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Virtue's End: God in the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas, ed. Fulvio Di Blasi, Joshua P. Hochschild, and Jeffrey Langan, South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008.

Virtue's End is a collection of nine papers exploring the role of God in the moral philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas. The topic is approached from a variety of perspectives, but central to the volume as a whole is a concern with two closely related questions. Firstly is knowledge of God necessary for a fully moral life? Secondly, is God an essential part of a fully developed moral theory? These questions are, as the title suggests, approached from within the Aristotelian/Thomistic perspective. And these questions naturally arise within such a perspective. Aquinas is, of course, explicitly and unabashedly a theistic philosopher, and so we would expect him to address these questions about God and morality. Aristotle has more often than Aquinas been embraced by naturalists, but he, too, does not shy away from theistic talk in his ethical treatises. One has only to read through to Book X (esp. chapter 8) of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to find the divine occupying an apparently prominent place in Aristotle's moral philosophy. Whatever we may judge about whether Book X fits happily with the preceding nine books, even in the preceding books, as well as works like the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does not shy away from talk of the divine. Given the influence of Aristotle on Aquinas, together with the fact that each is happy to talk about God in the context of doing moral philosophy, it is a useful project to consider just what God's role is in Aristotelian and Thomistic ethics. The essays in *Virtue's End* should mostly be found to be a helpful contribution to this project. Some posit a more fundamental role for God, and some a less fundamental role. I think the arguments presented on the side of the less fundamental role are much the stronger in Aristotle's case, and I more tentatively venture to say that they are somewhat the weaker in Aquinas's case. But I haven't the space to make the case here, and the reader will have to judge the matter for herself. Below, I briefly summarize these essays.

Kevin Flannery's essay "Can an Aristotelian Consider Himself a Friend of God?" is only indirectly related to the two central questions of the volume, though he does give a brief argument that Aristotelian ethics cannot be separated from religious belief (p. 10–11). Flannery notes the Aristotelian distinction between friendship according to equality and friendship according to preeminence. For Aristotle, only the latter is possible between a human being and God. Aquinas holds that the virtue of charity requires friendship with God. Flannery argues that Aquinas thinks that both types of friendship are possible between a human being and God. On the one hand, God is vastly superior to us and so is a friend according to preeminence. But at the same time, through Christ we have become children of God, and so, as the Apostle John tells us, are called God's friends—the friendship of equality.

On my reading, *contra* some of the authors in *Virtue's End*, the central features of Aristotle's moral theory are not dependent on theism. Christopher Kaczor, in his essay "The Divine in Thomas's Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: In What Sense Can We be Good without God?" argues that the same is true of Aquinas's moral theory, at least as it is presented in the *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*. Kaczor establishes his thesis primarily by arguing that wherever Aquinas employs God in an argument for a central ethical principle, he provides alongside that argument a non-theistic argument for the same principle.

Antonio Donato treats the same work in his essay "Contemplation As the End of Human Nature in Aquinas's *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*." He argues that Aquinas's theory of contemplation goes beyond Aristotle's. Whereas for Aristotle the highest human activity—and so perfect happiness—is contemplation *in this life* of the noble and divine, for Aquinas this is only imperfect happiness. Perfect happiness involves contemplation of God *in the next life*, with immediate cognitive awareness of God that goes beyond our current capacities. Donato suggests that Aquinas arrived at this view by assimilating some philosophical commitments of the Neoplatonists. Donato's conclusions are, at least on the surface, in tension with Kaczor's, since it is not clear how there could be a non-theistic argument for this conception of perfect happiness. But perhaps this merely amounts to a question about the scope of moral theory. Kaczor seems to take moral theory to be concerned only with human actions and happiness in this life, whereas Donato seems happy to extend it into the next.

