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## Book Reviews

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DARYL KOEHN. *The Nature of Evil*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 310 pp.

Daryl Koehn seeks to define evil according to what he calls the “wisdom tradition.” Those belonging to this tradition, he says, include Plato, Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Baruch Spinoza, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Dante Alighieri, and Henry James (3). Unlike the moralists, of whom Koehn selects Aristotle as the paradigm example, the author claims those of the wisdom tradition agree that true evil is not “violative vice resulting from the corruption of our will or choice,” but “human suffering caused by our lack of self-knowledge” (2). Namely, each maintains that “[e]vil is frustrated desire stemming from our efforts to preserve a false conception of the self” (4). Koehn claims, furthermore, that if and when we find our objective self – and each of us has the inner power to do so – then we will overcome evil. The remainder of the book analyzes novels so as to elucidate this claim. Unfortunately, the author’s idiosyncratic readings of the texts that he chooses only further highlight the inconsistencies of his argument.

The book begins with an analysis of the dangers of the Aristotelian view of evil as vice. Aristotle’s Ethics is for Koehn apparently too optimistic, and neglects to see that “evil is a beast forever crouching at our door” (34), in the form of inner hypocrisy. Koehn gives five criticisms of Aristotle’s Virtue/Vice Ethics. Firstly, it is problematic that Aristotle emphasizes the crucial role of societal praise and blame in the quest to become virtuous. This factor takes away our individuality and breeds resentment and hypocrisy: we tend to act as others would have us act, and so cannot find or express our unique selves. Secondly, Aristotle’s localization of virtue and vice within the human agent emphasizes an individual power of causality but cannot explain evil on the greater level of a community – as in, for example, mass-hysteria and witch-hunts. Thirdly, Koehn says that Aristotle and moralists like him tend to take a juridical perspective (unlike “ironic thinkers such as Jesus, Nietzsche, Spinoza and Socrates”) (30), which leads to self-righteousness and lack of intersubjective and intercultural awareness. Fourthly, Aristotle’s view is inconsistent since it claims that the society of praise and blame can modify a person’s behaviour, but at the same time it claims that a vicious (or, for that matter, a virtuous) person cannot change his behaviour. (One wonders how Aristotle is, after all, so optimistic in Koehn’s view.) Finally, the reduction of evil to a vice makes evil foreign to us. We can no longer recognize it, seeing it as it is, in our “natural impulses and commonplace fears” (33).

Aristotelian Ethics, then, makes us into hypocrites, which for Koehn is to say that it makes us evil. Self-knowledge, he goes on to hold, is our only means of salvation. The remainder of the book comprises an exercise in literary criticism, wherein anti-heroes are analyzed as various forms of his newly-defined evil. Unfortunately, the result is a rather bland account. Koehn discusses Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, R.S. Stevenson's *The Strange Tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. His main thesis, that evil is the suffering resulting from loss of knowledge of one's objective self, does tend to hold so long as he is looking at novels. However, when he turns to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Plato's *Euthyphro*, and the *New Testament*, the work becomes more esoteric and less consistent. Perhaps it is significant that though Koehn claims that the wisdom tradition is not only Occidental, instead of going to texts from other traditions, he chooses to give rather extraordinary readings of key religious and philosophic Western texts. Rather than allowing the texts to speak for themselves, he reads his theory into them.

Thus, Dante's *Divine Comedy* becomes a quest for love of every part of the universe, simply because each part contributes to the whole. In loving the whole universe, he says, we love God, for God is "the creative and life-giving universe" (180). It is hard to identify Dante's vision in such a picture of pantheism: Koehn takes the very soul out of Dante's work. We are divorced from the drama of the human's search for the source of his very desire. At Koehn's hands, God becomes a system in which man alone takes pride of place. There is no personal, loving God to save us.

The chapter on Jesus, "Evil as Satanizing Self, Others, and God" makes the rather unfortunate claim that Jesus taught his own form of Pelagianism. Koehn does not use this term, but his claim that "Jesus' ministry has one main message: the only way we can escape the satanic dynamic of blaming others for our unhappiness is to realize true power lies within us" (193), certainly smacks of it. Jesus is portrayed as a "wonderfully creative" (198) practical political figure whose primary achievement can be exemplified by the so-called miracle of the loaves and fishes. Koehn re-interprets this event in a two-fold manner, saying that "the true miracle is that a huge and restless crowd does not panic and become a mob. It stays calm because Jesus rejects the demonic response of viewing the crowd as an enemy. Treated as friends by Jesus, the people befriend each other, and no one goes hungry" (197). No one goes hungry, that is, because the disciples had enough food all along to feed the multitudes (they had been selfishly hoarding – and keeping out of sight – more than enough to feed well over five thousand people), with leftovers to spare, and Jesus convinces them to stop being selfish and hand it around. "In fact," Koehn tells us, "there is so much bread left over that the disciples, using their lunch baskets, collect twelve basketfuls of leftovers" (197f.). This "numerical detail" (197) is the evidence the author seizes upon for his argument. He explains, "instead of looking to Jesus for a solution, all the disciples had to do was to open their twelve hearts and share their food" (198). The disciples needed nothing from Jesus except a reminder to be less selfish. Where the disciples always tended to satanize others, Koehn says, Christ reminded them to look first inside themselves, and find their inner power. Needless to say, neither Calvary nor the Resurrection can factor within Koehn's calculations.

