

DAVIES, Brian; STUMP, Eleonore (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, xv+589p. ISBN: 978-0-19-532609-3.

This is yet another book to enrich the Oxford Handbook series and provide, at the same time, an outstanding summary—probably the best ever written—of Aquinas’ thought, which far surpasses *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, published in 1993. It also gives the *status quo* of the research regarding this author.

The editors are Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, eminent among Thomistic scholars. A particularly noteworthy achievement of the editors was the compilation of a series of chapters by diverse authors that complement, rather than overlap one another. The authors are mostly Anglophones, as is reflected in the secondary bibliography; there is, however, a regrettable dearth of contributions from non-English language sources.

In my opinion, this book would have been even more comprehensive had it included a chapter on Aesthetics (despite the fact that Aquinas never dealt with this subject in a systematic manner, although the same could be said of the Philosophy of Language) and more Latin terminology, in order to avoid ambiguities and clarify difficult passages.

But this in no way diminishes the great effort undertaken to compile thirty-eight contributions, divided into eight sections.

The first part of the book aims at sketching an historical background of

Aquinas. Torrell starts with an authoritative and precise synthesis on Aquinas’ life and works. In chapter three, A. Fidora emphasizes an oft-forgotten topic in the field of Aquinas’ thought, namely, the Latin Christian authors—a subject that still awaits comprehensive disclosure.

The second part discusses Metaphysics and the existence of God. The difficult task of grappling with “being” was assigned to J. Wippel, who provides a competent analysis of it and its meaning, in light of Latin terminology.

The following contribution on matter, form and individuation shows considerable originality of approach. Chapter nine covers the Five Ways, analyzed syllogistically. This chapter overemphasizes criticism against the given proofs for God’s existence, and could have been balanced by accentuating the possibility of the validity of those arguments.

The third part of this work deals with divine nature. Chapter ten, by Stump, discusses the simplicity of God, based on the distinction between *esse* and *id quod est*. Her arguments are very clear and solidly based in Aquinas’ works. The following chapter, by L. Honnefelder, highlights the question of participation (*par similitude*) and the relation with perfection. For him the solution “seems circular” and “open to objection” because of his presupposition

that “it is goodness as the perfection of *actus essendi* that *causes* goodness in God and creatures” (italics mine, p.155). But why, then, is it not the other way around, i.e., the goodness in God that *causes* the goodness as the perfection of *actus essendi*? The saying “*bonum in Deo est sicut in causa*” (*Summa Theologiae* I, q.6, a.1, ad 1) implies causation in creatures by the essentially good God, and never something akin to *causa sui*.

Chapter twelve explains Thomistic doctrine on God’s knowledge and will. This section is concluded by two chapters by B. Leftow. Both are truly valuable, and open doors for further discussion on intricate questions such as prescience and the immutability of God and future contingents.

The fourth part, about ethics and action theory, is the most extensive of the book. The first item is a chapter on emotions by P. King which expounds widely on the *passiones animae*, which are not to be reduced to feeling, having both psychological and somatic components. He also incorporates the Thomistic approach into a contemporary perspective. The chapter on Law and Natural Law approaches this subject from political, anthropological, theological and mereological perspectives. It even delves into highly complex questions such as the legal prohibition of prostitution. Particularly relevant is the chapter on *synderesis* and its distinction and relation with conscience, treated syllogistically. J. Porter deals with “virtues

and vices”, and T. Osborne, Jr. tackles “practical reasoning”, which could have been handled together with *synderesis*, but which would have resulted in a less comprehensive treatment. This section concludes with a chapter on the theological virtues, very strongly associated with Aquinas’ writings.

The fifth section begins with an excellent chapter authored by M. Pickavé. T. Hoffmann writes about the intellectual virtues, and B. Niederbacher deals with the relationship between reason and faith. Although it is clearly impossible to summarize even a reduced number of aspects of Aquinas’ thought in a few pages, the latter would have been more complete had the author drawn from the important aspects found in the commentaries of Boethius’ *De Trinitate* (q.2, a.3) and *Summa contra gentiles* (I, cap.4). The article by Pasnau is both original and systematic. He states, in passing, that “Aquinas thinks that no philosophical argument can establish human immortality” (p.363), because of the assumption that the separated soul is not the “whole human being” (Idem; *In I Cor* 15.2.924). Despite this, it is noteworthy that he recognizes a different perspective, given by Stump in the chapter on “Resurrection and the Separated Soul”. In his two last paragraphs he states firstly with Aquinas that “in order for human souls to be able to have a complete and distinctive cognition of things, they are constituted by nature as to be united to bodies” (p. 365), and he concludes that

“our minds work best when attached to a body” (ibid.). But, I am not convinced that Aquinas would agree with this statement with regards to knowledge, or only specifically with knowledge of sensible things, considering that: “*anima habet esse perfectius in corpore quam separata, in quantum est forma, non autem in quantum est intellectus*” (In IV Sent., d.50, q.1, a.1, ad 5). Besides that, as G. Pini explains, on page 496, separated souls “can receive new intelligible species directly from those substances” (God and Angels). And also: “The body prevents human soul from receiving a more perfect form of knowledge” (ibid.).

