

Book Reviews

Trinity in Aquinas by Gilles Emery, OP (*Ypsilanti, MI: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria College, 2003*), xxix + 361 pp.

CLAIMING MERE COMMONPLACES to be the teaching of Thomas Aquinas is a frequent failing in works on the Angelic Doctor. In contrast, *Trinity in Aquinas*, by Fr. Gilles Emery, OP, professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Fribourg, is particularly adept at highlighting the unique features of Thomas's Trinitarian theology. Deeply versed in the writings of Thomas's contemporaries, Fr. Emery proves a superior guide to the Angelic Doctor's voluminous writings on the Trinity, from the pertinent distinctions of the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, to their expansion in the *Summa contra gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*, and finally to their exegetical flowering in the *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*. Along the way, the reader is treated to detailed discussions of the unity and trinity of God, the relationship of the Holy Trinity to creation, the proper account of processions, relations, and persons in the Holy Trinity, the infamous Trinitarian "analogies," the controversy surrounding the procession of the Holy Spirit *a Filio*, and the "long and vast debate" about the relative priority of essentialism or personalism in Aquinas. Fr. Emery explains these rather difficult topics briskly, but with unparalleled ease and lucidity. What makes *Trinity in Aquinas* shine, however, is the way Fr. Emery finds passages that illuminate the distinctive aspects of Thomas's Trinitarian theology.

Trinity in Aquinas, which is a collection of seven independent studies, begins with a survey of Trinitarian theology from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. After patient examinations of Roscellinus, Abelard, Anselm, Gilbert de la Porrée, Peter Lombard, and Joachim of Fiore, Fr. Emery turns his attention to the role of *rationes necessariae* in medieval Trinitarian theology. It turns out that Thomas, for all his speculative brilliance, is more cautious than his contemporaries when assessing the capacities of reason to investigate the mystery of the Trinity. Unlike

Anselm, Richard of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and other Franciscans, Thomas is particularly wary of using *rationes necessariae* to demonstrate aspects of the mystery of the Trinity once it has been revealed, relying solely upon probable arguments. In fact, the caution displayed by Thomas in his commentary on Lombard's *Sententiae* becomes the methodological theme of the entire collection. Not satisfied with any treatment of the Holy Trinity that threatens to diminish its mystery, Thomas will likewise safeguard the contemplative and speculative order that wisdom alone provides. Consequently, faith and Scripture are the only sources for the analogies and plausible reasons that invite us to contemplate the mystery. Such concerns allow the reader to feel the force of Thomas's unique attribution of exemplarity to the procession of persons as a whole in his account of the relationship of the Holy Trinity to creation, which is the subject of the second chapter. Thus, for Thomas, the procession of the divine persons as persons is the cause of the procession and multiplicity of all creatures (67). One can imagine no better antidote to the common misconception that the medieval theologians thought of creation simply in terms of the One God!

Fr. Emery elaborates further on the methodological importance of plausible reasons in his third chapter, which takes up the complex structure of the Trinitarian treatise in the *Summa contra gentiles*. Here too, Fr. Emery treats the reader to a detailed account of Thomas's exegesis of Scripture and the various hermeneutic principles that shape his treatment of the Holy Trinity (esp. 90–91). Of particular importance, too, is the fact that Thomas abandons the theme, beloved by Augustine and the Victorines, of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son in the *Summa contra gentiles* in favor of an exploration of the essential love by which God loves himself (102, 216–17). Such a forward-looking decision allows Thomas to develop his mature position in the *Summa theologiae* on the Trinitarian persons as subsistent relations in contradistinction to the generally Franciscan emphasis on the Father as *fontalis plenitudo*, a teaching which Aquinas judges rather harshly: "*hoc non videtur verum*" (147, although cf. 197–98). Running like a red thread through all these essays is Thomas's emphasis on the Trinitarian persons. By the time that Fr. Emery addresses, in his fifth chapter, the charges of Théodore Régnon and Karl Rahner that Latin and Greek theology lay opposed by virtue of their alleged essentialism and personalism, he has amassed a seemingly endless series of quotations, all expertly explained, as evidence in favor of dismissing the charges outright. Indeed, so thoroughly does Fr. Emery make his case, that the fifth chapter seems almost anticlimactic. Even so, Fr. Emery does not shy away from some of Thomas's less than