These somewhat eccentric claims are hardly alleviated when the author analyzes Socrates in Plato's *Euthyphro*, at the end of which he gives us "A Double Approach to Resisting Evil." Firstly, we must "embark on a quest for self-knowledge and truth" (230). This much is expected, given Koehn's argument so far. The second point is more of a surprise: we should re-structure our education system, making sure that children learn enough pure and applied mathematics, so that they "learn to think in a disciplined way" (231). "If we are serious about resisting evil," Koehn continues later, "we need to consider ways to make public discourse more disciplined and eidetic" (231). One wonders how Koehn can say this, given his precursory criticism of the social aspects of Aristotelian Ethics. His emphasis on subjectivity alone, which is to have no recourse to public opinion, here becomes inconsequential. We should forget that society is whimsical and instead ensure that its public discourse has the virtues of mathematics. Then society will not lie to us about how to avoid evil, and we will find ourselves.

All in all, Koehn's discussion and approach proves incommensurate to the problem that he has undertaken. At the beginning of the book, he refuses to concede to Aristotle that human agency is at the heart of evil. And yet, his whole argument is that *we* are the ones who bring about evil, through our hypocritical refusal to find our objective selves. Where Aristotle would counter vicious evil with practice and inculcation of virtue, Koehn asks that we use our inner powers to overcome our frustrated desires (i.e. evil). Koehn admonishes that we need to look to ourselves, rather than to novels, to really find what we seek. He warns, "If we do not address this challenge, we will be swept out into [a] sea of anxiety, caught in a riptide of serial reading" (85). Koehn's efforts at analysis through novels and key texts may not make us anxious, but they do have the power to leave the reader somewhat bemused.

Renée Ryan  
K.U.Leuven

D. CLOUGH, *Ethics in Crisis. Interpreting Barth's Ethics* (Barth Studies Series), Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005.

According to many scholars, Karl Barth underwent a considerable change between the second edition of his commentary on *Romans* (1922) and his *Church Dogmatics*. Thus, the classical view on Barth expounded by Hans Urs von Balthasar claims that Barth's work on Anselm, *Faith seeking understanding* (1931), marks a decisive break with his former crisis theology, characterised by the use of dialectics. According to von Balthasar, this book represented the end point of Barth's conversion from dialectics to analogy, enabling him finally to arrive at a genuine, self-authenticating theology. This view could be easily supported by Barth's own statements about his intellectual evolution. However, in his *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Bruce McCormack had argued that the classical thesis that Barth's theology underwent a radical change in this period needs reconsidering. David Clough expands McCormack's thesis by demonstrating the significance of dialectic for

understanding Barth's theology up to the *Church Dogmatics*. The scope of the book is, however, more narrow, since Clough focuses on the ethical aspects of Barth's theology. Clough elaborates his thesis by means of a close reading and comparison of passages in *Romans II* and the *Church Dogmatics* that is always nuanced in its drawing of conclusions. Clough argues that the *Church Dogmatics* cannot be adequately interpreted without the concepts of 'crisis' and 'dialectic.' This is so for Barth's metaethical commitments (Chapter 4), his view on love and community (Chapter 5), and his ideas on war, peace and revolution (Chapter 6). According to Clough, Barth's ethics therefore remained an "ethics in crisis."

Besides this historical claim, Clough also has a clear systematic interest. He's eager to show that the crisis Barth proclaimed was not merely a local phenomenon in German theology at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the everlasting crisis of the possibility of theology in the face of a God who cannot be comprehended. Moreover, Barth's oppositional dialectic would be the solution to the crisis of theological ethics in the twenty-first century as identified by Zygmunt Bauman. According to Clough, a Barthian ethics would successfully avoid both the idolatry of ethical absolutism and the apostasy of ethical relativism. "Barth pictures the possibility of theological ethics as poised in unstable equilibrium, on the edge of a knife, between the necessity and impossibility of knowledge of God's will. Absolutist and relativist approaches are unable to maintain this precarious balance, and fall, one on each side, prematurely resolving the tension of the dialectic by claiming half-truths as final answers" (124). In contrast to Clough, I am not convinced of this Barthian solution. It does not only seem to us that Clough overemphasizes the 'positive' pole of the dialectic, the possibility of genuine human reflection in Barth's thought, but the oscillative character of the dialectic itself is at odds with the inevitable demand of systematization in ethics. Clough does try to defend Barth against the classical charge of occasionalism and of being unsystematic. But there still stands the possibility of the *Grenzfall* where God can command something that is contrary to all our ethical sensitivities. Therefore, the claim that the only solution to the 'crisis in ethics' is a 'crisis ethics' remains problematic according to me.

Jean Vanheessen  
K.U.Leuven

HEATHER WIDDOWS, *The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.  
190 pp.

In her book *The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch*, Heather Widdows goes beyond providing a mere outline of Murdoch's moral philosophy; she gives an excellent presentation of it. This area of Murdoch's work has been least commented upon, because most books that have appeared until now have been about Murdoch's life or the novels. Widdows treats with a certain amount of suspicion any reliance on the novels in terms of discovering Murdoch's philosophical position; nevertheless, she admits that the novels do provide some illumination of her philosophical ideas. But they also present a very different even conflicting picture by comparison with that of her philosophy.

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Widdows gives an account of Murdoch's philosophical insights from her whole career. Murdoch's moral vision is introduced in seven chapters. The first chapter "The Breadth of Iris Murdoch's Vision," is more of a general introduction to her life and the different influences on her. Chapter 2, "The Inner Life of the Individual," touches upon the importance of the individual and the concepts of "the self," "consciousness" and the "inner life" – key concepts to her philosophy. According to Murdoch, true morality is about becoming good, not about right action. Such a concept of morality necessitates a concept of the inner life which recognizes different qualities of consciousness, as right action derives from such a good quality of consciousness. Murdoch's opposition to and criticisms of the philosophies of her contemporaries and her own concept of the individual and the inner life are made very clear.

