Research Bibliography on Virtue and Virtue Ethics

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Articles on Character, Vision and Virtue


Entire issue devoted to virtue ethics.


Discusses how the Thomistic concept of virtue has been developed in modern ethics.


Bosley argues against confusing virtue with a natural property.

Bosley is professor of philosophy at the University of Alberta.


Investigates the key aspects of the Confucian virtue ethics in relation to the notions of the *chün-tzu* (Superior Person), the Five Relationships of society, the particular Confucian virtues of *jen* (benevolence) and *li* (propriety), the moral vision of the *tao* (Way), and the understanding of the *t’ien-ming* (Mandate of Heaven). The thesis of the article is that the moral matrix provided by the web of social relationships is what allows the Confucian ethics of virtue to function well.


Dossier of several ecclesial statements covering various instances of pastoral application of the idea of Christian solidarity.


Daly, who at this writing, taught at St. Anselm’s College in Manchester NH, investigates “how secondary moral precepts, or moral norms, relate to acquired virtues. Three questions drive this study. First, what is the purpose of moral norms in the *Summa theologiae*? Second, how are moral norms generated in the *Summa*? Finally, how are moral norms applied in the *Summa*?” (P. 214).


One of several articles in this number devoted to the general theme, "Virtues and the New Casuistry."


Discusses the criticism made against "virtue ethics" that it is insufficiently normative, and therefore unable to assist practical decision making. Donahue claims that "virtue ethics" does yield some central moral norms, and also provides a compelling framework for moral choice. A case study is also used to illustrate the author’s position.

**N.B. the pagination is out of order in this article: p. 235 should be followed by pp. 238-241, and then p. 241 should be followed by pp. 236-237, which in turn should be followed by pp. 242-243.**


Address presented on 16 March 1990 at the Annual Meeting of the Indiana Academy of Religion at DePaul University, Greencastle, Indiana. Dykstra describes his concept of a community of conviction, and applies it to the role of the university.


Argues for a renewed understanding of prudence as an important guiding principle for application of ethics in our modern world and discusses the contribution of Rahner's existential ethics.


Gert teaches at Dartmouth.


Discusses how the literary impact of the parable story can affect the shaping of character. Much of Guevin's essay is done in light of the work of Stanley Hauerwas.


Talks about recent literature on the issue of moral perfection and "saints" as moral paradigms (which position Horne refutes). Article has a certain bibliographic value.


Hunt, L.H. "Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics." Philosophical Review


At this article’s publication Iozzio is professor of theological ethics at Boston College School of Theology & Ministry.


Just as a case can be made for the fact that the virtues are united, inasmuch as the moral virtues complement and complete one another, so in the same way vices can be viewed in terms of multiple failure and/or lack.


Moral imagination is both a central issue in moral psychology and crucial to understanding virtue and vice. Discusses David's encounter with the prophet Nathan as
evidence for a failure in David's own moral imagination.


Kaczynski teaches at the Angelicum in Rome.


Keenan did his dissertation on the Thomistic distinction between good and right under Josef Fuchs at the Pontifical Gregorian University. At this writing Keenan taught moral theology at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA.


One of several articles on identity and narrative which treat this theme in relation to moral philosophy and/or theology.


One of several articles in this number devoted to the general theme, "Virtues and the New Casuistry."  Keenan gives an overview of the development of the ethics of virtue theories in the English-speaking world (primarily the USA) from 1973 to present, highlighting some of the differences between these theories and those centered on deontological normative ethics.


Discusses temperance, using as a contextual example undergraduates and drinking.


One of several articles in this number devoted to the general theme, "Virtues and the New
Casuistry." Kotva gives a good overview of the basic elements of an ethics of virtue theory, and shows the affinity of this sort of theory to Christian ethics. Kotva also shows how rules can and do function in a teleological theory.


Begins by looking at the Aristotelian roots of Christian virtue ethics, then compares this with natural virtue ethics and concludes with an account of virtues necessary for human flourishing in the contemporary world.

