

poisoning the prospects for authentic global solidarity, providing a cogent diagnosis of distressing moral deficiencies and resulting social injustices. Besides encapsulating the specific content of the appeal of Pope Francis for greater effort to overcome the tragic global indifference to refugees, these essays make palpable the spirit of Jesus's Parable of the Good Samaritan (the focus of part two of this volume) as it applies especially poignantly to the plight of displaced "people on the move."

As is often the case in ambitious collections of essays, there is a certain unevenness in the quality and originality of the contributions. While a solid majority succeed in braiding together the concerns of local church communities (often explicitly conscious of the aftereffects of the Covid pandemic that weaken constructive social engagement) with the agenda of Francis in the encyclical under consideration, a few stray a bit too far for comfort from the task of engaging the actual message of the pope in *Fratelli Tutti*. Still, the reader is consistently well served by this solidly researched volume for the many insights and creative applications to real-world contexts it brings to bear on the ethical content of this momentous social encyclical.

THOMAS MASSARO
Fordham University

Jewish Virtue Ethics. Edited by Geoffrey D. Claussen, Alexander Green, and Alan L. Mittelman. SUNY Series in Contemporary Jewish Thought. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2023. xii + 519 pages. \$39.95.

Noting an "underdeveloped" field in the Jewish tradition, *Jewish Virtue Ethics* surveys Judaism's ongoing interest in character and its excellences. Over thirty-five essays (mostly individual portraits of key thinkers), each contributor addresses four questions: the importance of virtue ethics in the source, the primacy of particular virtues, the specific means of virtue cultivation, and its impact on self-understandings of Judaism and Jewish identity. "Who, then, beyond some in the Jewish community, can Jewish virtue ethics speak to today?" So wonders Alan Mittelman in his epilogue, imagining as fitting interlocutors "communitarians, especially if they are religiously committed" (500).

If communitarians generally are predisposed as dialogue partners, Catholics should be particularly motivated to respond. "Dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel," encourages Pope Francis, "are part of the life of Jesus's disciples" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 248).

Aligned with the Hebrew Bible's abiding concern for what it means to be the People of Israel (B'nai Yisrael), in the first chapter, Amanda Beckenstein Mbuvi outlines how virtue accords with moral paradigms of covenant, priesthood, and family and illustrates their commingling in the curious case of King David. Drawing on the Rabbinic literature, Deborah Baer emphasizes how the tradition distinguishes itself, particularly in the ideal of the righteous sage who embodies Torah for his community. In subsequent chapters on medieval thinkers like Bahya ibn Paquda (1050–1080 CE) to modern ones, readers are offered varying exemplarist approaches (notably, Moses appears in most contributions) and more virtue-focused contributions, tending to prioritize humility and compassion.

Acts of storytelling correct misunderstandings that Jewish ethics hinges entirely on observing the law. A notable example is Sarah Zager's examination of *Or Yisrael* by Rabbi Israel Salanter (1809–1889), as she argues his virtue model both “manipulates tropes” from Jewish discourse and creatively appropriates yet departs from “contemporary Aristotelian virtue theories” (313). For Salanter, the performative and narrative context of “ritualized practice of study” (*limmud musar*) is crucial because the purpose of virtue ethics is primarily about curing spiritual ailments (i.e., vices), and not developing character. Just as one would consult a doctor for an illness, one should consult a “doctor of the soul” (viz., the Torah). By impassioned communal chants (*hitpa'alut*) of sayings about virtues in rabbinic literature, according to Zager, students may foster proper fear of God and facilitate an “emotional release” (317) that rectifies any inclinations to evil.

The volume avails resources to navigate and reinterpret complicated relations between law and virtue cultivation. For Nahmanides (affectionately called Ramban, 1194–1270 CE), Jonathan Jacobs observes, the law is a necessary guide for instructing right relations, and yet also inherently indicates the need “to go beyond the letter of law.” In his comment on the general commandment to “do what is right and good” (Deut 6:18), for instance, Ramban addresses the goal of justice in the marketplace but also beyond “so that one is known as someone of honesty and integrity in every aspect of behavior” (130–131). In the virtue jurisprudence of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (1903–1993), on the other hand, the law is framed as a “discipline” (*musar*) that yields its own distinct virtues and dispositions (420). Alternatively, as found in the *Iggerot Ha-Ra'ayyah* by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1863–1935), Don Seeman reflects how “reasons for the commandments” (*ta'amei ha-mitzvot*) become clarified once agency becomes aligned with divine purposes, writing, “correct proportion between virtue's freedom and law's obligation, Kook once observed, is like the

proportion between the scaffolding of a building (law) and the open space in which human activity transpires (virtue)” (362).

Other contributions will surprise readers in encountering familiar thinkers anew. Although Martin Buber (1878–1965) is rarely read as a virtue ethicist, William Plevan notes Buber’s overall concern with perfection as “the self-actualization of each human being’s unique personality” (370) and names accordingly openness and dialogical responsiveness as key dispositions in that pursuit. Buber’s notion of dialogue can also be founded in ways humanity is drawn into imitation of “divine *middot*, or attributes, of clothing the naked, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, and burying the dead” (378).

Similarly fruitful, Ned Curthoys situates the works of Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) in the Jewish “pariah tradition.” It is well known that Arendt endeavored to elaborate how the pursuit of excellence involves skills of practical reasoning and intellectual virtues to aid conscience’s capacity to judge, deliberate, and act. Retrieving Aristotle, furthermore, her conception of the good life is formulated in terms of human dignity and self-care, not selflessness. As an outsider who resists anti-Semitism and all forms of dehumanization, Curthoys poignantly stresses Arendt’s admiration for Socrates as “*the* exemplary philosopher, a courageous, dialogically motivated, and publicly engaged intellectual remembered for his close friendships” (428). In a particularly Jewish way, Curthoys’s Arendt accordingly employs the “critical perspective of the outsider among one’s people and rebels against injustices inflicted on oppressed people more generally” (436).

At times, the experience of reading this book is like digesting an annotated anthology. Ultimately, however, it lends itself well to precisely what is identified as the basic goal of Jewish-Christian dialogue by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: “One can only learn to love what one has gradually come to know, and one can only know truly and profoundly what one loves” (no. 44). Indeed, that learning is best done in dialogue and friendship. For moral theology, at the very least, this book signifies an invitation to a gradual deepening and possibly the mutual enrichment between our virtue traditions.

MICHAEL VANZANDT COLLINS
Assumption University (Windsor, ON)

The Catholic Case Against War: A Brief Guide. By David Carroll Cochran. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2024. ix + 182 pages. \$32.00 (paperback).

With this volume David Carroll Cochran has done a service for Catholics and others interested in a faith-based appraisal of war by