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Review of "Goodness and Justice: A Consequentialist Moral Theory"

Brian G. Henning

Gonzaga University, henning@gonzaga.edu

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Dominique Chenu, are subject to criticism by McInerny, not for their lack of respect for Thomas as a Catholic theologian but for ignoring his role as a philosopher, who as a philosopher is able to develop an Aristotelian-like natural theology independent of the faith. Speaking of some of his contemporaries, McInerny writes, "There is a tendency to 'theologize' St. Thomas in a manner reminiscent of Gilson and to suggest that Thomas cannot be understood even on such matters as the moral virtues by the mere philosopher." Christian philosophy for McInerny is more of a sociological description of the work of a class of philosophers who are Christian than a discipline in its own right. To think and to argue from the Christian faith is to engage in theology, not philosophy. The preamble that McInerny wishes to preserve is that of a natural theology accessible to all. That preamble consists in what can be known of God's existence and nature apart from faith or revelation. That enterprise, he insists, is open to believer and nonbeliever.

This book is not for everyone, but for those interested in the vagaries of 20th-century Thomism, it is indispensable. The reader will find interesting discussions of Gilson's attack on Thomas de Vio Cardinal Cajetan, the great 16th-century Dominican, DeLubac's similar criticism of Cajetan, and the negative reception of Marie-Dominique Chenu's book, *Une école de théologie*. With skills honed as a novelist as well as a philosopher, McInerny manages to recreate some of the excitement generated by the intellectual heavyweights of the early decades of the Thomistic revival. From records available to him, McInerny brings to life some of the discussions that took place within the French Thomistic Society of the 1920s and within Maritan's famous *Cercle d'études thomistes* at Meudon. Those issues of primary concern to disciples of Aristotle and Aquinas in the early decades of the last century retain in McInerny's retelling their compelling interest.—Jude P. Dougherty, *The Catholic University of America*.

MENDOLA, Joseph. *Goodness and Justice: A Consequentialist Moral Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 326 pp. Cloth, \$80.00—As novel as it is unfashionable, *Goodness and Justice* seeks to evade certain intuitive objections to classical utilitarianism through the unlikely marriage of a hedonic conception of the good and an egalitarian conception of distributive justice. With a nod to two often-divergent approaches in contemporary analytic ethics, Mendola structures his ambitious project around meeting two tests: provide a "direct argument" that gives a "transcendental vindication" of his moral claims and show how such a position is consonant with our "commonsense intuitions" about certain concrete cases.

Part one develops Mendola's unique form of consequentialism, Multiple-Act Consequentialism, or MAC. A distinctive feature of MAC is its view that the basic units of consideration are "atomic agents" or brief periods of enduring persons' lives. According to this theory, each of us is part of a multiplicity of overlapping group agents (p. 43). Thus the

task of MAC is the direct consequentialist evaluation of the options of the group agents of which we are constituents. When there are conflicts between different group acts, we should “defect” from group acts with good consequences only if we can achieve better consequences on our own. Though more complex than classical utilitarianism, Mendola convincingly argues that MAC is better able to “evade” three common objections to act consequentialism: namely, that it is too demanding, too permissive, and that it fails to respect special obligations.

Much of the remainder of the book is dedicated to developing the second element of the just good theory, what he calls the Hedonic Maximin Principle or HMP. Specifically, part two has the unenviable task of showing that pleasure is the only basic normative value, while part three is concerned with the distribution of that pleasure in a way that “skews our concern toward the benefits of the worst-off among us” (p. 5). In brief, HMP implies that “one outcome is better than another when the worst-off are better off, and also that relative wellbeing is, as the classical utilitarians suggested, a straightforward matter of pleasure and pain” (p. 6).

Mendola’s hedonism is clearly an heir to Bentham’s in that it, for instance, rejects qualitative differences between different forms of pleasure and pain (p. 172 ff.). However, he breaks with Bentham in rejecting psychological hedonism. Beyond the inadequate justification for rejecting qualitative concerns, one of the most troubling aspects of Mendola’s hedonism is its insistence that pleasure and pain are the only “unconstituted natural normative properties found in the world” (p. 139). According to such a view, pain is an actual property on the surface of a Cuisinart blade in exactly the sense that yellow is a property of a school bus (p. 177 ff.). Mendola’s claim that such a position is in keeping with “the most naive and natural human conception of the world” is far from compelling (p. 180).