The authors are professors at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska who frequently collaborate together in their published research.


Livezey teaches at Princeton Theological Seminary.


Discusses how Newman integrated three characteristics of discernment in the moral
imagination: dynamic, holistic, and subjective.

Magill teaches theology at St. Louis University.


Composed in April 1992.


McClendon is a Baptist, who nevertheless teaches at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Episcopalian) at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) of Berkeley, California.


Meilaender is Professor of Religion at Oberlin College.


Several articles on this general theme.


Argues that Virtue Ethics fails to provide a comprehensive account of the respective roles
of act-appraisal and person-appraisal in moral theory, and goes on to suggest how this relation should be understood.

Montague teaches at Western Washington University.


Written in Brazil, this work deals with moral theology and theology of liberation. This chapter considers virtue especially within the context of social ethics, particularly in the Latin American situation of systemic oppression.


Nielsen is professor of philosophy at the University of Calgary, Alberta.


Argues that much of the contemporary work on the ethics of virtue in Thomas Aquinas is deficient since it neglects or insufficiently considers the relation of Thomas’ virtue theory to his larger theological project. O’Meara seeks to give an exposition of Thomas’ thought which situates the treatment of the virtues in the context of God, God’s grace, and the relationships these have with human nature.


Discusses the way these terms function in the work of Stanley Hauerwas.


Discusses Confucian notion of a just society in contrast to John Rawls' well-known concept of "justice as fairness." Suggests that the Confucian concept might be both a challenge and a corrective to Rawls'. Good exposition of the importance of an ethics of virtue.


Analizza la dottrina tommasiana della gratitudine con frequenti richiami al pensiero di Cicerone e di Seneca.

The authors contend that the New Zealand Maori ethics is essentially a virtue ethics.

Perrett and Patterson are members of the philosophy department of Massey University, New Zealand.


______. "La vertu est toute autre chose qu'une habitude." Nouvelle Revue Théologique 82 (1960): 387-403.

Aussi en Le renouveau de la morale, 144-164. Tournai: Casterman, 1964.


Porter is professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.


Roberts holds that emotions enter into the structure of Christian virtues in especially central ways because of special features of the Christian virtues-system. He delineates four kinds of virtues: emotion virtues, behavioral virtues, virtues of will power, and attitudinal virtues. Roberts examines in depth an example of each of the last three virtues to indicate the structural dependency of these virtues on the Christian emotions.

Roberts is Professor in the Departments of Philosophy and Psychology at Wheaton College.


Contends that this debate involves more than a disagreement about normative ethics. Using an outline of William Frankena's understanding of the conditions of moral
reasoning, Schenk indicates where and why the disputed points in the debate naturally arise. Would be of some help in distinguishing characteristics of this debate, especially in terms of Frankena and Hauerwas.


Discusses authors, approaches and issues prominent in moral theology in the United States in the mid-1990's.


At this writing Selling was professor emeritus of the Catholic University of Leuven.


From the author supplied abstract: Spinoza conceived human freedom as a matter solely of rationality, but an understanding of the role emotion plays in moral virtue can lead one toward viewing emotionality as also essential to human freedom. A large part of human freedom consists in our tendency to give intrinsic importance to people or things outside ourselves and take them into our lives; this sense of importance, in rich and various ways, brings emotion into the center of our lives and our freedom as individuals.

Slote is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, College Park.

_______. "Is Virtue Possible?" Analysis 42 (1982): 70-76.


According to Slote a virtue ethics can help correct the lack of attention to the moral agent's own self, which "moral asymmetry" Slote maintains is found in Kantian moral theory.


Fearing an anti-intellectual strain in the current ethics of virtue, the author questions, in particular, assumptions in the work of Stanley Hauerwas. She criticizes his assumption that science claims to be value free, ahistorical or have access to a universal and certain truth. The author also takes issue with Hauerwas' contention that Christianity has a unique ethics. The article draws parallels between medical education, the study of ethics, health education, and education in virtue, concluding that as medical education is not to be confused with health education but feeds into it, so the study of ethics cannot be replaced by education in virtue.