flattering remarks about Greek theologians who denied the procession of the Holy Spirit *a Filio*, nor from Thomas's claim that procession *a Filio* is "necessary for salvation" (*de necessitate salutis*) (263–64, 267). Fr. Emery crowns *Trinity in Aquinas* with an analysis of Aquinas's speculative exegesis of Trinitarian passages in Thomas's lectures on the Gospel of John. Certain themes, such as the unity of will between the Father and the Son and the actions of the divine persons in the world, are more developed in Thomas's lectures on John than elsewhere, and Fr. Emery wastes no time explaining them in the context of Thomas's other works. Of crucial importance here is Emery's claim that the doctrine of the economic Trinity in Thomas is in no way limited to a description of the works of the persons in Scripture. Rather, the proper understanding of the Trinitarian works *ad extra* requires a robust metaphysics of participation and order not unlike the *reductio* so dear to St. Bonaventure (292–93). This is a fitting place to conclude *Trinity in Aquinas*, since it returns to the themes so impressively outlined in Fr. Emery's previous work, *La Trinité créatrice: Trinité et Création dans les commentaries aux Sentences de Thomas d'Aquin et de ses précurseurs* (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

Cataloging the virtues of *Trinity in Aquinas* is almost as difficult as summarizing it. Fr. Emery certainly knows his way around both medieval and modern sources; primary and secondary sources pack his study, and Latin quotations abound so that specialists can follow his complex arguments. As an interpreter of Thomas, Fr. Emery stands firmly in the tradition of Marie-Dominique Chenu: The *exitus-reditus* scheme figures heavily in his presentation of Thomas's thought, especially when discussing the relationship of the Holy Trinity to creation (53–59, 65–69, 77, et al.), as does Fr. Chenu's emphasis on *rationes verisimiles* (75). Like his great predecessor, Fr. Emery also has a fine eye for rarely discussed aspects of Thomas's thought, such as his innovative concept of "transcendental multitude" (*multitudo secundum quod est transcendens*; 30–31); his early description of God as artist (the metaphor that so exercised Étienne Gilson; 59); Thomas's use of conciliar and patristic sources, which was quite advanced for its day (111, 240, 269); and the importance of Trinitarian theology for understanding Thomas's doctrine of participation (42–43, 124, 288–89, 295, et al.).

With such a wealth of information, it may be unfair to criticize Fr. Emery's work for failing to address another aspect of Thomas's Trinitarian theology. Since *Trinity in Aquinas* addresses Rahner's criticism of medieval Trinitarian theology, I would have liked to see a discussion of the fifth article of the third question of the *tertia pars*, where the Angelic Doctor asks whether any of the divine persons could have assumed human nature.

When Thomas answers that the unity of the divine power would be threatened if the Father and the Holy Spirit could not do what the Son in fact did, he seems to imply that the unity of the divine nature is more important than the Trinitarian taxis in deciding the question. If so, this raises questions about many of the philosophical and theological concepts that appear in Professor Emery's essays. Particularly important in this regard are the concepts of necessity and fittingness, for it appears, at least in this article of the *Summa theologiae*, that the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinities is established merely *ex convenientia*. This is an issue of great historical and theological significance, since Thomas—at least at first glance—seems to have departed from both the Greek and earlier Latin traditions, which stressed the incompatibility of the Father's innascibility and his being sent. (In all fairness to Aquinas, this confusion can be traced to Augustine's agnosticism in *De Trinitate* concerning the exegesis of Genesis 3:8: "*et cum audissent vocem Domini Dei deambulantem in paradiso ad auram post meridiem.*") This is not merely a question of the contingency of creation and salvation—a point upon which all agree—but rather a question of the relative priority of nature and will in God's revelation of himself. If all agree that God could have revealed his nature in any number of contingent ways, no one would deny that when God reveals his nature he does not reveal another, since were God to reveal his nature to be other than it is, he would no longer be God. If, however, God is Triune and his Trinity of persons consists in subsistent relations determined by their relations of origin, it would seem that the Trinitarian taxis cannot be compromised. In any event, I think it a point of honor for Thomists (and followers of other scholastics who shared this position) to explain the thought of the Angelic Doctor in such a way that he sufficiently answers Rahner's charges.

