

RIGHT PRACTICAL REASON: ARISTOTLE, ACTION, AND PRUDENCE IN AQUINAS by Daniel Westberg, *Oxford University Press*, 1994, xii + 283.

The analysis of action theory in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas is probably one of the most difficult issues in the Aquinian corpus. Alan Donagan once suggested that there is much to learn from Aquinas's account. However, the analysis itself is often difficult and tedious. Daniel Westberg offers what he unabashedly calls "a new interpretation" to this important area of Aquinian studies. And indeed he succeeds admirably. Westberg takes his cue from the thoughtful yet until recently almost forgotten article by Elizabeth Anscombe in 1958 insisting that what analytic philosophy had to do was to develop an "adequate philosophy of psychology" [*Philosophy*, 33, 1958]. Working with this suggestion found in Miss Anscombe's article, Westberg develops an analysis of practical reason in which the intellect and will function together in the process of action. He suggests that "the practical reason is a psychological account of human decision" [P. 154]. In discussing how Aquinas analyzed the concept of "choice," Westberg suggests that "...choice is materially of the will, but formally of the reason" [p. 162]. Westberg is at pains to separate what he takes to be the "authentic" Thomas on action theory and practical reason from both the extreme rationalists on one side and the voluntarists on the other. Steeped in historical research of the period, Westberg argues that Aquinas is structurally much closer to Aristotle than many commentators, medieval, early modern, and contemporary [especially R.-A Gauthier] are wont to admit. His principal group of adversaries are the voluntarists, whose moral theory as part of their action theories depends on the will rather than the intellect. Westberg suggests that the shadow of Augustine hovers over the voluntarist tradition. This tradition was developed by the Franciscan theologians in Paris and Oxford, and eventually becomes part of the work of Scotus, and eventually, of Suarez. The renaissance scholastic, Cajetan, Westberg suggests, is also a mis-reader of Aquinas in terms of placing too much emphasis on will and conscience. That the commentators who were manualists misunderstood Aquinas is reiterated often by Westberg. Even Grisez's analysis of the first principle of practical reason, an article which so many of us read in our beginning work with Aquinas's moral theory, is found to split the function of the intellect and the will. Westberg's historical work is as refined as what one finds in John Finnis's admirable account of the history of scholastic rights theory in *Natural Law and Natural Rights* [Chapter VIII].

The voluntarist tradition eventually culminates in the Kantian account of universalizability. This produces the rule-bound moral theories so common to deontological discussions in normative ethics and metaethics. Martha Nussbaum has suggested that what Aristotle provides for us is an account of moral well-being in terms of how to lead a "good life." Of course, this is the kernel of truth in Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia*. This is in fundamental opposition to the deontological formalism common to

Kantian ethical theories. That we owe much to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* to get us thinking once again of "virtue ethics" as opposed to "obligation ethics" is commonly acknowledged. Westberg indeed wants to place Thomas in the "virtue ethics" camp. But to do that he must, so he argues, provide a reconstructed analysis of the concept of practical reason. Westberg suggests that Nussbaum among others has too quickly placed Aquinas into the camp with the voluntarists and those who deduce moral actions in an almost syllogistic manner. That this is opposed to Aquinas's reformulation of Aristotle on the contingent nature of moral activity is a point driven home often in this book.

Westberg begins his analysis of Aquinas's on action by considering the nature of the metaphysical theory which underpins Aquinas's entire approach to reality. This is a point often dismissed by contemporary philosophers who take a more Kantian view of Aquinas's moral theory as seen through natural law. Yet it seems that Aquinas's moral system is indeed a second order activity, one which is derivative from but not reducible to the metaphysical theory. Hence, the concepts of act and potency and substantial form—what I would refer to as a "natural kind" in Aquinas's ontology—are necessary, Westberg argues, to make sense of Aquinas's system. From this ontological account of the human person, especially the faculties of intellect and will, Westberg provides his reconstruction of Aquinas on human action through a "metaphysics of agency." He develops the concepts of *liberum arbitrium*, intention, decision, deliberation and execution with sophistication and insight.

