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dira sans doute que ce n'est pas la seule lecture possible de l'époque moderniste, de l'œuvre blondélienne et de leur influence réciproque. Il n'est pas certain, cependant, que là encore l'historien soit parvenu à démêler l'imaginaire du réel.

Alfred DUMAIS,

SAINT THOMAS D'AQUIN, **La loi nouvelle. Somme théologique. Ia IIae, Questions 106–108. Traduction française, notes et appendices par J. Tonneau, o.p.** Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1981, 10 × 16,5 cm, 261 pages.

Les Éditions du Cerf, dans leur bulletin de lancement de ce volume, attirent l'attention sur deux faits.

Le premier a trait à la collection elle-même. « Avec ce volume, y lit-on, s'achève l'ambitieux projet des Pères Dominicains français de donner, de la Somme théologique de saint Thomas d'Aquin, une traduction française largement annotée et commentée. Cette entreprise a exigé plus de soixante-dix ans. » Il convient donc de remercier les Pères pour le service éminent rendu à la communauté intellectuelle francophone. Bien que tous les volumes ne soient pas d'égale valeur, il reste que, dans l'ensemble, les Pères ont préparé un instrument de qualité appelé, du reste, à devenir d'autant plus indispensable que le latin subit présentement une éclipse sérieuse.

L'autre fait a trait à ce volume qui traite de la loi nouvelle. On y fait état de la difficulté particulière de ce traité de saint Thomas. D'ailleurs, J. Tonneau lui-même note que l'« extrême brièveté » des trois questions de ce traité « risque de les rendre obscures ou insignifiantes ». De plus, puisque « par le vocabulaire, le style, la manière d'argumenter, elles tranchent sur le reste de l'ouvrage, elles devaient être traitées avec une attention particulière ; il fallait en quelque sorte ranimer le texte et lui rendre ses vives couleurs en le replongeant dans ses sources bibliques et patristiques ». Ce programme, l'auteur l'a observé scrupuleusement. Une formule privilégiée consiste à recourir, par exemple, à une « lectura » de saint Thomas quand l'occasion s'y prête. Bien qu'il s'excuse, dans ces cas, de ne pas reprendre dans l'index tous les textes scripturaires, souvent assez nombreux, que saint Thomas allègue pour appuyer ou illustrer son commentaire, J.T. en arrive, grâce à ce procédé, à faire saisir jusqu'à quel point le grand théologien médiéval était imprégné de l'Écriture. Le lecteur prend ainsi conscience, selon la fine remarque de J.T. à l'égard de saint Thomas, que la loi de l'Évangile, c'est ce qui s'appelle loi nouvelle.

En dépit de l'intention de J.T. de rendre au texte, par un recours aux sources, « ses vives couleurs », il ne semble pas qu'il en soit vraiment ainsi. L'œil du lecteur de ce volume ne discerne pas facilement ces « vives couleurs » promises. Comme il est difficile d'incriminer le travail accompli par J.T., on peut se demander s'il n'aurait pas été utile d'ajouter un élément supplémentaire à ce retour aux sources. On le retrouve dans certains volumes de cette collection. Il s'agit de mettre en relief les retombées contemporaines du texte de base. On sait, par exemple, l'accueil des plus chaleureux que les théologiens d'aujourd'hui ont toujours réservé aux thèmes de certains articles, tels les articles 1 et 2 de la question 106, tel l'article 2 de la question 108. N'est-ce pas une excellente façon de « ranimer » un texte que de montrer son exceptionnelle vitalité, de nombreux siècles après sa parution ? N'est-ce pas, du même coup, fournir un témoignage sur la solidité de ses racines ? Il semble que cet ajout aurait contribué à donner plus de couleur à ces questions, dont J.T. lui-même craignait qu'elles ne parussent obscures au lecteur contemporain.

Félicien ROUSSEAU

Ralph MCINERNY, **Ethica Thomistica : The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas**, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1982, 129 pp. (14 × 21½ cm).

