

pictures with shame at the depicted cruelty rather than with relief in the mastery of Man over his threatening “Oriental” other. This chapter provides a profound interpretation of our cultural ambivalence toward the Global War on Terror, and could well serve as a stand-alone introduction to A.’s theory of the modern fourfold.

Despite A.’s professed interest in what comes “after” modernity (as indicated in the book’s subtitle), the discussion of resources for a more positive future remains inchoate. In the succinct concluding chapter, A. briefly considers recent theological texts by M. Shawn Copeland, Sharon Betcher, and Mayra Rivera as disclosive of possibilities, particularly in the sense of touch, that might enable us to embrace vulnerability and finally move beyond modernity’s preoccupation with the mastery of Man.

With the exception of this final chapter, there is little that is explicitly theological here. Nevertheless, A.’s work raises crucial theological questions through its study of the theo-logic of modernity. The role of the divine other in the construction of the modern Man begs for more attention, as do the processes through which Christianity came to be widely embraced in terms so contrary to such central Christian concepts as human vulnerability and finitude in a diverse creation. We might well wonder how much else of our Christian theology has been distorted by the theo-logic of modernity, especially when biodisciplinary power is evidently operative even in postures that present themselves as Christian resistance to modernity.

Mary Doak

University of San Diego, California

Toward Thriving Communities: Virtue Ethics as Social Ethics. By Brian Stiltner. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2016. Pp. 291. \$28.90.

This book is virtue ethics with a face, with a communal face. It provides us with a splendid text that combines theory and praxis, as it offers concrete and viable ways of cultivating virtue ethics in families, schools, work, and community service, after laying the theoretical foundation of virtue ethics theory as social ethics. Weaving theory and praxis, in the likes that have not been seen in previous books, and advancing virtue ethics to include the social dimension, beyond the personal and interpersonal aspects it has been confined to, this book has forged an original, a first in the field of virtue ethics as social ethics.

Founded on two interconnected fundamental human questions, “What is the good life for me?” and “What is good life for society?” the book is developed in two main parts: part 1, “Virtue Ethics as Personal, Communal and Social Ethics,” and part 2, “The Pursuit of Flourishing in Social Contexts.” The first part is theoretical ethics, as it lays the foundation of the book; the second part is constructive praxis-ethics as it creates actual ways of living out the theory.

The chapter which frames virtue ethics within the two ethical theories, deontology and consequentialism, is the first chapter of the book, because it establishes the place of virtue ethics in the field of ethical theories. The point of this first chapter is to show

that no ethical methodology is perfect; each leaves a lacuna to be filled. The author, however, asserts that compared to the deontological and consequentialist theories, virtue ethics has more strengths and fewer weaknesses, and therefore must be used as a primary approach. It addresses the more primary question on how moral agents as persons can act well in all situations, and it is well suited to exploring the connections between the personal and social dimensions of ethics.

The lacuna in the book's presentation of consequentialism is its failure to show the full range of consequentialist positions. There is no monolithic consequentialist position, but rather a range of views, with specific nuances here and there. In his situation ethics, Joseph Fletcher has made an extreme teleology popular. Sometimes called "utilitarianism" or "consequentialism," this form of absolute consequentialism counts only consequences. It is described as the ethical attitude that seeks to produce the greatest good for the greatest number. Among consequentialist ethicists, Richard McCormick represents a middle position described as a mixed teleology, which differs from strict consequentialism insofar as it asserts the morality of the means in which good or evil is achieved.

The other lacuna in the book is how virtue ethics deals with conflict of virtues and values in difficult and complex situations, where in realizing one value, it does so at the cost of another. Some scholars also say that there are virtues that cannot be integrated. For instance, A. D. M. Walder argues that justice and kindness cannot cohere in a single person. "One's impartial commitment to principles may be inimical to attachments to certain persons because of their particular individuality." There are situations that show people choosing justice over fidelity, like the woman lawyer in the *Movie Box* who turns her back on fidelity to her father, as she becomes his accuser of the crimes he committed against humanity. In other situations, fidelity is chosen over justice. In the movie, *Scent of a Woman*, a prep-school student decides not to report on his classmates in the face of the harm they have caused to the whole school; in *Terminator* a boy called to save the world endangers humanity's entire existence when he saves his mother first. The characters in these dramas, as people often find themselves in real life, were torn between two distinctly opposed claims. The necessity of the integration of virtue ethics with ethical methodologies that deal with conflict situations cannot be stressed enough, if virtue ethics can come to grips with reality where people are slugging it out everyday.

Except for these lacunae, the book is praised for its singular and distinctive contribution of virtue ethics as social ethics. Integrating theoretical analysis of virtue ethics in terms of norms for acting and living; human flourishing as the purpose of life; and communities as the contexts for becoming good and living well, with case-based applications, illuminates a broad sweep of virtue ethics as a foundational ethical theory. A thorough and comprehensive praxis-approach to virtue ethics in social contexts of families, schools, workplaces, service groups, makes this book an invaluable resource for moral educators. As a whole, this book will be a time-honored reference book for both theoreticians and practitioners of virtue ethics, especially in social ethics.

Ma. Christina Astorga
University of Portland, OR