As part of the "Notes in Moral Theology: 1990" Spohn reviews and discusses recent moral literature that stress aspects of the emotions, character, and virtue, and their involvement in morality. Two key concepts used in reference to the emotions are the criterion of "appropriateness" for moral assessments and strategies and the "education" of the emotions.

Spohn did his doctoral dissertation in Christian ethics under James M Gustafson at the University of Chicago on Jonathan Edwards' "Reasons of the Heart" and taught for many years at the Jesuit School of Theology-at-Berkeley, before taking a chair at Santa Clara University where he taught until his death in 2005.


*From the author’s abstract:* It is difficult for us to effectively diagnose our current character state such that we can follow Aristotle's advice to aim for the opposite extreme. The law can provide us a general standard, and the household strives to fill in the particular gaps inevitable to laws that must be universal. Neither, however, can ensure a proper diagnosis. Careful attention to Aristotle's discussion (in both his Metaphysics and his Nicomachean Ethics) of how the medical doctor generates health gives us a model we can apply to Aristotle's discussions of character virtues and vices in Book IV of Nicomachean Ethics. The medical doctor must identify the form of health and its various lacks, must have a sufficiently varied set of images by which to properly grasp these in the varied context of human beings, must attend carefully to the patient's impeded form of health, and must trace this impediment back to some cause on the basis of which she can act to correct the problem. By applying this model, we can more profitably employ Aristotle's discussions of individual virtues in our responsible attempts to diagnose and heal the characters of those who belong to us.

Stackle writes from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California.


At this writing Torchia was a postdoctoral fellow at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.


One of several articles in this number which treat Suarez.


In contra-distinction to John Rawls' formulation of two types of moral theories, those which define "right" in terms of good, and those which do not, Watson seeks to elaborate a fuller moral theory by retrieving the role and distinctive character of an ethics of virtue.

Watson is a philosophy professor at the University of California, Irvine.
Weithman, Paul J. "McDowell, Hypothetical Imperatives and Natural Law." American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 65 (1991): 177-187. Discusses John McDowell's "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (1978): 13-29, as well as other philosophers (e.g. Philippa Foot). Weithman holds McDowell's claim that "the motivational force of requirements of virtue can be adequately accounted for without appeal to inclinations of the virtuous person" is untrue for at least one claim of imperatives of virtue, i.e., imperatives which "express requirements of virtue arrived at through deliberation." p. 178.


Christian ethics which consider the character of Jesus' disciples must also be concerned with both virtues and with the feelings or affections appropriate to such a character. Explores the affection of sorrow in its connection with the virtue of charity, using Augustine, Kierkegaard, Calvin. Concentrates on Augustine's Confessions to show how one may come to sorrow well, and points out a significant sort of failure in discrimination in how one should feel.


Wogaman is Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.


One of several articles in this number devoted to the general theme, "Virtues and the New Casuistry."

Suggests the possibility of discerning "new" virtues, such as the virtue of regret, as an important development in virtue ethics theory.


Argues that Aristotle’s concept of virtue relies on practical wisdom while Confucius’ notion of *jen* (ren) focuses on filial love. Yu holds that Confucius can contribute to contemporary virtue ethics.

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Books on Character, Vision and Virtue


*From the publisher supplied description: Intelligent Virtue* presents a distinctive new account of virtue and happiness as central ethical ideas. Annas argues that exercising a virtue involves practical reasoning of a kind which can illuminatingly be compared to the kind of reasoning we find in someone exercising a practical skill. Rather than asking at the start how virtues relate to rules, principles, maximizing, or a final end, we should look at the way in which the acquisition and exercise of virtue can be seen to be in many ways like the acquisition and exercise of more mundane activities, such as farming, building or playing the piano. This helps us to see virtue as part of an agent's happiness or flourishing, and as constituting (wholly, or in part) that happiness. We are offered a better understanding of the relation between virtue as an ideal and virtue in everyday life, and the relation between being virtuous and doing the right thing.

