

of the sacraments to the virtue of religion, under the perhaps slightly misleadingly general title of ‘sacraments and philosophy’ by Thomas Joseph White OP; a highly suggestive essay on the importance for theological culture and religious practice of a ‘sacramental world’ by David Brown, whose partners in dialogue range from the J. A. T. Robinson of *Honest to God* via the Anglican sermons of J. H. Newman to the poetry of Les Murray and Gerard Manley Hopkins; and a typically dense and intriguing account of the relationship between sacramentality and embodiment by Catherine Pickstock.

Inevitably in a work such as this not every essay will be of equal appeal to all readers, and, despite its scale, there are notable absences. More could have been said, for instance, about the distinctive sacramentology of the Ancient Assyrian and Oriental Orthodox families of churches; about the difficulties and opportunities the sacraments present not merely for ecumenical but for interfaith dialogue; about the intersection of sacramental theology with political and aesthetic concerns. Nevertheless, the *Handbook* deserves to become a standard work of reference, and it is an unusually inspiring one.

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RATIONALITY AS VIRTUE: TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY by Lydia Schumacher, *Ashgate*, Farnham, 2015, pp. xi + 230, £65.00, hbk

There can be no contemporary theology without self-consciousness about its epistemological presuppositions. The source of this bedevilment has been traced to Descartes’ idealism (Ernst), Kant’s transcendental turn (Barth), Scotus and his Franciscan voluntarism (Milbank), the nominalist elimination of universals (Gillespie), Stoic anti-naturalism (Brooke), and a broader socio-cultural disembedding of the so-called Enlightenment’s ‘immanent frame’ (Taylor). By positing *Rationality as Virtue*, however, Schumacher sidesteps this preoccupation with genealogical determination of modern theology’s predicament and subverts an entire tradition of problematising faith’s rationality by inverting its question: can there be philosophical reasoning without a teleological account of rationality that always already invokes the theological, if only to negate it? Having used ‘virtue epistemology’ to introduce teleological considerations directly into the definition of intellectual endeavour itself, her answer, unsurprisingly, is a tacit ‘no’.

The first of a two-volume set, *Rationality as Virtue* offers, as the subtitle indicates, a ‘theological philosophy’; the promised second volume shifts the accent onto ‘philosophical theology’ that will demonstrate how the Christian *logos* provides an ‘exceptionally robust rationale for rationality’ (p. i). This preliminary volume, however, undertakes the propaedeutic task (already enormously ambitious in itself) of re-defining

reason ‘in terms that are more compatible with faith, before the question of the rationality of faith can be resolved’ (p. 5). As in previous works, Schumacher finds the resources for such a reconceptualization not only in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, but in a reading of Michael Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge*, whose ‘tacit dimension’ (‘the unknowing, sub-conscious or tacit knowledge, [that] fuels the knowing process’, p. 9) asserts an ineliminable fiduciary aspect of all knowledge (even the seemingly most objective knowledge generated by the empirical sciences). The fiduciary framework that Schumacher generates from the integration of these sources offers an account of enquiry that is governed by three phases unified by faith—‘expectant’, ‘fulfilled’ and ‘informed’—albeit ‘where faith is defined in a generic rather than a religious sense’ (p. 90). In the preliminary ‘expectant’ phase a problem or anomaly is perceived in a mode of ‘unknowing that [...] is employed to achieve understanding’ (p. 98), inaugurating a desire-driven quest for the resolution offered by apprehension of truth. The ‘arrival’ of truth involves bringing expectant faith to a degree of satiety in ‘fulfilled faith’, which (in a decidedly Polanyian move) shifts focus from the parts onto a holistic integration (p. 101), which in turn is gathered into the architectonic of ‘informed faith’, in which acquired knowledge builds upon the human psyche to enable a deeper, more penetrating and comprehensive engagement with the world.

Rationality, then, is an ongoing and asymptotic process of organic growth and development, not an inert faculty or state-of-affairs: ‘the ironic upshot is that the experiences that initially enable us to formulate ideas eventually force us to dismantle and reconsider those ideas, for the sake of comprehending an anomaly that seems important in the light of them’ (p. 93). As the triphasic account indicates, rationality cannot be reduced to a capacity for the acquisition of knowledge (as many anti-theological epistemologies might attempt to do), but is the distinctively human mode of being-in-the-world: it is rationality that is the condition for self-actualisation and human flourishing (pp. 146–158). Moreover, the shape of rationality, as a stable disposition, teleologically oriented toward frustration or flourishing, hampered and promoted by bad and good habits, can, Schumacher argues, be conceived in terms more customarily associated with virtue ethics: of particular importance to Schumacher is her argument that the ‘moral’ and ‘intellectual’ aspects of virtue hang together (p. 206) in an organic harmony of intellect and will (although, that said, there are points at which the will seems to exercise a degree of competitive priority over the intellect that many Thomists would resist).

Leaving aside the question of the detail of Schumacher’s reading of Aquinas, it is clear that virtue emerges for both as a distinctively human category, characteristic of rational animals capable of ends-directed deliberative action within temporal flow. Schumacher (rightly) says nothing of angelic intellection, nor the divine knowledge to which both are

analogically related. The virtue account of rationality is notably holistic, engaging the totality of human embodied affectivity and passionate relationality in a way that robustly (although implicitly) resists the angelism of much post-Cartesian epistemology. Indicative in this regard are the many hints toward a Thomistic pedagogy reminiscent of Victor White and Fainche Ryan (*cf.* p. 179, *e.g.*): perhaps the second, more theological volume, will see Schumacher, like Anna Ngairé Williams, connect the journey of rationality with sanctification and theosis.

Schumacher promises nothing short of a re-thinking of the foundations of Western philosophy and, in a couple of hundred pages, delivers much of what she promises. By sidestepping the genealogy of modernity—thereby resisting the temptation to formulate her proposal in deconstructive terms as (for example) a response to Kant—Schumacher avoids tarrying in the prolegomenal fields that often serve only to inoculate students against the idea that theological epistemology could ever be interesting, moving without explicit deconstruction to the ‘meat’ of her own constructive proposal. By refusing to engage the scientistic worldview on its own terms, she avoids the Pyrrhic victory of Schleiermacher’s argument for the inclusion of theology in the Fichtean pattern of Humboldt’s Berlin, *viz.* succeeding only by excavating theology of all that is distinctively theological. Nonetheless, there is a certain disengagement from the tradition that risks degenerating into shadow-boxing: there are hints towards friends and foes, but nothing concrete enough to constitute a dialogue.

It would be easy for a reviewer to engage in superficial nit-picking—does the account of fortitude (p. 194*ff*) not invoke a somewhat discredited theodicy?—but this would miss the magnitude of the contribution made by this truly outstanding book. Perhaps the only remaining structural question is that of Pontius Pilate: what, for Schumacher, *is* truth? Is it an attribute of a proposition, or a perfection of the soul in adequation to reality? There are metaphysical hints (‘the ‘mode’ of the knower expands conceptually to encompass the ‘mode of the thing’ under consideration’, p. 100), especially in the handling of participation (Chapter 2), but the treatment of the ontology of knowledge (essentially an interpretation of Aristotle’s *organon*, albeit a masterful one, pp. 55–83) is inadequately metaphysical to ground the project in its entirety, although perhaps this decidedly theological turn is what Schumacher promises in her concluding remarks about ‘the task of a subsequent work of theological philosophy’ (p. 215). For this reviewer, however, any book for which this question of the fundamental metaphysics of truth is the most pressing problematic, is a work located on the most important intellectual frontier of our times, and therefore Schumacher’s creative and sophisticated book is one that is well worth reading.

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