

Closely reading and interpreting arguments from the philosophical works of four thinkers—Jean-Luc Nancy, François Laruelle, Catherine Malabou, and Bernard Stiegler—the author of this book, Ian James brings to Anglophone readers of naturalism, science, or philosophy, some striking contemporary thoughts that looks at a syncretism of scientific realism and a novel naturalism. In doing so, James revisits the question of what philosophy itself is and takes this question as the guidepost for the course of the entire book. He brings out the continuity between philosophy and science by analysing the works of many thinkers. Through a deft interpretive reading of texts, James reminds us of the major questions posed by philosophy, non-philosophy, and science. He concludes that philosophy is a pluralist technique and stresses that the plural real needs to be understood in conjunction with continental naturalism. A first step towards reading the continuum of science and naturalism, this book is a thought-provoking read for all philosophy students.

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**Cultivating Virtue:
Perspectives from
Philosophy, Theology, and
Psychology**

Edited by Nancy E Snow

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Nancy E Snow has brought together essays which will be remembered in social sciences' departments as an interdisciplinary tour de force on the concept of virtue in domains ranging from Asian Studies to Islamic Studies to continental philosophy. In this review, we will concentrate on the trope of empathy which unifies this book. In its emphasis on children's welfare, this book itself is a work of *caritas* and supplements the works of countless thinkers who wanted to bring solace to little hearts. It is not sufficient to say that children are our future; we must think how we can serve

our children so that they feel less peer pressure and are brought up ethically without puritanical floggings. It is not for nothing that Charles Dickens (1812–70) wrote hundreds of pages on the plight of children. Snow and her writers in this book under review, show this same concern for children.

Note 4, in page 82, to 'The Roots of Empathy' (65–86) by Michael Slote illustrates the ambiguity and problems in loving children. It is not a given that all children are loved by their parents neither are all children who are not orphans cared for. Before quoting this endnote, we must turn briefly to instances where children with parents are not loved by their parents. These illustrations are needed to foreground the necessity of both the book under review and Slote's note. In Graham Greene's (1904–91) *The Power and the Glory* (1940), we have two children destroyed by their parents. Coral Fellows is destroyed by her parent's marital frigidity. And the unnamed Roman Catholic priest's daughter looks at her fugitive father with a demonic cold look of hatred. The priest's illegitimate daughter, to use contemporary terms, is bullied by her peers for no fault of her own. It is another matter that both Coral and the alcoholic priest's daughter are victims of abandonment in ways reminiscent of Christ's abandonment by his Father, yet the reality is that these two children like thousands of other lonely children cannot cry out '*Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani*; my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:45–6). *The Crow Girl* (2010), by the duo Erik Axl Sund, is a blood-curdling account of what parents, including mothers, can inflict on their own children. It is keeping the instances of Dickens, Greene, and Erik Axl Sund that we now quote fully note 4:

Though, as Jane Statlander-Slote has pointed out to me [Michael Slote], the unpleasant recognition of and sense of frustration at *our inability to ensure* that parents will love their children and not abuse them may also help to explain why moral educationists tend to avoid discussing abusive/unloving parents and what they do to their children. Let me also point out that the presumed fact that certain kinds of abuse can contribute to making some people/children incapable of developing moral motives and sentiments implies that a person's status or character as a moral being can depend on factors of luck. Various traditions (e.g.,

Confucianism and Kantian ethics) that stress the importance of moral self-cultivation or self-improvement play down such factors of luck, play down (in a way that Aristotle, in fact, did not) the typically crucial role that *other people* play in someone's moral education/development. But although it would be nice to think that people can or do (successfully) take their moral development into their own hands, I believe that there are fewer realistic possibilities for or instances of this than advocates of moral self-cultivation have thought. I hope to take up this issue for fuller treatment in a future publication (82).

Michael Slote's readings of Confucianism and Kantian ethics are taken up by other contributors (See Adam Cureton and Thomas E Hill, *Kant on Virtue and the Virtues*, 87–109) to this volume of essays.

Finally, we turn to one of the most interesting chapters, 'It Takes a Metaphysics: Raising Virtuous Buddhists' (171–95) by Owen Flanagan:

Buddhist children are raised into the Buddhist form of life in all the usual ways, by direct instruction in do's and don'ts, and in the norms and values that one would expect in socio-moral ecologies we think of as Buddhist. The methods of developing as a good Buddhist person are all the familiar ones, including Aristotelian virtue education. The reason to think this is that Aristotle did not put forward his theory of moral learning as a theory only about how Greek youth develop but also about how all youth develop. If Aristotle's theory is true, then it is also true of Buddhist youth. That said, Buddhist moral education calls attention to the multifarious ways that a life form is passed on in addition to habituation or practice in virtue (183).

As has been pointed out at the beginning of this review, Snow's team of writers rightly and always veer towards the ethical upbringing of children in the here and the now. This practical turn to philosophy makes this book an indispensable sourcebook for studying virtue. Generally, virtue formation, whether Aristotelian, Kantian, or Buddhist cannot happen in adults. Adults are far gone into the ways of the world and our opinions are rigid, being formed often during our childhood. Thus, this book's emphasis on the pedagogy of education is refreshing.