For Murdoch, moral experience plays an important role. She takes experience as a starting point of her moral philosophy. It is in and through one's experience of the world that Murdoch believes that moral values are recognized. Chapter 3 is dedicated to this issue, in the light of which Murdoch criticises other conceptions of moral philosophy. Murdoch argues for the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy. Widdows gives an account of her criticisms of those who maintain the dichotomy from its origins in Hume and Kant, through Wittgenstein's philosophy to its end point in Derrida's structuralism. The emphasis of this chapter is placed upon Murdoch's concept of moral experience and the type of moral philosophy which she believes derives from the recognition of the reality of moral values.

Chapter 4 is about the heart of Murdoch's philosophy, the moral value of the good. In this chapter, Murdoch's arguments for the good – arguments from perfection and her version of the ontological argument – are expounded and critiqued. The moral life for Murdoch is a quest from illusion to reality, in which the human being progresses from the natural state of egoism towards a clearer vision of reality and towards the good. Chapter 5 presents Murdoch's understanding of moral living, the nature of moral change, and tools which enable this change, especially her concept of attention and her inspirations for the quest: learning, art and love. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the place of art in the moral life, and to Murdoch's division of "good" and "great" art from "bad" or "mediocre" art. Murdoch defends good art from Plato's criticisms of art as illusion. Good art is presented as an aid to the moral life because it is truth-telling and reveals reality as well as, in a secular age, providing access to transcendence.

The final key theme of Murdoch's philosophy, namely, that of religion, is presented in Chapter 7. Because of the help that religion can give to the moral life, Murdoch claims that the religious imaginary as well as spirituality should be reclaimed by the secular world. Murdoch advocates demythologizing Christianity to produce a godless religion, which preserves both the individual and religious values, but without illusory, supernatural beliefs. Murdoch's view of the decline of religion, in addition to her picture of a godless religion and the creation of a mystical Christ who can aid the moral life, are the touchstones of this chapter.

To conclude, there is a final chapter where we find a variety of criticisms of the different themes of Murdoch discussed in the chapters throughout the book as a whole.

In this book, Murdoch is presented as a Platonist, even though Widdows stresses the fact that, at the very least, Murdoch's use of Plato is selective. Murdoch is interested in his moral philosophy only. I am not sure if I fully agree with Widdows here. To illustrate her concept of the good as both immanent and transcendent, Murdoch refers to Plato's picture of the cave. Taking into consideration that Murdoch is a Platonist, how can Widdows state that Murdoch uses the term "transcendent" in an Aristotelian sense, namely, that of transcending the categories?

Widdows describes Murdoch's unsystematic style, and states that it is no exaggeration to say that Murdoch is quite capable of moving from Plato, to Kant, to Wittgenstein, with references to Tolstoy, Shakespeare, and Virginia Woolf in the space of a few paragraphs. All of this makes Murdoch a difficult philosopher to read. This lack of clear argument is a constant criticism made of Murdoch's philosophy. Widdows does not see this as a disadvantage. She thinks Murdoch's unusual style could be regarded as a benefit – it is a result of her breadth of vision and her willingness to reintroduce into philosophy concepts which have been "analyzed away." Thus Murdoch presents a fuller picture of human being.

Widdows's suggestion that Murdoch is better described as a moral visionary than as a strict moral philosopher makes perfect sense. Murdoch presents a philosophy in which the individual can find no fulfilment. For Murdoch, the moral quest is always spiritual and transcendental, being an aspect of human lived reality. "Goodness, appears to be both rare and hard to picture" (*Sovereignty of the Good*, p. 53). Nevertheless, Murdoch's use of the ontological argument, replacing God with the Good, might be said to raise as many problems as it seems to avoid.

Murdoch's definition of great art is exceptionally small and, given the small number of examples, hard to comprehend and defend. The narrowness of Murdoch's definition of art seems to spring directly from her need to do justice to Plato's criticisms, which she accepts with regard to most art.

Murdoch is not religious herself, yet, in spite of her atheism, she has always been deeply interested in religion and the religious life. Murdoch is not concerned with the decline of religion as such but with the effect that the decline of belief has on our moral concepts and our understandings of what it means to be human. Murdoch's wish is to maintain some form of spirituality, the relationship between religion and art, and the role of religion in the moral life.

Christ becomes for her a mystical Christ, "a Christ who can console and save, but also is to be found as a living force within each human soul not in some supernatural elsewhere." It is hard to envisage how Murdoch pictures this mystical Christ. However, according to Widdows, we can gain some sense of what she intends by considering a passage from her novel, *Nuns and Soldiers*. Widdows asserts that Murdoch's fiction has explored what morality might mean in a world without God.

Murdoch connects morality directly to mysticism, stating that "the background to morals is properly some sort of mysticism" and that "morality leads naturally into mysticism and has a natural bond with religion." What Murdoch means by the religious is almost the same as her depiction of the moral life. Without a doubt, Murdoch's discussion of

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religion is narrow. She addresses a very small area of Christianity and theology. Her enlightenment conception of the inevitable decline of religious belief as a consequence of increasingly rational frameworks has proved false.

Moreover, her assertions that all human beings know in which direction the good lies seem over-optimistic, unrealistic, if they are taken apart from her picture of the human condition and the difficulty involved in escaping egoistic delusion. When Murdoch's vision is looked at in its entirety, her prescriptivism is overwhelming. She is proclaiming a moral way of life that begins to look more like an alternative belief-system, rather than a moral philosophy. According to Widdows, Murdoch, like Plato, can be accused of presenting a thoroughly elitist moral vision: escape from the cave is the prerogative of the few; the path to the good is hard; higher qualities of consciousness are available to the few not to the many, to whom higher qualities of consciousness are unrecognizable.