Annas teaches at the University of Arizona.


*From the publisher’s blurb:* Taking Aquinas's neglected definition of virtue in terms of its "causes," this book offers a systematic analysis of Aquinas on the nature, genesis, and role of virtue in human life.


Berthoff proposes a conception of virtue, in the word's generative and root sense, as the essential subject matter of imaginative literature.  He uses the term, virtue, to connote the integrity of the force which comes from persons, societies, or texts in consequence of their accomplishing their distinctive ends.  Berthoff also outlines the notion of virtue from classical times to the present, and examines it as a formative presence in such major literary works as *Hamlet*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Charterhouse of Parma*, plus Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* as well as the lyric poetry of Shelley, Yeats, and Frank O'Hara.

Berthoff is the Cabot Professor of English and American Literature at Harvard University.


*Drawn from Fleming’s review:* Bowlin identifies a confusion between “acts of toleration” done from a variety of motives with the character trait of virtuous tolerance that enables a person to act tolerantly for right reasons under appropriate circumstances.  Bowlin draws upon Aquinas and Wittgenstein in the construction of his account of the virtue of tolerance.


Essays, initially published elsewhere, on a wide variety of issues, such as abortion, fetal tissue research, liberation theology, and terrorism. Burtchaell's two principal criteria are 1) the moral import of human actions resides in their capacity to develop or stunt the agent's character; and 2) the criterion for discerning moral character lies ultimately with the Christian community.


Capps uses Erik Erikson's life-cycle theory, as well as biblical narratives and the Beatitudes to indicate how the so-called "deadly sins" can be combatted by cultivating what Capps terms the "saving virtues." Capps links each of the traditional deadly sins with a particular stage of personality development, such as gluttony with infancy.

Capps is professor of pastoral theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.


Drawing on a variety of authors, such as Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, Shakespeare, Hume, Jane Austen, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Sarte, Casey argues that the classic virtues of courage, temperance, practical wisdom, and justice centrally define the good for humans, and that these virtues have been neglected in modern moral philosophy. Conflicting values of success, worldliness, and pride are active parts of our modern moral thinking and these conflicting values lead to tensions and contradictions in our understanding of the moral life.

Casey teaches at Cambridge.


Cessario, Romanus, O.P.  The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics.  Notre Dame: University

Instead of a voluntarist approach to theological ethics, which stresses norms and precepts, Cessario presents an ethics which aims to illustrate a moral life based on the cultivation of the virtues.


Questo volume è un contributo alla delineazione della coscienza assiologica dell'«essere persona in Cristo» come fonte di motivazione per l'agire. Vi è disegnato il personalismo etico cristiano, come essere e dover-essere di fede, carità, speranza, virtù che costituiscono i modi fondamentali della relazione con Dio. Non tre obblighi di vita cristiana e neppure tre atteggiamenti settoriali o categoriali, ma le tre espressioni strutturali della vita teologale: rivelative e decisive dell'essere e agire cristiano.


Looks at how daily moral decisions shape our lives and how these decisions in turn are shaped by the guidance of the Spirit, Scripture, interaction with community, and formation of conscience.


Farley examines both the Old and the New Testament and applies their teachings on moral character to the Christian life today. In the process, Farley critically reviews the current philosophical and theological interest in virtue, engages the Aristotelian, Thomist, and modern views of virtue, incorporates and responds to feminist concerns, and discusses the importance of the biblical virtues for our pluralistic age.


20 essays divided into an introduction and 5 parts: 1) Identity, Commitment, and Agency; 2) Character, Temperament, and Emotion; 3) Moral Psychology and the Virtues; 4) Rationality, Responsibility, and Morality; and 5) Virtue Theory. Many of the essays are concerned with aspects or critiques of Kantian morality.


