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DANIEL C. RUSSELL. *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*. Oxford University Press, 2009. pp. xvii + 439. ISBN 978-0-19-956579-5. £50.00 (hardback).

The chief impression given by this book is of a considerable breadth and depth of scholarship, compiled together into a single large volume; and the principal difficulty posed for its subsequent appraisal involves the need to judge whether the result should be lauded for its comprehensiveness, or whether there are grounds for suspecting that publication as a single monograph may not have been suited to presenting the work's arguments in the sharpest possible relief. The book is unified by the theme of *phronesis*, the practical wisdom or intelligence central to Aristotle's taxonomy of the virtues, and by its defence of a broadly Aristotelian appreciation of *phronesis* as an important element of virtue theory. Presentation in a single monograph therefore permits Russell's arguments to be developed in a clearly unified and systematic form. Yet the book has two immediate targets. It aims to show that with a suitable account of the virtues, one that regards *phronesis* as a part of every virtue, it is possible to meet 'the challenge of giving a... formal virtue-based account of what makes an action "right" ' (p. viii). It aims, secondly, to answer developments in empirical psychology alleged to cast doubt on the idea that our actions are as reliably grounded in character as virtue theory requires them to be. In and amongst all this, its central thesis is that *phronesis* 'is a necessary part of all virtue', in opposition to philosophers who judge this claim to be false or positively unappealing (p. 31).

In spite of its attempt to answer critics of diverse persuasions, the book is very much a broadside in a local dispute: it defends the possibility of virtue theory by defending one particular approach to virtue ethics over others, and readers who do not have either an investment in these debates or a readiness to suspend their doubts about virtue theory could very well end up muttering about angels and pinheads. The book is, moreover, as unashamedly abstracted as it is insular, in that its proclaimed 'task is not to construct a virtue theory, but to examine certain formal features of such a theory' (p. 156). It is perhaps fitting that the work's most evident flaw is its failure, when discussing 'our serious practical concerns' in the second chapter, to define these precisely and generally enough to make it clear what distinguishes them from, say, our trivial practical concerns. (I have been unable to check the accompanying reference to a paper by Christine Korsgaard because my university's library does not carry *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, its sole place of publication.)

In addition to his primary targets, Russell addresses a secondary objective along the way. The question of how the virtues are to be enumerated occupies an entire section (out of four), as befits 'a problem which virtue ethicists and their critics alike have almost entirely ignored, but which if unresolved would jeopardize the very possibility of virtue ethics' (p. 145). Again, the solution he offers depends on *phronesis* and its being part of every virtue, and so the discussion logically enters into the theme of the book as a whole; and yet, perhaps *because* the problem has not been raised by other virtue theorists, the

threatening argument can at times feel tangential, built up only to be slapped down again in the end. Possibly this impression is a by-product of the book's strategy of setting off from several problematic points in order to show that in each case the road to a solution brings us to *phronesis*: the unity of the whole is inevitably not always visible in its parts.

None of my structural misgivings should be allowed to blot out the fact that the book exhibits multiple virtues of its own, however (and sometimes unexpected ones: its explanation of the Athenian notion of *leitourgia*, for example, is a notably elegant treatment of the sometimes mystifying virtue of magnificence within Aristotle's system). There is a great deal that is admirable in the careful exegesis of Aristotle's ethical formulae, in the formidable knowledge of modern virtue theory, in the accounts of work in empirical psychology which lucidly explain their threat to virtue theory for an audience outside the sciences—and over and above all this, in the author's startling ability to give each of these informed and critical treatment, and to synthesise his responses into a unified philosophical outlook.

The result is weighty, and so bounteous with detail that I have rather *had* to focus on structure and rationale at the expense of so much argumentation. What I remain uncertain about is whether the concentration of these various ingredients into a single volume is the strategy which best demonstrates the unity both of the virtues and of Russell's theoretical framework, or whether the result is a juxtaposition of multiple problems, in light of their related solutions, whose discussion might have otherwise benefitted from more individual attunement outside the constraints of a single book with a single audience.

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