

*Assuming Responsibility* is a stunning book. Jennifer Herdt ranges magisterially over a range of sources, extending from classical antiquity to the most recent debates in ethics, building a case with a power and elegance that will command the admiration and attention of theological and non-theological readers. This is a theological ethicist working at the height of her powers, synthesizing intellectual history, philosophy, and theology, to mount a bold and convincing thesis, which ends with joy, understood as delight in the good, fellowship, and answerability to others.

Christopher J. Insole, Durham University/Australian Catholic University

Bringing together moral philosophy and moral theology, Jennifer Herdt's *Assuming Responsibility* is a triumph of intellectual synthesis. Its advocacy of 'goodness-prior eudaimonism' is skillful and unmatched in its erudition. Her book will, in short, be required reading on eudaimonism and its history from now on.

Tom Angier, University of Cape Town

Historically informed, philosophically rigorous, and theologically insightful, this erudite and lucid book formulates and defends original and compelling conceptions of eudaimonia and obligation. At once a scholarly reconstruction of ancient, medieval, and early modern perspectives and a constructive contribution to contemporary debates, it demonstrates that eudaimonia and obligation are not ultimately rivals but have distinct yet complementary places in an account of the moral life. ... It is a conceptual achievement of the first rank and a landmark in the retrieval of eudaimonism in the field of Christian ethics.

Gerald P. McKenny, University of Notre Dame, Indiana

For too long, too many moral philosophers and theologians have thought that an account of the moral life that accents the virtues and human flourishing must forsake all talk of obligation and moral responsibility. In her terrific new book, Jennifer Herdt encourages us to think again. With a defence of eudaimonism that is ecstatic not egoistic and an account of obligation that is tethered to our ordinary practices of reason-giving, she offers an important and compelling corrective. More than that, ... she shows us how a life of right response to persons and value, to normative demands and deontic status, to grave injustice and horrific desecration, can be, by grace, a life of discipleship, a life that participates in the ecstatic character of God's love.

John Bowlin, Princeton Theological Seminary

Recent decades have witnessed an enthusiastic retrieval of eudaimonism, according to which the virtuous life is the happy life. But the critique launched by Kant – that eudaimonism is egoistic and distorts the character of duty or obligation – has persisted. Should I develop the virtues because these are the traits I need in order to flourish? Is it facts about my own happiness that determine my obligations to others?

In this book, Jennifer Herdt deftly sifts through these debates, showing why we should embrace ‘ecstatic’ or ‘goodness-prior’ eudaimonism while rejecting ‘welfare-prior’ forms of eudaimonism. Grasping the character of ecstatic eudaimonism, she argues, has major implications, overcoming the common assumption of a sharp break between pagan and Christian eudaimonism, as well as of a late medieval or Protestant repudiation of eudaimonism in favor of divine command theory. Agents cannot rightly respond to the goods they encounter unless they respond to them precisely as good, and not merely as a means to promoting their own welfare; in responding well, their agency is thereby necessarily perfected. In conversation with vital strands of contemporary moral philosophy, Herdt goes on to articulate the distinctive character of obligation as a feature of accountability relations among agents. *Assuming Responsibility* offers a fresh point of departure for theological and philosophical approaches to virtue ethics, moral agency, and the contested relationship between the good and the right.