If Murdoch is really advocating a mystical morality, there is no reason why any form of religious or spiritual belief that helps the individual move away from selfish obsession and focus on the reality of others should not be deemed to be spiritual. However, it remains to be seen whether ethics in its current form fulfils Murdoch's wish for a philosophy which, like existentialism, could be a "philosophy that one could live by" and so fill the current philosophical void. Murdoch's moral vision, as we have already seen, is predominantly and fundamentally individual, making it difficult to transfer the insights of her moral philosophy to the wider global issues of modern ethics.

Apparently, Murdoch is wrong to claim that religious belief is impossible in the modern world. Likewise, Murdoch's claims that many believers do not believe literally, and already use biblical images simply as images, again appear arbitrary. Even believers who do use images as spiritual guides may still retain more traditional belief than is allowed in the Murdochian way of thinking. Murdoch seems to equate a lack of literal belief in the historical Jesus, or the Gospel stories, with a lack of belief in a personal God. Moreover, her assertion that even if all religion disappeared, spiritual experiences would remain, suggests that her wish to find a way for Christianity to continue is simply a practical move: that transforming the religion we have is likely to be easier and more truthful (because of the moral recognition already involved and because of the importance of continuity) than creating a new religion. Even if Murdoch's wish that Christianity become a non-literal, non-dogmatic, "godless religion" were successful, it is still questionable whether this would really be in continuity with religion in any real sense.

Sonja Zuba  
K.U.Leuven

ERIK J. WIELENBERG. *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. x + 193 pp.

In 1751, David Hume wrote in *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* that "[t]he only object of reasoning is to discover the circumstances on both sides, which are common to [the estimable or blameable qualities of men]; to observe that particular in which the

estimable qualities agree on the one hand, and the blameable on the other; and thence to reach the foundation of ethics, and find those universal principles, from which all censure or approbation is ultimately derived.”<sup>1</sup>

To find the universal principles that govern the moral values in a world devoid of God, and thence to reach the foundation of naturalist ethics in human society, Wielenberg opens his book *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* with the statement that he “will not argue for the truth of naturalism” and that his “project instead will be a conditional one: [to] suppose that naturalism is true” (3), a premise which will be stated repeatedly throughout the book as “if naturalism is known to be true”.

Starting from that premise, Wielenberg defends an ethical realism, arguing that there is a value/virtue system to which human beings can adhere to justify their actions without referring to a “supernatural commander.” To support his thesis, he critically examines four arguments for the claim by theists that, if God does not exist, then all human life would lack internal meaning. These arguments are: (1) the final outcome argument, (2) the pointless existence argument, (3) the nobody of significance cares argument, and (4) God as the source of ethics argument. On the basis of Richard Taylor’s reply to these arguments – creating your own meaning – and Peter Singer’s model implying that the final outcome argument places an undue amount of importance on the *final* state of affairs to which a life leads, that the presence of avoidable intrinsic evil in the universe takes the place of a supernatural commander as the thing that renders our lives internally meaningful, and that it does not matter if there is nobody who cares, the author rejects the first three internal meaning arguments. The fourth argument he refutes in accordance with Peter Singer’s proposition: to make your life worth living is to devote it to the reduction of avoidable pain in the universe, and since this can be done whether God exists or not, the absence of God does not render all human lives internally meaningless. In this way, the pursuit of the ethical life produces a lasting sense of fulfilment (hence, brings internal meaning to one’s life).

The naturalistic point of view, says Wielenberg, does not coincide with what is known as “Karamazov’s Thesis,” namely that if God does not exist, there are no ethical facts at all. On the contrary, he argues that naturalistic humility engenders charity, since humility involves recognition of the tremendous contribution of blind chance to the fates of human beings. This recognition should lead us to acknowledge an obligation to assist the less fortunate among us as this obligation is grounded *not* in any divine command *but* instead in the particulars of the situation (114).

Throughout his book, Wielenberg sets naturalistic situation ethics against theistic dogmatic ethics. Sometimes both situations overlap. In chapter 3, part 5, concerning divine justice, self-sacrifice, and moral absurdity (89–94), he claims that, in a given situation, atheism and theism both can inspire horrendous behaviour. As an example of moral absurdity inspired by atheism, he quotes a report by Richard Wurmbrand in which a Communist torturer makes the following statement: “There is no God, no hereafter, no punishment for evil. We can do what we wish” (Karamazov’s Thesis at its extreme). On the other hand, the author gives a historic example of the moral absurdity inspired by theism. It is the tale of the massacre of every single occupant of the French city of

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Béziers in 1209. Abbot Arnald-Amaury, pope Innocent III's hand-picked leader of the Albigensian Crusade, cried "Kill them all! God will recognize his own!" as his army killed some 10,000 to 20,000 people, with just over 200 estimated to have been Cathars. The fact that this seems so horrendous, so unethical, and so immoral proves that there is a value/virtue system in the cosmos with or without God. And Wielenberg makes the point that even in a Godless universe self-sacrificing action is possible since one has the possibility to forego the ultimate fate one deserves to help others. He puts us on guard, however, by telling us that, if justice cannot be had on earth, in a theistic universe one recourse for the believer is to put matters directly in God's hands, while in a Godless universe where there is no divine justice, justice must be obtained in *this* world, so one should be more cautious about the taking of human life.

