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## Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd, eds., VIRTUES AND THEIR VICES

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*Virtues and Their Vices*, edited by Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd. Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 528. \$120 (hardcover); \$40 (paperback).

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Following the pioneering work of luminaries such as G. E. M. Anscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre, the revival of philosophical interest in the virtues over the past half-century has given rise to a vast body of literature that is sometimes loosely categorized under the term “virtue theory,” but that represents a diverse array of research questions, methods of inquiry, and philosophical views. In the spirit of modern moral philosophy, many virtue ethicists have attempted to demonstrate that all moral concepts can be reduced to the notion of virtue, as opposed to duty or happiness. In a similar vein, some virtue epistemologists have appealed to the notion of virtue in an attempt to define knowledge and resolve other central epistemological questions. Other virtue theorists have turned to empirical psychology to assess whether people actually have (or can develop) moral and intellectual virtues.

In contrast to, though not necessarily in conflict with, these approaches to the study of virtue, a small but growing number of philosophers and scholars from other disciplines (notably theology and psychology) have engaged in careful analysis of individual virtues, vices, and related psychological states with the aim of contributing to a robust vision of human flourishing and of deepening understanding of the human excellences constitutive of the good life. *Virtues and Their Vices* exemplifies this approach to the study of the virtues and does more than any other recent work to advance it. In this collection, Timpe and Boyd have gathered together many of the foremost scholars of virtue to produce a volume notable not only for its impressive breadth—22 chapters, each written by a different author or partnership of co-authors—but also for the consistent clarity and depth of insight of each of its chapters. *Virtues and Their Vices* significantly clarifies and illuminates the virtues that foster human flourishing and the vices that detract from it. This volume would be an excellent introduction for students new to the study of the virtues, and it is essential reading for scholars already working on character and moral psychology.

The volume is largely structured around traditional groupings of the virtues and vices. It contains five sections covering (1) the cardinal virtues, (2) the capital vices and their corrective virtues, (3) intellectual virtues, (4) the theological virtues, and (5) the virtues across various academic disciplines. In the remainder of this review I will highlight some of the distinctive themes and strengths (I think it fitting to call them “virtues”) of



the volume that run across its various sections and I will conclude by noting some inevitable limitations (I certainly would not call them “vices”) of the volume that point toward areas ripe for further research.

One virtue of the volume that I expect will be of special interest to readers of this journal is the volume’s sustained interaction with Christian philosophical theology of the virtues and vices, especially as codified in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. The history of Christian philosophical-theological reflection on the virtues and vices provides a wealth of resources for contemporary reflection on moral character, but these resources often go untapped by philosophers and psychologists working in this area today. This neglect of engagement with traditional Christian thought on moral character is especially evident in contemporary philosophical reflection on the vices (or, rather, the sparsity thereof). As one piece of anecdotal evidence for such neglect, I was recently at a conference on the theme of virtue cultivation where one senior philosopher working in virtue ethics gave a talk on the need for a systematic philosophical analysis of the vices, a kind of DSM for disorders of moral character, and he was surprised to learn that Aquinas provides such a treatment of the capital vices in his *Summa* and *De Malo*.

Though the contributors to *Virtues and Their Vices* represent a variety of moral outlooks—some explicitly Christian, some not—the volume goes a long way toward bringing contemporary scholarship on virtues and vices (back) into conversation with the venerable history of Christian philosophical and theological reflection on the moral life. In addition to three chapters focused on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, as well as an excellent chapter on “Virtue in Theology” by Stephen Pope, several of the chapters on the cardinal virtues and the capital vices contain sustained critical engagement with Aquinas’s analyses of the traits (notably the chapters on prudence, fortitude, lust, gluttony, sloth, envy, and pride). In his chapter on pride, Craig Boyd also provides a helpful discussion of Augustine’s treatment of *superbia*. Likewise, Colleen McCluskey, Robert Kruschwitz, and Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung draw insightfully on the Desert Fathers of the early Christian church, such as Evagrius of Pontus and John Cassian, in their respective analyses of lust and chastity, gluttony and abstinence, and sloth. McCluskey also draws on the wisdom of the Desert Mother, Amma Sarah.

While many of the chapters in the volume interact with Christian philosophical theology, however, the volume is not (or at least not solely) aimed at analyzing the virtues and vices from the perspective of Christianity. In fact, another virtue of the volume is that many of the chapters present divergent and competing traditional understandings of their focal trait in order to clarify the nature of the trait. In his chapter on “Fortitude and the Conflict of Frameworks,” for example, Daniel McInerney compares the Northern courage depicted in *Beowulf*, Aquinas’s treatment of Christian fortitude, and the contemporary notion, lauded by Steve Jobs in his well-known Stanford University commencement address, of the courage to

listen to one's own "inner voice." McInerny also offers a helpful discussion, informed by MacIntyre, on how to adjudicate between competing moral frameworks in our search for the truth.

In another notable example of this comparative frameworks approach, McCluskey compares Aquinas's treatment of lust as a vice and chastity as a virtue with Simon Blackburn's recent analysis of lust as a virtue and chastity as a vice, noting that the two views are not as far apart as it might seem. Kruschwitz likewise provides an insightful comparative evaluation of the Stoic analysis of gluttony articulated by Epictetus's teacher, Musonius Rufus, and Aquinas's Christian analysis of the vice. Although Ruth Groenhout's chapter is not focused on a single virtue or vice, she engages in a careful comparative analysis of the frameworks of virtue ethics, Confucian ethics, and feminist care ethics in an effort to show that Confucian and care ethics do not fit very well within the category of virtue ethics in the way that a common taxonomy of ethical theories might suggest.