I do not raise this issue to question Fr. Emery's findings, which are truly edifying, but rather because I hope that he might devote his numerous talents and vast erudition to a detailed study on necessity and contingency in Thomas's Trinitarian theology—perhaps in a study not unlike his confrère Gilbert Narcisse's *Les raisons de Dieu*. In the meantime, anyone interested in medieval theology or contemporary discussions of the Holy Trinity should purchase a copy of Fr. Emery's work at his earliest convenience. A work that promises to repay diligent study with profound insight, *Trinity in Aquinas* should rest close at hand for anyone who takes the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas seriously. N V

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Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism by Michael J. Buckley, SJ (*New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004*)

IN *DENYING and Disclosing God*, Michael Buckley builds on his earlier work, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), that received such justly deserved acclaim. Whereas the earlier book ran nearly four hundred pages, the current book, derived from his D'Arcy lectures, spans less than half the length of the previous book. Despite its comparative brevity, *Denying and Disclosing God* will not disappoint devotees who expect the erudition and care that marks all of Buckley's work.

The book reads like a series of lectures insofar as each chapter, though related, could be consumed on its own. The first two chapters recapitulate much of what the first book argued—namely, that the mechanics of Newton first gains their independence from faith and then presumes to give faith a more valid foundation. Theologians resorted to *philosophical* apologetics that bracketed religious experience while relying on mechanics to prove the existence of God. In their attempt to appeal universally, theologians ceded the particular expertise of theology. This strategy proved disastrous when Diderot and d'Holbach envisioned dynamic matter that no longer needed any God to set things in motion. Paradoxically, concludes Buckley,

Atheism . . . did not arise in its strength primarily from a purported opposition of science or from the rich discoveries of that period or from the intellectual movements skeptically antagonistic to any claim for certainty. It arose from the contradiction immanent within . . . its apologetic strategies. (46)

Of course, Christianity has a long history of hiding its hand. Already when St. Paul goes to Athens, he appeals initially not to the crucified Christ, but to the Athenians' "unknown God." This tradition would also include such early apologists as Justin Martyr and the long list of Christian intellectuals who would claim a universally accessible, natural knowledge of God. Though Buckley makes a persuasive argument about theology's contribution to atheism, he does not explain how the fact of this ironic contribution should or should not inform Christian use of the *spolia Aegyptiorum*. The hero of the book turns out to be John of the Cross, but the reader may well ask, why not Karl Barth?

Buckley approaches some of these questions retrospectively in the third chapter, where he defends Aquinas against the charge that the *Summa theologiae*,

with its employment of the inference of the *quinque viae* to demonstrate the existence of God and to buttress philosophically the self-revelation of God, with its reliance upon metaphysics in its treatment of the nature of God and of the trinity itself before any consideration of the mysteries of Christ, (47)

encourages a strategy similar to that of early modern apologists. As Buckley reads the first response to question 2, article 1 of the *prima pars*, the question of the self-evidence of God's existence is crucial for a defense of Aquinas against such critics as Paul Tillich. For St. Thomas, God emerges in self-consciousness like a figure in the distance. The teleological urge for authentic happiness is implanted in each person, but is known in an "inchoate" manner. Such knowledge is not its own kind, but instead is an early stage of what one hopes will become a richer knowledge. As Buckley puts it, "When human beings naturally long for happiness, they are actually and naturally longing for God" (54). In this sense, as one comes to know God as the *telos* of one's desire, "one cannot help feeling that [one] has *always known* God" (56, quoting Gilson).