Cultivating Virtue should be read in conjunction with Swami Atmashraddhananda's edited volume on pedagogy, *Manifesting Inherent Perfection—Education for Complete Self-Development* published by Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. Further, it needs to be remarked that Owen Flanagan's understanding of Buddhism is one of the most lucid and thus, approachable discussions on Buddhist conceptions regarding emptiness (192).

Before we end this review, we must take heed of the research presented by the psychologist Darcia Narvaez. Often parents, guardians, and teachers believe that sparing the rod spoils a child. The disastrous effects of corporal punishment, which is a form of child-abuse, are highlighted by Narvaez in her chapter, 'The Co-Construction of Virtue: Epigenetics, Development and Culture' (251–77). She writes:

How do TET [Triune Ethics Theory] mindsets relate to the EDN [Evolved Developmental Niche]? In a study of over 400 adults, a 10-item adult self-report measure of EDN history was correlated with ethical orientation. Items were about childhood experience in terms of breastfeeding length, responsivity (combination of happiness, support, responsiveness to needs), touch (affection, corporal punishment), play (adult-organized, free inside, free outside), and social support (family togetherness). Those who reported less play and family togetherness activities were more likely to have a safety ethical orientation (either aggressive or withdrawing). A withdrawing moral orientation was also correlated with less reported affectionate touch. Both engagement ethic and communal imagination ethics were related to longer breastfeeding, heightened responsivity, less corporal punishment, greater inside and outside play, and more family togetherness. Engagement was also related to greater affectionate touch. In an examination of mental health, poor mental health was related to more self-concerned moral orientations. That is, anxiety and depression were positively correlated with Safety ethics and negatively correlated with Engagement and Imagination (262).

Without debating and empirically rethinking Kantian punishment models (107), how can we ready our children for self-actualising? This

emphasis on childhood and the virtue praxes during childhood is so timely, that one has to praise the wisdom of the editor and the writers anthologised here. Once the formative years are past, it is very difficult to orient oneself to virtue. In old age, the psychic apparatus has ossified and even learning noble things may not be useful in achieving a virtuous telos. Thus, once when Acharya Shankara came across an old man struggling with the subtleties of Sanskrit grammar, the Acharya sung: 'Worship God, worship the Lord, O dull-witted. When the appointed time (death) comes, the grammar-rules surely will not save you' (*Bhaja-govindam Stotram*).

The book under review, therefore, should be compulsory reading in departments where educational pedagogy is taught. It does not need saying that it should also be available to students of philosophy, theology, and psychology. It is never too late to learn new things and neuroplasticity does occur. Though, to quote W B Yeats, soul might 'clap its hands' with soul (W B Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*); yet it is often too late to become holy. Holiness is the telos of human life and holiness is the subject of this book. Thus, the philosophers, theologians, and psychologists in this book write so much on children. They realise that holiness, or the sustained practice of virtue, has little to do with the intellect. Holiness has to be acquired even at the cost of intellectual chicanery. It is rarely the case that learned tomes help one to become holy. *Cultivating Virtue* is one of those rare books. It is meant for scholars but in its scope and ideological positions, it is a manual for becoming saintly or virtuous.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay



**Divine Plays of Lord Siva:
Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam**

Sri Paranjyothi Munivar

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<http://www.chennai.math.org>.
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9788178236629.

The book under review is a translation of one of the famous Shaivite puranas of Tamil Nadu called *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* by sage Paranjyothi Munivar who lived in seventeenth or eighteenth century. The work consisting of sixty-four episodes of Lord Shiva bestowing grace on his devotees is a scripture intended to arouse and cultivate faith and devotion.

The stories mainly speak of the Pandya kings, who were devotees of Lord Shiva and their capital city Madurai, where their chosen deity was enshrined. How their Lord protected them during various difficulties and calamities form the major part of the work. It is interesting to note how in the absence of a male child, the Pandya king Malaya Dvaja enthroned his daughter Thatathaka, who proved to be an able administrator and a great conqueror. The divine plays of the Lord find full expression when God takes human form as the king Sundarapandya and exemplifies an ideal king.

The story of Bhushanapandya is significant to understand the importance of Vedic knowledge. Even though the king was religious, he ignored the Vedic brahmanas, who left his kingdom and it lost its splendour. So the Lord appeared in his dream to advise him on the importance of cultivating Vedic knowledge and asked him to respect the Vedic brahmanas. We find that in the modern age, Swami Vivekananda stressed on the study of Vedas, especially the Upanishads that form the knowledge-portion of the Vedas, and also to cultivate Sanskrit learning so that we shall be able to get first-hand knowledge of Sanskrit scriptures. Bhagavadgita, which is the most renowned Hindu scripture, consists of the essence of the Upanishads and one will be surprised to find many shlokas of the Gita resembling the mantras of the Upanishads.

All living beings are children of God, whose mercy flows to all creatures. This is proved by the story of Sukala and Sukalan, whose children became piglets by the curse of deva-guru. It is said that Lord Shiva took the form of a female pig and suckled these piglets. Later on by his grace they regained human forms. Hence, it is said that God is father, mother, teacher, friend—one's all in all.

This book, though a Shaiva scripture, can well be enjoyed by all devotees. As Sri Ramakrishna