Has several chapters which treat of virtue and character.


Two of the essays are published here for the first time: "Virtues and Vices," and "Are Moral Considerations Overriding?"; the others had been previously published elsewhere between 1957 and 1976, though these contain some minor updating. Besides essays on the virtues, moral arguments and values, Foot includes treatment of abortion and the double effect, euthanasia, plus essays on Hume, Nietzsche, and a "Reply" to Frankena. Reviewed by B. Vermazen in *Nous* 17 (1983): 117-121.


Good collection of articles covering a broad spectrum of philosophical positions on virtue ethics.

Galston takes issue with the views of Rawls, Dworkin, and Ackerman who would hold that the essence of liberalism is such that it should remain neutral concerning varying conceptions of life and the good. Galston's view is that the modern liberal state is committed to a particular understanding of the human good and to that end has developed characteristic institutions and practices, which in turn help guide public policy, justice, the virtues, etc.

Galston is a professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Maryland at College Park and Senior Research Scholar at the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy.

García de Haro teaches at the Istituto Giovanni Paolo II in Rome.

Gatti, Guido.  

Geach, Peter T.  

Glendon, Mary Ann and David Blankenhorn, eds.  

Gula, Richard M., S.J.  

Happel, Stephen and Walter, James J.  

Harak, G. Simon, S.J.  

In a twist on the virtue ethics debate Harak suggests that morality is best approached through a discussion of human passions which move the person toward God and life's joys. According to the author this approach requires a new model of human agency which can better take account of, and manage the passions. Thomas Aquinas and
Ignatius of Loyola provide two dialogue partners for Harak's discussion.


Looks at Paul as a guide in an examination of how the virtues that flow from Scripture can provide a lens to interpret Scripture.  The book also considers the theological virtues, natural virtues and vices, as well as social and sexual ethics.


Harrington is professor of New Testament and Keenan is professor of moral theology at Boston College.


Includes an essay by Tu Wei Ming on the Confucian sage.


Discusses the work of several English-language moral philosophers and theologians, including Iris Murdoch, Stanley Hauerwas, Philippa Foot, William Frankena, etc. in terms of the relevance of duty-centered vs virtue-centered ethics.


[Adapted from the publisher’s press blurb]: Argues that law can promote moral values even in pluralistic societies such as the United States. Using federal legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, she argues that the law rightly promotes the values of autonomy and solidarity. At the same time, she cautions that wise lawmakers will not enact mandates that are too far out of step with the lived moral values of the actual community. According to Kaveny, the law is best understood as a moral teacher.
encouraging people to act virtuously, rather than a police officer requiring them to do so. She applies this theoretical framework to the controversial moral-legal issues of abortion, genetics, and euthanasia, and also proposes a moral analysis of the act of voting, in dialogue with the election guides issued by the US bishops.

Kaveny is John P. Murphy Foundation Professor of Law and Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. She holds a JD and a PhD in religious ethics from Yale University.


Compilation of articles which have appeared earlier in *Church,* as well as eight new essays. Designed primarily for the non-specialist, and appropriate for individual reflection as well as adult education groups.

Keenan did his dissertation on the Thomistic distinction between good and right under Josef Fuchs at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Currently Keenan teaches moral theology at Boston College.


Arguing that the prevalence of evil presents a fundamental problem for our secular sensibility, Kekes develops a conception of character morality as a response. Kekes maintains that the main sources of evil are habitual, unchosen actions produced by our character defects and that we can increase our control over the evil we cause by cultivating a reflective temper. In addition to philosophical sources Kekes bases his arguments on the works of Sophocles, Shakespeare and Conrad.


According to Kilpatrick, the basic problem with moral education in our schools is that traditional character education has been abandoned in favor of a "non-judgmental" value approach, which focusses on the student's own ego and feelings to the exclusion of moral principles.
Kilpatrick is professor of education at Boston College.


Traditional scholastic account.


Revised doctoral dissertation done at Fordham University.  Kotva is a Mennonite pastor.