Still, this reading does not explain why Aquinas waits until the *tertia pars* to treat Christ. *Pace* Chenu and other Thomists, Buckley argues that Aquinas's Christology cannot be viewed as an appendix unrelated to the first two parts. Here the care of Buckley's reading proves insightful: In the prologue to the *tertia pars*, Aquinas writes that the consideration of Christ serves as a "consummatio." Buckley points out that in the Aristotelian tradition, "one only knows something in its completion" (65). Following J. P. Torrell, Buckley states, "Christology is the consummation of theology because Christ is the consummation of the divine action of uniting the world with himself." The goodness of God manifested in creation reaches its completion in the self-gift of Christ's life and death. For Aquinas then, the gradual sense of the longing for happiness that exists in each person is only completed through a knowledge of Christ as the consummate self-revelation of the Trinity. Rather than providing the foundation for natural theology as a separate branch of theology, Aquinas "charted a radically different course from the one taken by the rationalist tradition traced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (69).

In the following chapter, "God as the Anti-Human," Buckley untangles the militant atheism of Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Echoing Henri de Lubac's *Drama of Humanistic Atheism*, Buckley proposes that nineteenth-century atheism considered God to be an imaginary force against which humanity fought to liberate itself. Before treating these militant atheists, Buckley argues that the stage was being set first by

Locke and then Kant. Locke issued a shift in what Buckley calls “fundamental thinking,” which, in this case, meant shifting “foundational thinking from ‘things’—from the realities given in nature or the ideas confronting the thinking subject—to the actual capacities of thinking subjects themselves” (75). This epistemological shift became more widely accepted on the Continent with Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. As Buckley puts it,

Kant did not originate this flood; he augmented and sanctioned it for the century that was to follow. Under his blessings, these waters become holy. Disciplines bearing such names as epistemology or criticism or phenomenologies of spirit or cognitional theory became prevalent and foundational in the nineteenth century. (78)

The historical narrative is skeletal compared to the work of an historian of ideas like Frederick Beiser, but Buckley’s account of the “turn to the subject” agrees with mainstream histories of philosophy.

Following Richard Niebuhr, Buckley labels Schleiermacher “the Kant of modern Protestantism” for instituting a turn to the subject in theology. One can certainly trace the influence of Kant on Schleiermacher, but here Buckley’s narrow focus leaves something to be desired. He argues that Schleiermacher does for theology what Kant does for philosophy: “the human becomes . . . the criterion for what we know of God—since we never know God in Himself but only what God is for us” (80). But this *pro nobis* appeal links Schleiermacher to Kant only insofar as they were both heirs to Luther. Buckley’s reading of *On Religion* also overlooks the deeper thread of Spinozist monism that runs through much of the text, a monism pervasive among the Romantic crowd to which Schleiermacher belonged, and these Romantics, though not entirely dismissive of Kant, reappropriated monism as an alternative to Kant’s analytic tendency to separate rather than bring together.

Though Buckley’s reading of the nineteenth century feels narrow, the argument that the later militant atheists built on foundations laid by Locke, Kant, and Schleiermacher manages to persuade. God and the human become bitter enemies. Writes Buckley, “It was only a question of time until the centrality of the human saw itself threatened by the very God whose *ex professo* existence it was explicitly to sustain. . . . This inherently vicious antinomy between the divine and the human led inexorably to the elimination of the divine” (96).

The final two chapters constitute Buckley’s suggested remedies for the problem of disbelief. Buckley makes an interesting case that the Christian

apophatic tradition anticipates many of the problems about religious consciousness articulated by militant atheists. As Buckley explains, apophatic theology is not a fuzzy agnosticism; rather, it seeks to develop “a faith that points beyond experience and concepts, a process through negation into the infinite mystery that is God, a reality that begs language” (110). Instead of throwing the search for God into reverse after the realization that one’s consciousness of God involves a certain projection, the apophatic theology of John of the Cross and Gregory of Nyssa implores the seeker to move toward a richer sense of a God who is, paradoxically, both accessible and beyond our grasp.