The sixth part is composed of two articles on the theory of language. Klima rightly states that Aquinas does not, strictly speaking, have a philosophy of language (neither do the medieval philosophers). To me, it seems that it would have been appropriate for the following chapter, by Davies on analogy, to consider some important technical issues regarding analogy in Aquinas’s thought such as the differentiation between this topic of attribution and analogy of proportionality.

Part seven, entitled “Philosophical Theology” (which could have been more aptly called just “Theology”), has eight chapters. The two articles by Eleonore Stump are outstanding. The first deals with “Providence and the Problem of Evil”, the most intricate opposition against the existence of God, and more specifically with the problem of suffering,

emphasized as God’s medicine for post-lapsarian humanity. Her second contribution for this section is the above-mentioned chapter on resurrection and the separated soul. One of the most relevant points is the distinction between constitution and identity in Aquinas’ thought. Regarding this, “a particular can exist with less than the normal natural complement of constituents [...], only by one of its main metaphysical parts, namely, the soul [...]. [T]he existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of a person” (p.463). The other subjects covered are the Trinity, Incarnation, Saving Work of Christ, Sacraments, Prayer and the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The last part consists of two chapters. The first is about the development of Aquinas’ thought, in which G. Pini traces some of the main topics which Aquinas developed (or even changed his mind on) throughout his life, such as the use of analogy and the necessity of grace. Worthy of note, in the final article on “the influence of Aquinas”—despite its being too heavily based on secondary bibliography—is the part in which the author provides a perspective on Aquinas outside the Schools.

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No Theological or Philosophical library should dismiss this book. Aquinas, one of the most brilliant minds ever, continues to inspire not only Thomists, but all who honestly search truth, echoing the words of Paul VI: “His philosophical knowledge, which reflects the

essences of really existing things in their certain and unchanging truth, is neither medieval nor proper to any particular nation; it transcends time and space, and is no less valid for all humanity in our day” (*Letter to Aniceto Fernández, Master General of the Order of Preachers*: March 7th, 1964. In: AAS 56, 1964, 304).

This valuable Handbook, and similar publications, are certainly important contributions to ensuring Aquinas’ validity within the contemporary context.

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EMERY, Gilles. *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*. Tr. Matthew Levering. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, xvi+219p. ISBN: 978-0-8132-1864-9

Anyone who is acquainted with recent developments in Trinitarian theology could scarcely pass over Fr. Gilles Emery, O.P. Beginning with his *La Trinité Créatrice* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), the Author has produced a series of first-rate works on Aquinas’ Trinitarian theology. Amongst others, there is his *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti: Sapientia, 2003), or more recently *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: University Press, 2007). There are also his brilliant articles in *The Thomist* including *Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (64 (2000): 521-563); *The Personal Mode of Trinitarian Action in Saint Thomas Aquinas* (69 (2005): 31-77), and *Theologia and Dispensatio: The Centrality of the Divine Missions in St. Thomas’ Trinitarian Theology* (74 (2010): 515-561).

But with this *Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, Emery evidently surpasses himself, going beyond the extensive confines of the Aquinate’s

works to the sources of Catholic doctrine on the Trinity. And in doing so, he does a very notable service to Catholic theologians in general, and Thomists in particular, by — perhaps without meaning to do so — bringing superbly into evidence the profound wealth of the sources that St. Thomas used and the acute knowledge that he had of them.

The twentieth century study of Trinitarian theology has been literally plagued by the myth that Theology in the West had neglected (or even ignored) the rich speculation of the East (particularly the Cappadocians): St. Augustine’s so-called “essentialism”, we were told, lacked the profound “personalism” of the great St. Basil and his contemporary St. Gregory Nazianzen. Ever since Theodore de Régnon’s pioneer *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité* (Paris: Retaux, 1892-1898), we have been increasingly led to believe — perhaps more by those who cited him than