In "Aristotle vs. the Neo-Darwinians: Human Nature and the Foundation of Ethics," Marie George argues that Aristotle rightly differs from neo-Darwinians in holding the following: (i) nature acts for an end; (ii) reason is not just another sense power, but an immaterial faculty capable of grasping immaterial goods (iii) we are truly free; (iv) human nature is in some sense fundamentally unchanging. George also argues that, while Aristotle does not make fundamental reference to God in building up his ethics, his theism aids him in getting to (i). While I am sympathetic with some of George's conclusions, I remain unconvinced that theism plays an important role here, not least because Aristotle's main argument for teleology, *Physics* II, does not presuppose theism.

Anthony Lisska's essay "The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas: A New Look at Some Old Questions" explores the metaphysical foundations of Thomistic ethics. Lisska argues that an ontology of natural kinds is required to ground Thomistic ethics. Furthermore, from two key facts, two happy results follow. The facts are these: (i) for Aquinas, the natural kind *human* is defined by a certain set of capacities or dispositional properties; (ii) the good is the development of these dispositional properties. The happy results are these: (a) the naturalistic fallacy is avoided; (b) the derivation of a theory of obligation becomes possible. Finally, and to the point of our central questions, Lisska argues that one can get to a natural kind ontology, as well as our two happy results, without bringing God into the picture. Though Aquinas thinks that, in fact, God is the ontological ground of everything else, this need not be established for ethical theory. This question of God's status is one belonging to the highest flights of metaphysics rather than to ethics.

In "Knowledge of the Good as Participation in God's Love," Fulvio Di Blasi returns to the question whether knowledge of God is necessary for a moral life. He approaches this through the concept of *participation*. According to Aquinas, non-essential goods are goods by participation in the essential good (God). Through our knowledge of participated goods, we have knowledge of God as the essential good. But we may have this knowledge in one of two ways: (i) by recognizing in a confused way that there is a highest good; (ii) by recognizing God as the highest good. Di Blasi suggests that an atheist, by knowing God only in the former sense, may be moral but will fall short of complete moral goodness. For that, we must know God in the latter sense.

Giacomo Samek Lodovici picks up the same question in his “The Role of God in Aquinas’s Ethical Thought: Can an Atheist Be Moral?” and gives a similar answer to Di Blasi’s. While many of the proper aims of ethics can be identified without awareness of God’s existence, two of these—to know the truth (including the truth about God) and to live in society with God—cannot be identified or achieved without knowledge of God. Since achieving these two aims is essential to the completely good life, only one with knowledge of God can be completely good.

Moving back from the question of practice to the question of theory, Robert Gahl argues in “Who Made the Law? God, Ethics, and the Law of Nature” that a partial account of the moral life can be given without reference to God. An adequate account of natural law, however, resists any non-theistic articulation. But Gahl goes even further. Though a coherent Thomistic ethical theory can be articulated given general theistic principles, Aquinas holds that the consequences of original sin involve a “radical need” for grace, without which we will not be able rationally to orient ourselves to our proper aims.

In “Hierarchy and Direction for Choice,” Daniel McInerny addresses an issue related to our main questions. McInerny takes Aquinas to hold that God is the ultimate human end, that human goods are arranged in a natural hierarchy, and that this hierarchy provides direction for choice. Indeed, obligation depends on the guidance provided by the hierarchy of goods. The guidance is provided for because there is an ultimate end, because lower goods are for the sake of and regulated by higher goods, and because many non-ultimate goods are nevertheless intrinsically good and so choiceworthy in themselves. Though he does not focus explicitly on our main questions, McInerny’s argument suggests that one cannot identify the appropriate hierarchy of goods, and so cannot consistently identify one’s obligations, without recognizing God as the ultimate end.

Virtue’s End is simply but attractively produced and at \$19 will be an affordable and welcome addition to the libraries of ethicists, philosophical theologians, and scholars of Aristotle and Aquinas. Most, and I among them, will find much to cheer and much to disagree with, but the arguments are careful and stimulating throughout.