Buckley also makes the point that religious experience has been omitted from much critical theological reflection. In short, the experience of Christian saints has not been considered viable data; Buckley laments this fact and asks rhetorically: “Is it not a lacuna . . . that theology neither has nor has striven to forge the intellectual devices to probe in these concrete experiences the disclosure they offer of the reality of God and so render them available for so universal a discipline?” (130). The experiences of holy and good people should not be cognitively empty.

One could have hoped for a thicker book that filled in the details of each lecture more exhaustively, but *Denying and Disclosing God* should still be of interest to anyone concerned about the crisis of belief and the history of ideas in modernity. And even the well-versed scholars will no doubt reconsider some of their positions if they encounter the text sincerely. Instead of offering theological cotton candy—easily consumed, but not overly nourishing—Buckley provides the wholesome nutrients of a coconut that one must arduously engage before its richness can be digested. Buckley has done historians of ideas and theologians a great favor by providing an original and compelling account of how God has been lost, and how we might gain a glimpse again. N V

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John Paul II and the Legacy of *Dignitatis Humanae* by Hermínio Rico, SJ (*Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002*), 273 pp.

JOHN PAUL II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae is published as part of the Moral Tradition Series of Georgetown University Press edited by James F. Keenan, SJ. The author, Fr. Hermínio Rico, SJ, is editor of the Jesuit cultural monthly journal *Brotéria—Cristianismo e Cultura* and a guest lecturer of theology at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa in

Lisbon. In his preface, Fr. Rico reveals that the present study is “the conclusion of a course of studies of theology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Boston College.” Accordingly, Fr. Rico expresses his particular gratitude to Fr. David Hollenbach, SJ, who directed the research that led to the published work.

There is much impressive scholarship in this study. Rico provides many details related to the background and composition of Vatican Council II’s 1965 *Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis humanae)*. Of particular interest is the debate between the followers of the American Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, who wanted the declaration to have a limited juridical focus, and the followers of “the French school,” who were convinced that the document “needed more compelling and complete theological grounding” (29). Rico offers some valuable insights on this tension within the document itself, and he carefully examines a 1976 study of Philippe André-Vincent, who was concerned to distinguish the teaching on religious freedom of the council from various modern understandings of individualistic freedom.

The main heuristic framework employed by Rico for understanding *Dignitatis humanae* is that of three historical moments. The first moment he understands as the result of a doctrinal development away from the nineteenth-century papal ideal of the Church possessing “a juridically privileged status in a confessional state” (4). Thus, after a long period of resistance, the Catholic Church accepted religious freedom in civil society as a human right not to be denied.

The second moment Rico describes as the “freedom of the Church against atheistic communism” (9). It was this historical dimension that greatly informed the interventions of Pope John Paul II (as Bishop Wojtyla) at Vatican II with respect to religious freedom. Here, it was primarily a concern of the freedom of the Church within politically hostile regimes. It was also a matter of upholding the obligations of all human beings toward the truth in settings where the freedom to articulate the truth was being suppressed.

The third moment identified by Rico is one that is still unfolding. It is the challenge faced by the Church in democratic and pluralist societies where there is an emerging effort “to reduce religion to a purely private affair” and resist any efforts of the Church to influence “social and political issues” (13). The challenge, of course, is for the Church to establish credibility as a public voice in such political settings, which are becoming the norm in Europe, North America, and, to some extent, in Latin America.

The interpretative framework of the three historical moments is helpful in many respects. Rico, though, makes use of this framework to present

persistent criticisms of John Paul II's interpretation and application of the teachings of *Dignitatis humanae* within his pontificate. He understands John Paul II as being overly influenced by the second historical moment (that is, the confrontation with communism) but lacking an effective strategy for the third (that is, engagement with pluralistic democracies). Rico accuses the pontiff of "rhetorical exaggerations" and "lack of nuance" (163), "a top-down obedience-to-authority approach to moral formation within and by the Church" (169), "a biased approach to the interpretation of *Dignitatis humanae*" (196, note 205), and an outlook toward the modern secular world that may be "tendentiously pessimistic" (206).

