



Worldly Virtue: Moral Ideals and Contemporary Life

Judith Andre

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Worldly Virtue argues that general discussions of virtue need to be complemented by attention to specific virtues. Each chapter addresses a single virtue, most of them traditional (e.g., honesty, generosity, and humility), and sometimes newly framed (“earthly virtue,” for instance, and “open hope.”) The final essay breaks ground by identifying virtues specific to the fact that we age. The book draws upon various spiritual traditions, especially Christianity and Buddhism, for what they value and the practices that sustain those values; at times it identifies ways in which each can mislead. The book also draws from contemporary sciences, natural but especially behavioral. Anthropologists and sociologists, for instance, have identified a universal norm of reciprocity; virtuous generosity must respect this need to give back. In another example, new understandings of addiction suggest that temperance requires dealing with pain as much as resisting pleasure. Because no single template applies to every virtue, different questions are asked about each. Nevertheless each chapter addresses the often-neglected question of how the virtue in question is acquired, and how social context can support or impede its acquisition. The book is addressed to philosophers, but may also be of interest in religious studies, for its philosophical development of religious themes.

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