Essays organizes into three parts: 1) Ethical Theory and the Virtues; 2) Moral Psychology; and 3) Some Vices and Virtues.


According to the author, both Kantian and utilitarian traditions have largely ignored the ways in which decisions are integrated over time, and instead provide a "snapshot" model of moral decision.  Kupperman offers his own theory which he feels corrects a number of the deficiencies of classical and contemporary ethical theories.

Kupperman teaches at the University of Connecticut, Storrs.


The author argues that narrative does not just simply tell a story, but also has the capacity to reveal the virtuous life.  To this end he examines three texts: James Agee's A Death in the Family, Walker Percy's Love in the Ruins, and Robert Penn Warren's A Place to Come To, in order to demonstrate how a study of narrative structure, and particularly the narrative element character explores and reveals the life of virtue.  The work concludes with a discussion of how moral criticism has a place in post-modern literary reflection.


According to Macedo the liberal constitutional state promotes a particular set of "virtues," that accord with a commitment to the demands of public reasonableness.


From the promotional advertisement:  Whether in the cafeteria, classroom, or dorm lounge, questions abound on college campuses. Not only do students grapple with existential issues but they also struggle with ethical ones such as "Why be moral? " In Introducing Moral Theology, William Mattison addresses this question as well as grapples with the impact that religious belief has on day to day living. Structured in two parts, this unique text on Catholic moral theology covers cardinal virtues (temperance, prudence, fortitude, and justice) as well as theological virtues (faith, hope, and love). It is equipped with study questions, terms and their definitions, and illustrative case studies. Rooted in the Catholic tradition, this overview will also appeal to non Catholics interested in virtue ethics.

Mattison teaches at Catholic University of America.


Meilaender is Professor of Religion at Oberlin College.


Essays treat from a “MacIntyrean” perspective family, homo sexuality, abortion, pacifism, feminism, business ethics, medical ethics, and economic justice.


Argues that Thomas holds that prudence and the virtues have priority over natural law in moral understanding and decision-making. This is a revision of Nelson's doctoral dissertation done under Jeffrey Stout at Princeton. Nelson is dean of upperclass students at Dartmouth College.


Applies classical concepts of virtue to the premises of a modern democracy in order to create a new political theory, based not on a minimalist rules system, but rather on the character ethics of the classical Greek tradition. Includes a proposed model of organizational management applicable to various "communities": the state, business, professions, and voluntary organizations.


O'Connor is professor of religious studies at the University of California–Riverside and
was president of the Society of Christian Ethics in 2003.


Un piccolo manuale delle virtù etiche che definiscono il buon professionista.


Through an examination of a virtue-based ethics, this book proposes a theological view of medical ethics that helps the Christian physician reconcile faith, reason, and professional duty.


German originals: *Vom Sinn der Tapferkeit* and *Zucht und Mass*


*From the promotional advertisement*: This book, the last that noted moral theologian Servais Pinckaers, OP, wrote before his death, was conceived as a follow-up to his previous work *Plaidoyer pour la vertu* (An Appeal for Virtue) (2007) Pinckaers’ aim in Passions and Virtue was to show the positive and essential role that our emotions play in the life of virtue. His purpose is part of a larger project of renewing moral theology, a theology too often experienced as an ethics of obligation rather than as a practical guide to living virtuously. To this end, Pinckaers sketches a positive psychology of the passions as found in the biblical tradition, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, in pagan
authors and, especially, in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In addition to treating
the virtues as they relate to the concupiscible and irascible appetites, the will, and the
intellect, Pinckaers expands the discussion to include such unexpected topics as humor,
silence, the positive role of anger in the life of virtue, work, rest and leisure, sports, the
psychology of the virtues and, finally, the positive limits to a life of virtue in the useless
servant.