Of all the writings of John Paul II, the encyclicals *Veritatis splendor* (1993) and *Evangelium vitae* (1995) are signaled out for their excessively pessimistic views of modern secular culture. Rico believes the pope is correct to worry about the dangers of moral relativism and religious indifferentism, but he fears that John Paul II's overly negative estimation of "the contemporary culture of freedom" (225) will undercut effective efforts at dialogue and moral persuasion on the part of the Church. He likewise is afraid that the pontiff's approach of "prophetic denunciation" (226) will rekindle old fears of "attempts to impose Catholic views upon the whole society" (234). In the final analysis, Rico believes that *Dignitatis humanae* was seeking a fine balance between truth and freedom. John Paul II, however, is hindered by "a constant insistence on the priority of truth over freedom" (221), a priority which puts the pope in "clear tension with the view of Murray and others inspired by him" who understand freedom as "a value to be respected always even when it regards people in error and evil" (ibid.).

To be fair to Fr. Rico, he does not favor moral relativism or religious indifferentism. His concern, ultimately, is to establish credibility for the Church's voice by means of "dialogue and search for common ground in cultural transformation" (176). He favors efforts at persuasion with complete respect for freedom and the building of consensus according to the democratic model. He believes this posture is more in line with *Dignitatis humanae* than that of John Paul II, who evokes "echoes of paternalistic views of political power," especially by his "direct appeals to political authorities to heed the voice of the Church and enforce demands of the objective moral order upon society through legislation" (222).

While Rico's analysis will resonate with some, I find it deficient in several ways. First, he does not seem to appreciate the gravity of abortion as a moral evil. Indeed, he complains about the "disproportionate importance" being given "to a particular issue," that is, abortion (180). Just as in the nineteenth century too much importance was given to the issue of

“religious freedom,” now abortion has become “the make or break criterion of all judgments and the focus of totally one-sided extremist positions” that can weaken the social influence of the Church and drive it into “the isolation of dead-end doctrinal immobility” (180). At one point, Rico indirectly suggests that John Paul II, in seeking to overturn laws permitting abortion, is promoting Catholicism as “the one true morality” entitled to “legal enforcement” (241, note 41). But, for Rico, to understand the protection of unborn human life as simply a “Catholic” issue plays into the hands of the secularists who want to isolate the pro-life doctrine as simply sectarian.

Another weakness of Rico’s analysis is his failure to recognize that John Paul II’s call for the legal protection of innocent human life is in complete accord with *Dignitatis humanae*, number 7, which teaches that in the exercise of their freedom human beings are “bound by the moral law” and “the rights of others” (including the unborn it would seem!). Moreover, *Dignitatis humanae*, number 11, supports the pontiff’s “prophetic denunciation” of abortion by praising the apostles “who were not afraid to speak out against public authority when it opposed God’s holy will.” It should also be noted that John Paul II’s main appeal in *Evangelium vitae* is for Catholic legislators to work for the legal protection of the unborn. The pontiff does not need to dialogue with members of his own flock since he assumes that they already accept Catholic moral teaching. For those who are not Catholic, he assumes an awareness of the natural law that stands in stark contrast to the evil of abortion.

This leads to the last weakness of Rico’s book: his reduction of John Paul II to simply one interpreter of Vatican II rather than its authoritative interpreter. Fr. Rico presents many valuable details of John Paul II’s personal involvement with the council’s discussions on religious freedom. It would seem that the Holy Father, who was personally present for these conciliar deliberations, should have a better understanding of what *Dignitatis humanae* actually taught than later commentators like Hollenbach and Hehir. Beyond this, Rico should manifest greater deference to the teachings of the Roman pontiff, who, according to *Lumen gentium*, number 22, is “the Vicar of Christ and shepherd of the whole Church.” N.V

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The Wisdom of Aristotle by Carlo Natali, translated by G. Parks (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), xii + 259 pp.