Professor Ralph McInerny's *Ethica Thomistica : The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* is, as the title clearly suggests, a discussion of the basic principles of moral philosophy within the framework of St. Thomas. The author claims that his book is neither original nor scholarly and yet the reader will find that in several ways it is both. There is a freshness of approach and style about it which unfortunately is all too often absent in standard books on Thomistic moral philosophy. The style is clear, crisp, direct and to the point. As for its scholarship, the book is as faithful and well-structured an introduction to Aquinas' moral philosophy as any scholar with some thirty years studying, assimilating and teaching Aquinas can

make it. Most of the book's essays are, in fact, a re-edited version of some of the author's lectures and articles published in reputable journals over a period of several years.

In eight easy-to-read and easy-to-follow chapters, the author discusses the major trends in Aquinas' moral philosophy. Starting with the human act as the formal object of moral philosophy, the author leads the reader to a discussion of the "good" that man seeks to how it may and should be applied in practical life situations. He deals with these basic principles both "objectively" as they emanate from an analysis of the tenets of natural law as well as "epistemologically" as the agent is capable of knowing an applying them, provided he has developed and informed conscience and can act prudently. Throughout his discussions, McInerny keeps the reader aware of some recent interpretations that contemporary writers are giving to those aspects of Aquinas' moral philosophy that he raises.

To this effect, there are some remarks which I should like to make. For instance, in his chapter on "Ultimate End and Moral Principles" (Chap. 3), the author quotes I-II, 94, 2, and explains how in Aquinas' view there are goods which man shares with all creatures as a being (preservation), other goods he shares with only some other creatures as an animal (reproduction) and some which are peculiar to him as a rational being (the natural inclination to live in society or to lead a social life), with all the natural consequences that the goods he seeks bring with them. However, down the line in the same question, Aquinas makes allowance, which McInerny does not seem to make, for exceptions and uncertainties (art. 4), and for the inescapable fact that though those "matters of detail", as Aquinas calls particular conclusions, which flow from the fundamental premises noted above are unchangeable "as to rectitude and as to knowledge", they can nonetheless be modified depending on circumstances or situations (art. 5). McInerny is, of course, quite aware that there is an infinity of ways in which a particular action may be performed and that the further it gets away from the general principle the more it may appear, in application, to fall short of the moral ideal. He notes that "this may seem to be a defect", and explains it by saying that "it is rather the liberating aspect of the moral ideal" but fears that "this opens the door to what may be called moral relativism..." He picks up this topic again in Chapter 7, "Prudence and Conscience" and by a rigorous analysis of what a judgment of conscience is all about walks a fine line without trapping himself into saying that moral principles are purely relative depending on the perception of the agent and/or depending on the situation in which the agent may find himself. Regrettably, at this point in his discussion, he embarks on a distracting excursion on Grisez's essay concerning "The First Principle of Practical Reason". Within the context of the points he was making, one would have prefered McInerny to attempt a reconciliation between Aquinas' applied moral philosophy and the Christian approach to situation ethics which, albeit obliquely, finds its classical roots in Aquinas and which in effect represents the liberating force of the moral ideal that McInerny speaks of.

Again, Chapter 4 which deals with "The Structure of the Human Act" calls for an analysis of the act itself, the intention and the circumstances of the act. McInerny provides a very practical discussion of voluntary, involuntary and non-voluntary actions but here I looked in vain for a discussion, even a brief one, of the principle of the double effect. Other than implicit readings of it, he unfortunately deprives the student of Thomism of his insights into the principle and that at a time when the principle itself is being subjected to numerous interpretations.

Finally, the author notes that since it was not his intention to write a scholarly study on Aquinas' moral philosophy, the absence of references and footnotes may come with a mixture of relief and annoyance to the reader. Relief, perhaps; annoyance, definitely. McInerny is a scholar himself and his study has more than the proverbial scholarly touch about it and in any case even a book intended as an introduction and addressed to the uninitiated in Thomistic ethics should not have been denied the benefit of references for further study and research. To those for whom to date Aquinas has been a closed book, he could possibly become, as he did for the author, their intellectual mentor.

Other than these remarks, *Ethica Thomistica* is a valuable addition to McInerny's several publications which include *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas, A History of Western Philosophy, New Themes in Christian Philosophy, Thomism in an Age of Reason.*

Ralph McInerny is a Michael P. Grace Professor of Medieval Studies and Director of the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.

Paul J. MICALLEF