How, then, can we be moral? The answer is a complex one. In a Godless universe, certain actions may be morally obligatory and others may be morally wrong, but there is no reason for human beings to be particularly interested in which are which. The atheist David Hume maintained that morality and self-interest generally coincide, not because justice is meted out in the afterlife, but because being moral is beneficial in *this* life. The Russian writer and physician Vikenty Vikentevich Veresaev (1867–1945), who was a friend of Tolstoy, wrote in his influential book *Living Lives* [*Zhivaia zhizn'*] – an analysis of the work of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy – that the meaning of life, for Tolstoy, was life itself, not goodness, which is but one manifestation of life.<sup>2</sup>

Wielenberg advances the thesis that the extent to which self-interest and the demands of morality coincide is a contingent matter (129) and that we have to live our lives here and now. "In a universe," he explains, "in which human beings are largely at the mercy of morally indifferent forces beyond their control, one prominent kind of achievement is *taking control*" (118). Therefore, we should "increase the understanding of how the brain works and how it is responsible for our mental states" (129). He then combines this proposition with an evolutionary point of view: "Perhaps evolution will eliminate weakness of will if it is given enough time" (135). At this point, Wielenberg endorses evolutionary ethics. "In a naturalistic world, the human mind is fully a product of blind forces at work over countless eons. There is nothing sacred about its design; it is not part of a divine plan, or a divine construction that we are forbidden to manipulate" (141). In fact, Wielenberg argues that morals or ethics are universal in human societies because they are based in human biology. This is reminiscent of Larry Arnhart's work *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature*.<sup>3</sup> Where Arnhart advances the Darwinian thesis that the purpose of morality is the survival of the group without making claims about immortality of the soul, or about rewards or punishments in the afterlife, Wielenberg states that in a naturalistic universe there is no afterlife, and so any internal meaning that a human life possesses is to be found in this earthly life, and he recommends putting science, especially neuroscience, to use in the Platonic quest for a reliable way of making people virtuous. He concludes his book *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* with "Long live the ethical revolution." Should this conclusion be read "Long live evolutionary ethics"?

Wielenberg has written a worthwhile book, and he has done this with verve. His arguments are often provocative. It is his way to make people reflect on what he writes. But, most of all, *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* is, as is stated in the synopsis on the back flap of the book, “a tour of some of the central landmarks of th[e] underexplored territory” of the value/virtue system in a universe devoid of God.

Luc Aerts

NOTES

1. David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 76-7.
2. Cf. Donna Tussing Orwin, *Tolstoy's Art and Thought 1847-1880*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 124-5.
3. Cf. Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature*. Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1998.

MARVIN T. BROWN, *Corporate Integrity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 200 pp.

Marvin T. Brown's latest book deals with corporate integrity. It is meant as a workbook or handbook, and is very insightful and explicative. Every chapter is structured well and ends with a few questions. With a book about corporate integrity, Brown is dealing with a hot item. Recent years have revealed a growing interest in organizational and business ethics. Corporate integrity is one of the concepts frequently used in the current debate on the social and environmental responsibility of business corporations.

The introduction of the concept of integrity in the field of business ethics does not appear out of the blue. In fundamental ethics, the concept of integrity has been linked with the authenticity, accountability, and responsibility of the moral person. Like in fundamental ethics, the concept of integrity covers a large spectrum of different meanings. Original in the approach of Brown is that he does not only take into account the most common elements of corporate integrity. The concept of corporate integrity he describes is a relational concept, or, what he calls in the introduction, “a model of organizational ethics that is truly integrative.”

The meaning of integrity Brown describes is based on “wholeness.” With wholeness as the central element, other meanings of integrity find their place in the integrity puzzle: integrity as consistency, integrity as relational awareness, integrity as pursuing a worthwhile purpose. The analysis of Brown integrates a lot of the literature on the topic and takes up different well known philosophical insights in a new perspective. In his description of integrity, it comes to the fore that integrity itself is an ethical principle and a good starting point to talk about organizational ethics. Applied to corporations, integrity gives a sketch of a challenging multidimensional reality of which the cultural dimension is the most important. The challenge is plural: corporations should be able to deal with differences, should aim for relational wholeness in interpersonal relationship, have a responsibility to nature, etc.

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So, corporate integrity includes corporate responsibility. The corporation is a part of society and needs to answer to the demands addressed by society. A new reading of Aristotle's ethics as a public, civic ethic describes the cooperation as a member of the civic realm. With this reading of Aristotle, Brown both overrides classical corporate responsibility theories and common Aristotelian approaches. In the new Aristotelian approach, suggesting relations as well as communication as important elements, a contextual perspective is used that can examine and change communication patterns.

How integrity is related with the other dimensions is worked out dimension by dimension in the next chapters of the book. In the elaboration of different elements, it is clear that Brown has a lot of expertise in the field. The concept of integrity is dealt with both inside the corporation and in relation with the outside, with society as a whole. The book of Brown broadens the perspective, is didactically well structured, and can count as one of the best introductions I have read so far on the concept of corporate integrity and responsibility. I hope this book will be an aid for thinking about and communicating the close relationship between civil society and corporations, and their responsibility one towards the other.

Tomas Folens  
K.U.Leuven

VAN HOOFT, STAN, *Understanding Virtue Ethics*. Bucks: Acumen, 2006.

The clarity of thought, lucid writing style, and logical structure which characterise Van Hooff's book make it an accessible and stimulating read, not only for budding philosophers, but also for those working in the areas of applied ethics, bioethics, and theological ethics. The lecturer or expert who reads this book will find an invaluable resource for teaching and, indeed, revision of some of the complexities of Aristotelian virtue ethics. The novice will find a user-friendly text, together with tables explaining philosophical theories of virtue and questions for reflection and revision that are tailored to suit the student's need for clarity and simplicity. Indeed, the author's choice of structure follows a logical thought-process that guides that student from basic questions relating to virtue theory to more complex and sophisticated ones. The gradual progression of Van Hooff's book corresponds to the way students learn: it provides the student with the basic nuggets of information they will need to engage with the more demanding chapters that appear later in the book. This is admirable indeed.