One learns very much from this analysis of practical reason in Aquinas. It is, I believe, the best recent account of this set of concepts so necessary for Aquinas's action theory I have discovered. Westberg's arguments are clearly spelled out, his footnotes are a veritable gold mine of scholarly information, and his historical discussions help us understand better the general sweep of scholastic and modern action theory which often begins with at least lip service to Aristotle's ethical theory. Westberg is at pains to show that more than mere lip service is needed to explicate adequately these concepts in Aquinas.

I have two quibbles with the analysis, both very minor given the sophisticated panorama which Westberg provides for us and both connected more with issues in Aquinas's philosophy of mind. First, in his discussion of the *vis cogitativa*, Westberg seems to be aligned structurally with an analysis of this faculty put forward a half century ago by Klubertanz. I suspect that a wider reading of the *vis cogitativa* in terms of the perception of individuals [how indeed Reid distinguished sensation from perception] is important for Aquinas's faculty psychology. Westberg, like Klubertanz, appears to keep this faculty of the internal sensorium connected only with moral awareness. Secondly, I suspect that Westberg is too restrictive in his analysis of intention. He writes that "in its proper sense, intention belongs to the will." [p. 137] This follows from a discussion of the texts in which Aquinas discusses the "tending toward" of a faculty to its object. I suggest that the concept of intention itself is more like a generic concept, with one species belonging to Aquinas's

epistemology and another to the will. This would save the cognitive part of "*esse intentionale*" which both Geach and Kenny suggest to be one of Aquinas's main contributions to western philosophy of mind.

One learns ever so much from this text. It is highly recommended for any student of Aquinas—and, a fortiori, of Aristotle—who would like to see a different spin placed upon the terribly difficult set of concepts which go to make up Aquinas's action theory. This book is one to read and ponder. It certainly is a thoughtful addition to the wealth of literature on Aristotle and Aquinas dealing with moral theory which has followed MacIntyre's "recovery" of virtue ethics.

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HEIDEGGER AND CHRISTIANITY: THE HENSLEY HENSON LECTURES 1993–94 by John Macquarrie *SCM Press, 1994, viii + 135 pp, £9.95 pbk.*

As is well known, English Heidegger studies are forever indebted to Professor John Macquarrie. It was while he was working on his doctoral thesis about Rudolf Bultmann that his supervisor suggested the necessity of understanding the philosopher in order to understand the theologian. Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) fascinated, and on finishing his thesis Macquarrie began a translation that he completed with his American co-translator Edward S. Robinson and published in 1962. Since then Macquarrie has complemented his initial work with a series of lucid essays on Heidegger's thought, of which the present volume is the most recent. As expected it is a wonderfully clear exposition of a body of work renowned for its density and difficulty. The first-time reader of Heidegger who wants to know a little of what he said about being and time, thinking and theology, technology and art, language and poetry, may happily start here. However, those wanting something more than an introduction will be disappointed, especially those wanting to know if Heidegger is of any real interest to theology.

In the preface Macquarrie announces that he has used the opportunity of the Hensley Henson lectures to consider the 'general question of the status of time and history in relation to Christian thought' by way of Heidegger's philosophy. Indeed he has; but in a *very* general way. Furthermore his irenic composure leads him to avoid making judgements about Heidegger's meaning wherever possible. On Macquarrie's reading, Heidegger is a deeply ambiguous writer, especially when it comes to the question of God, but Macquarrie does not seek to question the reason for this ambiguity. His is a very amiable reading of Heidegger. While he acknowledges John Caputo's suggestion of three 'turns' in Heidegger's thought—from Catholicism to Protestantism, from Christianity to nihilism, and from nihilism to the mythopoesis of earth and sky, the mortals and the gods—he presents Heidegger's development as more of a meditative journey that takes him away from and returns him to the Catholic faith of his birth—though again this 'return' is shrouded in ambiguity.

While there is much that is ambiguous in Macquarrie's Heidegger, there is little that is truly dark: nothing that is disingenuous or dishonest, nothing demented or demonic. One might think of it as an Anglicized