Pincoffs, Edmund. *Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics*. Lawrence KA:


A revised version of lectures given elsewhere, primarily the Stone Lectures delivered at
Princeton Theological Seminary in 2011. Porter’s thesis is that Thomas Aquinas’
theory of the natural law can only be properly understood in the context of his theory of
virtue. Justice in Thomas’ view goes beyond “objective standards for equity, fairness,
and obligation” to represent for humans “a full and appropriate development—a
perfection, in other words—of the capacity that it informs, the will” (p. ix). This closer
study in turn will offer additional insights into Thomas’ understanding of morality, moral
judgment, and the norms of maleficence.

Porter is professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

*The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Virtue*. Louisville:


1966.


Roberts, Samuel K. *In the Path of Virtue: The African American Moral Tradition*. Cleveland:

Sachs taught systematic theology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts and later at the Boston College School of Theology & Ministry before his retirement in 2016. This is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation.


From the promotional notice: Classical virtue ethics, exemplified by Aristotle (d. 322 BC), asked: what can we know of human nature and the virtues by which it is perfected in order to live well? Dominant ethical theories today generally avoid the question of human nature, taking deontological (non-metaphysical) or utilitarian (maximizing perceived social benefit) approaches. Elizabeth Anscombe's 1958 article "Modern Moral Philosophy," sparked a revival of virtue ethics. She critiqued contemporary ethical theories and exhorted her readers to recover central features of an Aristotelian approach. Jonathan Sanford finds that despite the common origins of contemporary virtue ethics in Anscombe, the literature varies widely not just in its scope but in its basic commitments. What exactly is contemporary virtue ethics? In Before Virtue, Sanford develops strategies for describing contemporary virtue ethics accurately. He then assesses contemporary virtue approaches by the Anscombean dual standard which inspired them: the degree to which they avoid the pitfalls of modern moral philosophy and the extent to which they exemplify a successful recovery of an Aristotelian approach to ethics. Sanford finds the results to be mixed. But an underlying and unifying theme emerges: an adequate virtue theory must incorporate at least preliminary answers to the questions of the nature of human beings, our ends, and the principles by means of which our ends are best pursued. It is only in light of recognizing the significance of those questions to moral philosophy that one can begin to appreciate the contribution of Aristotelian ethics. Ultimately, Anscombe's judgment about the need to eschew what she designates as modern moral philosophy is vindicated through a recovery of Aristotelian ethics that goes further in addressing those more basic questions than has most contemporary virtue ethics. The concluding chapters of this book contribute to that recovery.


Collection of several essays, many previously published elsewhere in German and/or English.

The Italian translation is of two books by Schüller: Die Begründung sitlicher Urteile. Typen ethischer Argumentation in der Moraltheologie, (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1980), and Der menschliche Mensch. Aufsätze zur Metaethik und zur Sprache der Moral, (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1982).


Series of essays which critique prevalent approaches to human good and virtue. Slote argues that current approaches oversimplify the subject, and that a more exact approach is needed.

Slote teaches at the University of Maryland.


Taylor seeks to use the ancient moral ideas of virtue, happiness, and pride in pursuing an ideal of personal excellence, rather than relying on concepts such as moral right and wrong, moral obligation, and the like.

Taylor is Leavitt-Spencer Professor of Philosophy at Union College.


From the publisher’s description: “engages questions central to feminist theory and practice, from the perspective of Aristotelian ethics. Focused primarily on selves who
endure and resist oppression, she addresses the ways in which devastating conditions confronted by these selves both limit and burden their moral goodness, and affect their possibilities of flourishing. She describes two different forms of "moral trouble" prevalent under oppression. The first is that the oppressed self may be morally damaged, prevented from developing or exercising some of the virtues; the second is that the very conditions of oppression require the oppressed to develop a set of virtues that carry a moral cost to those who practice them—traits that Tessman refers to as "burdened virtues." These virtues have the unusual feature of being disjoined from their bearer's own well being.”


Woodill is an Orthodox priest and the pastor of St. John Church in Alpha, New Jersey. His doctorate in ethics and systematic theology is from Fordham.


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