

Moral Evil. By Andrew Michael Flescher. Moral Traditions Series. Washington: Georgetown University. Pp. vii + 280. \$32.95.

Students of the problem of evil will find in Flescher's volume a thoughtful and comprehensive overview of ancient and contemporary theories about the nature of evil and human responses to it. F. claims to be writing a "rational" rather than a "historical" reconstruction (16). The difference lies in the rational reconstruction's intention to connect historical ideas with contemporary issues. Thus F. admirably introduces conversation between classic theories like those of the Manichees, Aristotle, Augustine, Nietzsche, and Taoist and Zen masters with novels like Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*—including its film version—and Albert Camus's *The Fall*. Contemporary issues like Hurricane Katrina and the Fukushima nuclear disaster also take their place in this wide-ranging conversation.

F. specifies four models of the relation of good and evil, drawn from long years of teaching and reflection; they form the heart of the argument and provide a manageable and useful way of reviewing the multiple theories that attempt to give a coherent account of good and evil. The first model, based on the historical movement of Manichaeism, presents evil as having a substantive existence over and against good—and God. The second deals with theodicies, the classic religious treatments in the West that vindicate the divine "in the light of the terrible sufferings human beings experience" (12). The third model develops the attempts of Nietzsche and others to move "beyond good and evil" by showing the essentially subjective character of "evil," that is, its dependence on perspective: depending on perspective, one can see suicide bombers as terrorists or as heroes. F.'s fourth model is Augustine's "evil as the privation of good."

The first four chapters treat these four models, carefully balancing description and critique. After taking the reader into a sympathetic exploration of each model, F. shows their limitations, following a helpful threefold analysis according to the models of descriptive accuracy. Does the model fit the facts of human experience?—its normative value. Does it provide a suitable guide for action? And what of its spiritual depth—does it have "the wherewithal to console anguished sufferers"? (59)

Following this largely descriptive presentation of these four models, chapter 5 develops a fifth model, F.'s own normative position that combines Augustine's explanation of evil as "privation" with Aristotle's virtue ethics. The twofold purpose of this chapter is to argue "that the Augustinian account is to be preferred over its alternatives" (16), and "to draw a hitherto unexplored connection between Augustine and Aristotle, that is, between the privation thesis and character development" (16).

The coupling of Augustine and Aristotle is a bold venture that invites a rethinking of these two foundational authors. F. makes clear his intentions. He does not claim that either Augustine or Aristotle "needs" the other, as though each one's thought could not stand on its own. He does argue that "the respective objectives that emerge in their ethical writings turn out symbiotically to serve one another in ways not previously considered" (237). Augustine's emphasis on the universality of sin complements

Aristotle's more elitist emphasis on the relatively few people who are really capable of living a virtuous life.

Toward the end of chapter 5, F. provides a welcome development of his analysis by turning to the role of religion in moving individuals to a virtuous life. The Jewish doctrine of *yetzer ha-ra*, for instance, "the evil inclination to which all human beings are believed to be subject" (240), leads to the doctrine of repentance (*teshuvah*) that opens up the possibility of reform of life. F.'s example of Alcoholics Anonymous—he treats it in a Catholic context—provides another practical application of the Augustinian theory of universal privation and the need for grace to attain liberation of the will.

F. pivots between two interpretations of Augustine and Aristotle: one sees them interested primarily in personal reform and development; the other finds in them a promotion of personal responsibility for the evils that happen in the world. The emphasis on personal responsibility for the evils of the world takes F. into territory that seems more to express his own aim in writing than the explicit teachings of Augustine and Aristotle. To his credit, F. anticipates this critique (235) and attempts to answer it, not entirely convincingly, in my opinion.

F. concludes by bringing us back to what has been the aim of his exploration throughout, that we attend more to what we can do about evil than to understanding it in a detached and theoretical way.

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In Defence of War. By Nigel Biggar. Oxford: Oxford University, 2013.
Pp. xii + 361. \$55.

This is a significant book. It provides a defense and clarification of just war theory within the Christian tradition through a series of extended engagements with Christian and secular critics of that theory. Biggar makes a clear and important case, and does so with impressive learning and literary style.

The volume opens with a closely argued case against three pacifist critics of the just war tradition—Stanley Hauerwas, John Howard Yoder, Richard Hays. B.'s formidable rebuttals of these three accounts of Christian pacifism will be hard to ignore. After exposing the flaws he sees in the three critics, B. presents a proper Christian rendering of the just war tradition.

Chapters 2 and 3 are central to B.'s desire to reconstruct just war thinking in a way consonant with Christian morality. B. endorses Augustine's views that war has a retributive purpose, that Christians can qualify violence by love, and that love properly includes elements of anger and retribution. He also examines the principle of double effect and provides his own interpretation that is largely consonant with Thomas Aquinas, although B. adds refinements where he finds Aquinas's language ambiguous. B. is a close reader of texts and a skillful wordsmith. He makes a strong case for the appropriate role of resentment and retribution in a theory of justice that