Yet even if one were to grant a basic status to hedonic value, the author fails to give sufficient reasons why pleasure is the *only* basic value. His rejection of health as a basic value is characteristic. After noting that many non-human entities have healthy states, he eliminates it from consideration because the “dominant intuition” is that only “things with psychologies . . . are of genuine normative significance” (p. 125). For one interested in direct arguments and transcendental vindication, this sort of argument is particularly disappointing. Although Mendola’s defense of hedonism falls short of convincing this reader, he was nevertheless successful in achieving one of his primary goals: to demonstrate that hedonism cannot be dismissed with the wave of a hand as radically counterintuitive.

The potential excesses of his consequentialism and hedonism are ultimately kept in check by the maximin structure of HMP. Whereas classical utilitarianism is concerned merely with maximizing pleasure, HMP is also concerned with the distribution of that pleasure in such a way that it gives greatest concern to the worst-off among us. It is in this way that Mendola seeks to respond to the chronic problem of distributional inequality that is usually the result of a pure consequentialism.

One of the more promising aspects of Mendola's position is its unusual focus not on individual lives, but on group agents and momentary bits of lives. No individual is properly understood apart from its relationship to the multiplicity of overlapping groups of which it finds itself a part. Yet, unfortunately, this recognition is not accompanied by the embrace of an organic metaphysical position that emphasizes the inter-relatedness of individuals. Indeed, Mendola not only explicitly rejects the notion that organic unities have any normative status (p. 203), he refuses to defend a single, coherent metaphysical position that would justify his hedonism. Despite its apparent difficulties, Mendola's *Goodness and Justice* is to be applauded for its daring attempt to simultaneously resurrect hedonism and respond to chronic shortcomings of consequentialism by making it more attentive to distributive justice.—Brian G. Henning, *Mount St. Mary's University*.

MOHR, Richard D. *God and Forms in Plato*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2005. xxv + 279 pp. Paper, \$28.00.—This is a re-edition of a collection of essays originally published as *The Platonic Cosmology* (Brill, 1985). The new edition contains (in a revised form) all the original essays, to which have been added four previously published papers as well as a new preface and conclusion.

Professor Mohr aims to explain “how, for Plato, God makes the world” (ix). He appropriately opens with the *Timaeus*, to which he devotes roughly half his book; but he also writes essays on most of the ‘cosmological dialogues,’ including the *Laws*, *Statesman*, *Sophist*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and the *Republic*. According to Mohr, the *Timaeus* should not be read as a myth or a merely rhetorical display of speeches; rather, it contains Plato's serious views about cosmology and should be read literally, if also judiciously. Mohr characterizes Plato's doctrine as a “dualistic unitarianism,” meaning that God and the Forms have complementary yet distinct roles in the process of creation (xv, n. 22). More specifically, the Platonic ‘Demiurge’ introduces (greater) order into the pre-existing and (partially) chaotic materials by using the Forms as templates; looking off to the Forms, he introduces “immanent standards” into the phenomenal realm. These standards are at once “instances of the Forms” while remaining “mired in the vagaries of the corporeal;” they enable us to lay hold of “true opinions” about the phenomena (54, 37). The role of the Platonic Demiurge is thus primarily epistemological, not moral or esthetic: he improves the world by infusing it with standards, thereby making it “more intelligible” (xxi).

Mohr regards Plato's doctrine of Forms as essentially true, even though it is characterized by “paradox” (79–80). All existing beings, he argues, ultimately depend “for their identification and intelligibility” upon the Forms taken as standards (40). Each Form is unique and differs, in particular, from every other Form. Remarkably, Mohr's Forms do not possess *any* of the specific characteristics that they enable us to identify (and understand) in other things. The Form of ‘Animal,’ for ex-