Chapter one provides a detailed and rather impressive account of the methodological differences between virtue and duty ethics. Van Hooff points out that although both approaches attempt to understand how human beings ought to behave, how we prescribe and justify norms, and assess how moral rules fit into our lives, they differ in the way they fulfil these tasks. Duty ethics focuses primarily upon duties towards the other. It is wrong to lie, to steal, or to kill because of the harm it does to others. Moral rules are there to protect the other at all costs. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, is not as clear-cut: it emphasises the character of the individual who is acting. For the virtue ethicist, it is wrong to lie, not only because of the hurt it could cause another, but also because

being honest is an admirable trait to possess. The point of being virtuous, therefore, is not “so much that it helps us fulfil our moral obligations towards others—although they may indeed have this benefit—but to ensure that we ourselves flourish in a variety of ways” (10).

Van Hooft’s clear definition of both duty and virtue ethics provides a sound platform for the in-depth discussion that follows. Showing an unmistakable support for virtue theory, as opposed to a purely deontological approach to ethics, Van Hooft alerts the reader to the advantages of virtue ethics. Over and above the need for rules and principles, the ethics of virtue asks, “what should I be?”; “what characteristics are admirable?”; “how can I achieve excellence?” Unlike rules and principles, virtue ethics takes account of the ethical development of the person acting, and his/her internal state is considered to be an essential component influencing moral action.

But, as Van Hooft rightly points out, much of what makes up our character is influenced by our upbringing, the behaviour that we observe around us, and our own efforts at self-formation (13). In this respect, virtue ethics is much more complex than duty ethics, and it can account for the fact that human beings are enmeshed in a tradition, a community, a family, with social ties and relationships that impact on development, personality and behaviour.

This is similar to Alasdair MacIntyre’s belief that moral development does not take place in a vacuum but in a tradition that is complex and highly significant for the ethical development of individuals, especially children. A good character is not acquired *ex-nihilo* but through the received wisdom and stories of tradition and the examples of those around us who exemplify the virtues (Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, London: Duckworth, 1985, 201ff.). Van Hooft’s work shows a distinct MacIntyrian flavour when he says that the virtuous agent looks at others as a source of guidance, rather than blindly obeying abstract and metaphysical rules and principles that are thought to be purely objective (18). Moreover, Van Hooft is of the opinion that the virtuous agent is motivated to act virtuously because he/she wants to be certain type of person. Thus, in contrast to duty ethics, the obligation is internal (reasons internalism) rather than external (reasons externalism), and decisions will not be entirely dictated by a norm; they will also be expressive of the individual’s judgement, experience, character and virtue (22).

This is a significant point for understanding virtue theory in general, because it emphasises the fact that virtue ethics requires the agent to take responsibility for his/own moral decisions. As Van Hooft puts it, “if it were true that we could just deduce our decisions from general principles or act merely in obedience to moral laws, then we could assign the responsibility to those laws” (22). Moral maturity requires individuals to know and to understand how and when to act morally, and, perhaps more importantly, it expects the agent to know what to do when faced with moral dilemmas or a situation where two rules conflict. It is difficult to see how the deontologist would cope in a similar situation.

Indeed, the place of emotions in virtue ethics is another reason why it may be seen as an attractive alternative to a purely rule-based ethic. Virtue theory considers that the

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person is involved and invested in the situation, and that he/she needs emotions to empathise with others and imagine their difficulties. The following of norms and principles does not allow for this kind of hermeneutic. Moral development is strictly linear, rational, objective and foundationalist. Virtue ethics, however, is hermeneutical or circular in method: it is learned in community; it requires emotion and experience; we can learn from looking at other people who are considered to be virtuous; and our understanding is always evolving and creative, never complete.

The creativity which virtue ethics permits is among the reason why Van Hooft deems virtue ethics methodologically superior to duty ethics. Because individuals find themselves in unusual and complex situations, none of which are identical, moral development must allow for creativity and innovation. These factors, which are as much instinctive and bodily as they are intellectual, will enable agents to think for themselves in dilemma situations. Moreover, creativity is necessary to offer a critique of the dominant standards or relativistic stances adopted by a community. As Van Hooft puts it, "One cannot step outside the hermeneutic circle in order to establish a moral-view from nowhere, but one can critique the dominant values and standards of one's community from the creative and sensitive insights that arise from one's character as shaped in specific communities" (41).

Of course, the community's role in the articulation and practice of the virtues is only one aspect of what is involved in becoming virtuous; possessing the Aristotelian desire to be good and to reach the goal of goodness (*eudaimonia*) is also important. Van Hooft's second chapter aims to provide its readers with the Aristotelian roots out of which much of our ethical theory is derived. The author discusses the vegetative (bodily), appetitive, deliberative and contemplative levels of the Aristotelian moral agent, with a view to highlighting the distinction between the *desiring* and the *intellectual* functions of the person (cf. 53ff). This distinction is significant because it reminds us that being virtuous involves a commitment and a desire to do good as well as the ability to make decisions which reflect that fundamental desire. It is only when our character virtues correspond to our intellectual virtues, and vice versa, that one is presumed virtuous.

Following this distinction is a rather interesting point which is often overlooked in virtue theory: we must be trained to be virtuous. This is the case because we are not born virtuous, therefore we must go through a process, as Van Hooft notes, of being "rewarded for doing the virtuous thing and punished for doing the vicious thing" (57). In this way, we acquire the habit "without, at first, knowing what the virtue is and without having the disposition to act virtuously. The first steps towards virtue are the result of encouragement and training" (57).

In recent years, one notes the dominance of virtue theory in almost every aspect of ethical reflection and scholarship. In some cases, however, this is at the expense of any attempt to account for how the virtues are learned, or for the non-reflective way in which ethical development and formation begins. Children need to be taught what virtue is, and although the notion of a super-ego is rejected by some scholars as being an overly simplistic way of describing the early stages of moral growth, its value should not be dismissed. The primary means of educating children about virtue is through training,

however it is explained or construed. The hope is, of course, that the child will move on from this stage and develop a mature and prudent attitude to decision making. For, as Van Hooft explains, the Aristotelian account of the virtues does not accept that being virtuous involves demonstrating an outward compliance with accepted standards of behaviour (58); it is also an internal matter that involves desire and the ability to judge prudently complex situations. “The fully virtuous person certainly has dispositions to avoid extremes, but he also has the discernment to see what a given situation calls for. The younger person who is not yet fully formed in all the virtues and is still struggling to acquire the virtues of character can only depend on the notion of virtue as a mean and on rules of thumb for finding what the mean is” (61).

