon Cancer	50
	References	52
5	Making Responsible Life Plans: Cultural Differences in Lay Attitudes in Germany and Israel Towards Predictive Genetic Testing for Late-Onset Diseases	55
5.1	To Know or not to Know?	56
5.2	To Tell or not to Tell?	60
5.3	Conclusions	63
	References	65
6	Planning One’s End of Life in an Expert Biomedical Culture	67
6.1	Recent Changes in the Legal Situation	67
6.2	Tracing the Differences Between Germany and Israel in End-of-Life Care Policies	70
6.3	Comparative Analysis of the Statements	72
	6.3.1 Legal Backgrounds	72
	6.3.2 Main Similarities and Differences	73
6.4	Cultural Diversity of Moral Key Elements in the Argumentation	74
	6.4.1 Handling Conflicting Situations in End-of-Life Situations	74
	6.4.2 Religious and Historical Factors	75
6.5	Conclusions	76
	References	78
7	Lay Attitudes Towards End-of-Life Decision-Making in Germany and Israel	81
7.1	Patient Autonomy as the Leading Principle for Withholding End-of-Life Medical Treatment	84
7.2	Withdrawing Treatment: Between Patient Autonomy and Doctors’ Duty “Not to Harm”	85
7.3	Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Unsolvable Dilemmas and the Advice to Be Cautious	87
7.4	Who Should Decide? Shared Decision-Making as a Challenge	89
7.5	Formal or Informal Advance Directives?	90
7.6	Conclusions	91
	References	93

- 8 Risks and Responsibilities: Making Plans for Life and Death 95**
 - 8.1 Self-responsibility and Individual Risk 96
 - 8.2 Family Responsibility and Shared Risk 97
 - 8.3 Responsibility of Society and the Risk of Social Coercion 99
 - 8.4 Conclusions 101
 - 8.4.1 The Perspective of Being Affected 103
 - References 104

- 9 Final Conclusion: Disentangling the Micro and the Macro
in Bioethics 107**
 - References 119

Chapter 1

Introduction: Engaging in Comparative Bioethics

In 2004, an Israeli sociologist and a German bioethicist met at an international conference on bioethics in a cloister in the Netherlands. Following a presentation they started conversing and the Israeli sociologist asked: “How is it that Germans are so reluctant about genetic testing?” The German bioethicist paused a bit and answered with uncertainty: “I am not sure whether they are so reluctant. The geneticists I met are all very supportive.” After sharing some comparative data, they realized that the existing research consisted mainly of policy analysis and surveys of professionals. There were two important lacunas. First, public opinion and lay attitudes have not been well-studied. Second, the question “why” was still open, requiring a more empirically grounded and nuanced understating that ventures beyond important (yet easily flagged) premises such as the historical legacy of the Holocaust—an issue that is perhaps always in the background when a German and an Israeli meet.

Indeed, our task in this book concerning a contemporary re-examination of the lessons of the Holocaust presents a relatively new stage in the history of German-Israeli research collaborations in the social sciences and the humanities. The first stage (around the 1950s–1960s) could be characterized by avoidance, with some beginnings of German-Israeli collaborations in the basic sciences but none in the humanities. In the next stage (around the 1970s–1980s), the subject of “German history” was allowed back into Israeli universities, nevertheless while avoiding the Holocaust. This book is the outcome of a relatively recent phase of re-examination, expressed by studies that take the Holocaust as a focus for re-examining present-day cultural scripts of eugenics and euthanasia with a focus on the common, yet also very different, legacy and interpretation of the lessons of the Holocaust.

Five months after their first and unplanned meeting, the German bioethicist and the Israeli sociologist embarked on an intensive exchange by making plans for joint research projects. Now, ten years later, we decided to write a book. This book is a comprehensive, empirically-grounded exploration of a culturally embedded bioethics. Its aim is to develop, methodologically and theoretically, a research