

Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd, eds., *Virtues and Their Vices* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014. x + 510 pp. \$112.94).

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One of the more important areas of retrieval in contemporary work in ethics and moral theology is the discussion of virtues and vices in the tradition. Our contemporary discussion has not limited itself to generic retrieval—simply taking ancient wisdom and applying it wholesale today—but is a creative reworking of ideas and traditions in conversation with ancient thinkers. Thomas Aquinas is perhaps the most important representative invoked in this discussion, with a specific focus on his retrieval and development of Aristotle. In this particular volume, readers are given an excellent introduction into this conversation, and are exposed to the kind of constructive work being done. The essays, by and large, do a fine job of historical discussion balanced with contemporary issues/retrieval, that is interwoven into the author's own constructive agenda. In this sense, this volume would be a perfect way to start one's research on the virtues and vices, but it would also serve as a helpful outline of contemporary thought on the topic. To further add to the usability of the volume, it is helpfully broken down into five major sections: I. The Cardinal Virtues; II. The Capital Vices and Corrective Virtues; III. Intellectual Virtues; IV. The Theological Virtues; and, V. Virtue Across the Disciplines. These sections seek to address central aspects of the traditional discussion of the virtues and vices that, nonetheless, create room for our own contemporary retrieval and development. Importantly, the chapters do not seek to assert a single, uniform interpretation of the virtues and their vices, as if this volume were a constructive argument for an overarching view on the topic. Rather, one sees tensions and rifts within the authors, but these points of conflict prove to be informative and clarifying rather than muddying the issues and creating confusion.

The above provides recommendation enough, and the volume deserves it. It fills a major lacuna in the field, and will be a helpful resource for students and researchers alike. It would be impossible to go through all of the chapters, or even the sections, in a short review; and like all edited volumes there is a wide range of quality and focus. Therefore, in light of the focus of this journal, and the strand of virtue tradition developed in this volume, it proves helpful to focus on the theological issues at hand. The editors' self-description is philosophical, and they have included a chapter in the final section on theology and the virtues, written by Stephen Pope. This distinction, between philosophy and theology, creates a rather odd tension in the volume, especially when working so much with a figure like Aquinas who would not have separated these out so cleanly. (This tension is felt

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most obviously with the inclusion of “The Theological Virtues” as a major section heading). Pope’s essay sheds light on this tension, noting that the theologian works in the context of a distinctive way of life (like ancient philosophy) and a comprehensive worldview. This starting assumption pushes the discussion into a different register than the other essays, and, what feels like an inevitability, leads Pope to engage with different conversation partners. Rather than turning to Aristotle, and the line of virtue ethics developed on his foundation, Pope turns to Jesus and discipleship, addressing religious experience and community along the way. Instead of building a general structure and pattern at this point, maybe focusing on imitation and the delineation of various virtues found in the life of Jesus, Pope pushes the discussion back further, starting with the broad movement of redemption history grounded in God, creation, grace, and incarnation, to provide a generous enough theological scaffolding to the conversation. Within the incarnation, Pope unveils one of the key turning points to any Christian account of the virtues—the cross of Christ. It is here where a cruciform account of life under God is given shape, and where values like weakness are put in place of power. Pope then moves into a discussion of the theological virtues and a case study in the cardinal virtues, ordering the discussion in light of his previous development. This is, of course, a lot to do in a single chapter, and Pope’s is necessarily sparse at points. But the very breadth of this discussion points to a wellspring of fruitful issues to explore, many of which are left untouched by the volume as a whole.

What Pope’s essay does, it would seem, is to reveal a rift in what is being called a philosophical account with what is often deemed a theological account. A further cleavage can be seen in how a parallel volume focusing on broad questions of Christian ethics is outlined in comparison with this one. In the second edition of *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells,¹ rather than turning to the history of the ethical discussion to provide the outline, Hauerwas and Wells turn to worship. The ethical task for the Christian is grounded in worship, and, fittingly, the volume’s outline is based upon the liturgy. This is certainly not the *only* way to approach Christian ethics, and it is open for debate whether it is even a good way to have the discussion; but, nonetheless, the differences are striking. For analytic theologians, the pull of these two fields of study, the contemporary philosophical and theological guilds, must create a tension. This tension may be addressed in any number of ways, but, let me suggest, ignoring it is not one of those options. What Pope’s essay adds to the volume, other than its material content, is a call to a more unified and mutually informed discussion between modern analytic philosophy and theology. By including his essay, the tension inherent in the volume becomes too clear, and one is left to wonder how it might differ if other theological categories were employed.

While this volume is an incredibly helpful resource, for Christian theological use, I think there are some glaring drawbacks. One such drawback, as noted above, is that one of the fundamental questions, the relation between theological and

¹ Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds 2011. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Second Edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

philosophical discussion, is never addressed explicitly. When the theological virtues are developed, a broader base of Christian figures is turned to for interaction, but the notion of a distinctly theological *approach* is neglected. In light of the comparison above with the Hauerwas and Wells volume, an explicit discussion of these issues would prove fruitful. Along similar lines, as I have been focusing on within this review, Pope's essay unveils that the philosophical and theological approaches do not simply differ materially but formally. This raises questions concerning the nature and task of philosophical theology in general and analytic theology more specifically. I think that this volume would have been a good place to have that discussion in light of the broad interest in virtue and vice across the philosophical and theological spectrum.

As I noted earlier, in spite of this critique, this is an incredibly important and useful volume for the study of virtues and vices for anyone, philosopher and theologian alike. It would be a mistake to hear my critique as a reason to ignore the volume, for instance, if one considers oneself more theologically minded (however we might understand that). Theologians should not ignore the figures or essays found here, but should recognize the divide between philosophical and theological approaches to these issues, and inquire concerning how these two fields can engage in mutual dialogue. Pope's essay provides one such approach, the Hauerwas and Wells volume provides another. To value this volume within the context of this journal, it seems that a creative and constructive engagement with the distinctive theological resources available to the theologian needs to be wielded appropriately. If the volume is used that way, I think it will prove to be fruitful well beyond the confines of the philosophical guild. As it stands, I worry that theologians will simply turn elsewhere. This, if nothing else, is incredibly unfortunate.