An equally commendable element in chapter two of Van Hooft’s book pertains to his treatment of prudence (*phronesis*). Along with stressing all the common features that scholars have come to expect of an Aristotelian account of prudence, Van Hooft alerts us to the fact that to be prudent involves not only the intellectual ability to make good decisions but the perception to know implicitly what is required in a given situation. Prudence involves the skill of perception and the ability to see immediately what is ethically relevant and what kind of action should flow from a virtuous choice (68). The author sums it up very well indeed: “You could be a well-read and wise philosopher and be able to articulate and justify a great many important moral principles, but unless you see how these principles apply in everyday life, and act on them, it will be empty rhetoric” (68).

After highlighting the appeal and significance of Aristotelian ethical theory, Van Hooft invites his readers to consider some of the philosophical traditions that came to dominate ethical and philosophical discussion of the twentieth century. His main focus is upon the works of David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Emmanuel Levinas. Beginning with Hume’s work, Van Hooft moves from an analysis of emotions and subjectivity in ethical thought and Nietzsche’s ethics of power and self-promotion to Levinas’ emphasis on the justice that is due to the other. Although each theory has its advantages—for instance, Hume’s work suggests that feelings are significant in ethical matters, and Nietzsche’s emphasis on humanity’s competitiveness is a realistic account of the moral agent—it seems that Levinas’ thought is more balanced than the other two. For Levinas, our experiences of other people transform our existence and our image of who we are. Because of others, our self-project is no longer Nietzschean, or Hume’s empathetic character; rather, it is the ethical call to respect the other wherever possible. Interaction with others requires an ethical response; we must be polite if we are to go about our daily lives. When we say “please” and “thank you” we demonstrate an ethical reverence for others. When we listen to others, we show a genuine care for the speaker.

Thus, for Levinas, we are not merely abstract thinking agents, but agents in relationships. Our fundamental stance towards the world is not defined by placing ourselves at the centre, but by recognising that we are required by nature to respect others. This means that virtue is not just a habit but something that is ingrained on our very natures as human beings. Caring about others, therefore, is an aspect of our being that is as

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primordial as our self-project. Thus, Van Hooft successfully demonstrates the fact that Levinas' view of humanity can mediate between Hume's subjectivist self and Nietzsche's narcissistic self.

This chapter is an impressive one. Van Hooft writes with ease and confidence about some of the most complex philosophers of Western thought, and ones which students of philosophy and ethics often find difficult. The structure of Van Hooft's analysis is extremely helpful because it allows the student to move gently through the exposition, analysis and critique of these major thinkers. Although some might argue that the discussion of Hume, Nietzsche, and Levinas is not substantial enough for philosophy undergraduates, it will certainly provide an invaluable, clear introductory text.

The same may be said about chapter four. Van Hooft's discussion of Paul Ricoeur's interpretation of the ethical aim is both lucid and stimulating. It discusses how the individual's understanding of virtue translates into relationships with significant others and the wider social and political community as social justice. Although it is lamentable that the majority of the Anglophone student cohort is monolingual, and some undergraduates find it almost impossible to read Ricoeur's work in the original, Van Hooft's chapter will help to overcome these difficulties. With an excellent table followed by a commentary explaining Ricoeur's understanding of the ethical aim, the author succeeds in capturing the sophistication of Ricoeur's theory of justice without estranging his reader. This ought to make Van Hooft's monograph very popular indeed.

The final two chapters of Van Hooft's work deal with the more specific issues, such as "which virtues are most important?"; "what is the connection between virtues?"; "are they interconnected or based on a primary virtues?"; "how can they be used in professional life?"; "how can the virtues assist us in our individual professional roles?" Again, the distinctive feature of these chapters is Van Hooft's talent for writing clear and readable prose to communicate some of the most fundamental human questions. Along with recommending it to my undergraduate ethics students, this book is one that I will consult and use again. The style, depth of analysis, questions for discussion, and the clarity of exposition of this book give the academic community an excellent model on which to base future introductory texts that discuss what are often perceived to be complex philosophical subjects. The series editor should be very proud indeed.

Ann Marie Mealey,  
Trinity and All Saints, University of Leeds (UK)

MCGREGOR, JOAN, *Is it Rape? On Acquaintance Rape and Taking Women's Consent Seriously*, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005.

McGregor's important work focuses on the way in which rape is conceived in legal practice. Generally understood as non-consensual sex between strangers, where violence and extreme physical force are the means used by the aggressor to obtain sex, the author attempts to renegotiate the legal definition of rape to include cases of non-consensual sex between acquaintances. She offers a compelling reinterpretation of the term, where

manipulation, fear, coercion, and intimidation, not merely physical force and violence, are significant factors in determining the nature and gravity of the offence.

The layout of McGregor's book makes it an accessible and stimulating read. She begins by highlighting the inadequacies of the criminal law system, arguing that 'date-rape' is one of the most common, but unreported, crimes in America. Fear of violence, manipulation, and the threat of not being believed by the authorities are among the many reasons why women in the US fail to report 'date-rapes.' In short, the issue at the heart of McGregor's analysis of rape is that neither society nor women consider non-consensual sexual intercourse with an acquaintance as a criminal offence. The law, according to McGregor, does not recognise cases where women might be scared to resist; in other words, in circumstances where saying "no" is interpreted as saying "yes," because the victim did not forcefully resist.