As should be apparent by now, the volume is deeply rooted in and indebted to historical philosophical treatments of the virtues and vices. Despite its careful and sustained engagement with the history of philosophy, however, the volume is not solely or even primarily a work in the history of philosophy of moral character. Yet another virtue of the volume is that it brings ancient wisdom about the virtues and vices into conversation with contemporary scientific and philosophical research. James Van Slyke, for example, draws on neuroscientific and psychological insights about the connections between emotion and cognition and the processes of imitation and simulation in order to better understand the formation of moral virtue and practical wisdom. He also offers a compelling virtue-theoretic critique of recent attempts to develop a reductive science of morality. In a different sort of engagement with contemporary neuroscience and psychology, Andrew Pinsent creatively draws on research on autism and prosopagnosia (the inability to recognize faces) to explain Dante's treatment of avarice as a particularly insidious vice. According to Pinsent, Dante recognized that avarice inhibits second-person relatedness, thereby causing a kind of "spiritual prosopagnosia." Though less engaged with contemporary science than the two chapters just mentioned, Robert Roberts's chapter on temperance provides a compelling and deeply insightful Aristotelian analysis of the virtue. Roberts then brings his analysis into conversation with current psychological understandings of addiction in order to reveal the morally significant differences between suffering from an addiction and having the vice of intemperance.

Two chapters that are particularly noteworthy for bringing ancient wisdom into conversation with contemporary philosophical research are John Greco's chapter on the intellectual virtue of *episteme* (which he identifies as a kind of understanding) and Jason Baehr's chapter on the intellectual virtue of *sophia* or wisdom. Both of these authors draw heavily on Aristotle in their development of neo-Aristotelian analyses of the intellectual virtues,

and they then clarify their analyses in conversation with contemporary epistemological debates.

One final virtue of the book that deserves mention is the way in which it illuminates the interconnections between the virtues and the vices. While the editors rightly raise concerns about the unity and reciprocity of the virtues theses in the introduction (pp. 9–11), certain virtues nevertheless seem to complement one another and even depend on each other for their fullest realization. Jay Wood highlights this interconnectedness of several virtues in his chapter on prudence and Roberts offers an insightful explanation of the interdependence of temperance and justice in his chapter on the former. Also, as the section heading “The Capital Vices and Corrective Virtues” suggests, the chapters on the capital vices carefully consider the virtues that oppose and help to correct the individual vices. While she does not focus directly on the interdependence of various virtues, in her chapter on trust, Linda Zagzebski presents a compelling case that many of the virtues of the intellect are dependent on epistemic trust. As she puts it, “Epistemic trust has a crucial role in intellectual virtue since many of the intellectual virtues are either enhancements of epistemic trust or constraints on it” (269). In a similar move with respect to the moral virtues, Pope argues that all of the virtues depend for their content or “form” on charity. Interestingly, though, he argues that it is possible to possess practical wisdom about matters pertaining to salvation (infused prudence) while lacking practical wisdom about the ordinary affairs of life (acquired prudence).

Having highlighted four notable virtues of this volume, I conclude by drawing attention to some limitations of the volume that point toward areas ripe for further research. The first has to do with the volume’s treatment of the intellectual virtues. The editors point out that their section on intellectual virtues diverges from Aristotle’s list by including a chapter on trust and no chapter on *techne* or *nous* (24), but the volume nevertheless reflects Aristotle’s treatment of the intellectual virtues by focusing on epistemic goods or achievements, as opposed to traits such as open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and intellectual respect. Of course, there is nothing wrong with following Aristotle’s characterization of the intellectual virtues. And Zagzebski’s chapter on trust does helpfully discuss several intellectual trait virtues. So, the absence of individual chapters on these virtues is no real flaw of the volume. Yet, readers looking for in-depth treatments of intellectual character traits will have to look elsewhere (e.g., Roberts and Woods’s *Intellectual Virtues* [Oxford University Press, 2007]).

A second limitation of the volume is that, given its focus on understanding the natures of the virtues and vices, it devotes relatively little attention to questions surrounding how to cultivate the virtues and eliminate the vices. Of course, reflecting carefully and deeply on the nature of the virtues and vices through the lens of robust moral outlooks can enhance the moral understanding constitutive of practical wisdom and inspire efforts

at virtue cultivation. *Virtues and Their Vices* thus importantly contributes to the project of moral formation. Moreover, some of the chapters in the volume explicitly discuss strategies and practices for cultivating the virtues and eliminating the vices (see, e.g., the chapters on temperance, gluttony, and sloth). Nevertheless, philosophers of virtue would do the academic community, the Church, and our society a great service by devoting more attention to understanding the processes of virtue formation. While it obviously cannot accomplish everything in the space of one book, *Virtues and Their Vices* points to the need for more research in this area. To its credit, it also provides excellent foundational treatments of the virtues and vices that should help guide such research for many years to come. (Disclaimer: The views expressed here are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of the US Air Force, the US Department of Defense, or the US government.)