Having outlined the need to expand current rape laws, McGregor's second chapter reinforces further the need for change regarding rape convictions. She provides a well-researched and detailed account of the history of rape law. Her analysis shows that traditionally, the law has protected men's interests in sexual access and against prosecution. More shocking still is the fact that statutes and courts have employed assumptions and standards about rape, consent, force, reasonable belief, and resistance that failed to consider the female perspective. Women react to force, or the threat of force, differently than men. When faced with the threat of being raped, therefore, women often choose not to resist out of a fear of being subjected to a more brutal assault. This, however, does not mean that they consented; it is still rape, whether or not there is evidence of physical opposition. Thus, argues McGregor, although so-called submission was traditionally interpreted as consent—because the woman did not put up a reasonable fight—it must be remembered that "physical resistance might be a male reaction to attack, but not necessarily a typical female reaction. Men are socialized to fight, to respond physically; women are not and may respond by, for example, crying or 'freezing'" (37).

It is for this reason that McGregor believes that rape laws should not be gender-neutral, as men and women react differently to the threat of rape or sexual assault (cf. 37ff). While law understands a "reasonable person's" reaction to these situations to include force and extreme physical resistance, this is a predominately male reaction to an unwelcome situation, not necessarily a female one.

Following the historical analysis of rape laws and their weaknesses, the author introduces her own argument, that is, that rape convictions should not be based solely upon the presence of physical attack on a the victim by a stranger, but should attend to *how* and *whether* consent was obtained. In this way, McGregor succeeds in expanding the narrowly construed definition of rape as a violent attack between strangers to include non-violent, non-consensual rapes between acquaintances.

Respect for the woman's autonomy is crucial to McGregor's argument, and failure to secure free and informed consent, therefore, constitutes rape. The advantage of the author's newly conceptualised understanding of rape is that its complexities can now be considered; date rapes, acquaintance rapes, incidences of manipulation and coercion to obtain sex are now seen in a new light. "No" no longer means "yes"; the absence of force

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no longer entails the presence of consent; women's autonomy is no longer undermined; and rape laws are no longer gender-neutral (in favour of a male perception of rape).

McGregor's argument is a significant one, and the final chapters of her book are where she is at her best. The renegotiation of the legal definition of rape in terms of the act of consent between persons, rather than mere physical force, permits consideration of cases where the victim could not consent. McGregor refers to internal and external constraints that undermine the rational, free action of consent. The former includes coercion, manipulation, and deception, whereas that latter refers to cases where drugs and alcohol affect the agent's ability to access intelligently and rationally the situation in which the possibility of consensual and non-consensual sexual intercourse arises, mental retardation and illness, and being underage. McGregor's fundamental point is that "sexual autonomy requires the individual to have quite sophisticated abilities and understandings to make choices consistent with their well-being" (160). Where these abilities are undermined or temporarily incapacitated, argues McGregor, the law should not presume that consent was obtained (160 ff.).

Of course, while McGregor's argument for establishing the *actus reus* of rape in terms of consent is a convincing one, it comes under scrutiny when one considers the perspective of the accused. Rape requires a particular mental state about the crime committed. Indeed, guilt for a crime requires the defendant to have a specific mental state (*mens rea*), which signifies what he actually believed or understood at the time of the crime. A person cannot be convicted for something he/she didn't know or believe was wrong. It is at this point that McGregor introduces the common question concerning consent and sexual conduct: Can "yes" mean "no"?

According to McGregor, "To engage in sex on the basis of an unreasonable belief [i.e., that the victim was saying 'no' because she was enjoying herself] is to omit to take reasonable care that we can demand of individuals when engaging in conduct that has substantial risks associated with it" (201). Unreasonable beliefs about sexual acts arise when the defendant shows no regard for the consent or sexual autonomy of his partner. Apart from cases of insanity or mental retardation, McGregor believes that men should take responsibility for obtaining consent from their partners, while women should ensure that they make their views and desires clear. This will ensure that "no" always means "no," and that outrageous fantasies about sexual conduct will no longer cloud our views about sexual consent and respect for sexual self-determination (cf. 198ff).

Whatever one's views are about sex and its moral and lawful regulation, McGregor's position is crystal clear: Anyone wanting a sexual relationship should take responsibility for obtaining and giving consent. Words and actions are not toys; they are the means through which human beings can express and fulfil their needs and desires. However, the freedom to express sexual desire carries with it the responsibility to obtain consent from another person. It is only when rights and responsibilities are considered together that we can, as McGregor illustrates, "teach males and females about sexuality in ways that are to be celebrated" (247).

*Is it Rape?* deserves to be read by theologians, lawyers, sociologists, and anyone interested in the ethical and legal questions surrounding rape. McGregor takes a very

serious issue and overturns any narrowly construed ideas about how it should be interpreted. This is an admirable contribution, not only to the *Live Questions in Ethics and Moral Philosophy* series, but also to the all too often neglected victims of rape, whose story needs to be told in a new light. McGregor's work is an effort to speak for those who feel they no longer have a voice, and awakens us to the complexities of human behaviour, desire, and sexual interaction that can both create and destroy human persons.

Although some might contend that determining rape cases on the basis of consent could be subject to exploitation, especially in cases where an ex feels betrayed or hurt by a relationship and decides to deny having consensual sex with her partner, McGregor's work gives us much to think about when analysing the moral and legal consequences of rape. Apart from certain lapses in proofreading and spell checking, where "consensual" often appears as "consensual" [sic] (cf. pp. 1, 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 61, 62, 190, etc.), and some incidences of wayward punctuation, *Is it Rape?* is a book that few would dare to write but ever fewer would succeed. Neither can be said of Joan McGregor.

Ann Marie Mealey,  
Trinity and All Saints College, University of Leeds.