THIS IS A VERY GOOD translation of a book Carlo Natali published in Italian ten years ago. The English version, appropriately, includes an afterword that is meant to fill the ten-year gap by summarizing the most recent debate on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Natali proves to be very competent, not only in the Italian scholarship on Aristotle's ethics, but also in the contemporary German, French, and American literature. The expert reader of Aristotle will appreciate the author's constant and careful use of Aristotle's original Greek terms, and his ability to always frame the discussion of the ethics into the overall context of Aristotle's thought and writings. It is worth mentioning the book's critical apparatus, which counts many detailed and useful footnotes, the list of "Texts Cited," an "Index of Greek Terms," an "Index of Names," an "Index of Passages Cited," and a "Subject Index."

The book is entirely dedicated to Aristotle's concept of *phronêsis*—which Natali identifies with practical knowledge and reasoning—and counts four chapters, respectively, "Virtue or Science?" "Ends and Means," "The Practical Syllogism," and "Aristotle's Conception of Happiness." Strictly speaking, the key chapters are the first three, in which it is explained how moral knowledge originates choice and action. However, by concluding the book after those chapters "the reader would have received a slightly distorted image of" practical knowledge, running "the risk of limiting wisdom's field of action to individual choices, and to particular moments of human life" (111). We might add that the fourth chapter appears less systematic and well organized than the former, and not perfectly integrated in the overall structure of the book; as if Natali had originally conceived it independently on the other chapters.

The first chapter introduces and states the main theses of the book: namely, that *phronêsis* is not science (*epistêmê*) due to its intrinsic connection with the right desire (that is, with the ethical virtues); this connection is the specific trait of practical knowledge as *practical*. Two other key theses of the book, which align Natali with some recent trends in the interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, are: (1) the thesis that *phronêsis* interacts with the ethical virtues in determining the ends of the action; and (2) the thesis that practical syllogism concludes with the actual action, but it is only *symbolically* a syllogism as it involves many middle terms, and in the last analysis, it cannot be said to have a major and a minor premise. But let us go back to the first chapter.

Natali begins by criticizing von Arnim, who argued that Aristotle, in the *Topics*, identified *phronêsis* and *epistêmê*. Natali thinks that the *Topics*

does not contain a definite doctrine of *phronêsis*. However, it defines *phronêsis* as a virtue (“the virtue of the rational part of the soul”; 2) and outlines a conceptual difference between virtue and science—as “a science, unlike a virtue, can also produce evil” (6). “In the *Topics*, Aristotle had not yet formulated the concept of *aretê dianoêtikê*, that is, a virtue of the intellect, a concept applicable even to the most rigorous science” (3). In the *Magna moralia* as well “it is certain that a virtue cannot be science, but it is not certain what *phronêsis* is” (10). The solution comes with the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where *phronêsis* is featured as a virtue of the rational part of the soul devoted to taking decision (*logistikón*), and the ethical virtues are featured as the virtues of the irrational part of the soul. It follows that “truth is an essential aspect of practical knowledge” (12) because truth is the function (*ergon*) of the entire rational part of the soul. Truth is not enough, though, as practical knowledge is about the good action to perform. *Phronêsis*, therefore,

necessarily contains within itself an element of personal and emotional participation, of good desire; this makes it a different kind of knowledge from pure science. . . . If one possesses *phronêsis*, one’s desire naturally tends towards the good and cannot be directed toward anything else, not even by accident, without causing *phronêsis* itself to disappear. For this reason, of all the intellectual virtues it is the one closest to the ethical virtues. (12–13; see also 16, 19, and 26)

We should certainly praise Natali for underlining that *phronêsis* is about truth and that, as the virtue of the good moral reasoning, it must be intrinsically connected to the right desire. However, there are two things that should raise our suspicion. One is the hasty identification of *phronêsis* with practical knowledge, which might involve a reductive view of practical knowledge that finally leaves *phronêsis*’s truth ungrounded. The other is the translation of Aristotle’s “*logon*” and “*alogon*” as, respectively, “rational” and “irrational,” which might irremediably relegate the ethical virtues to a part of the soul that is, in our sense of the word, intrinsically *irrational*. The two points are dangerously connected as Natali agrees that *phronêsis* is basically about *reasoning* (16–19), and that, even if there is an interaction, the primacy in giving the ends to moral action lies on the side of the ethical virtues. The feeling is therefore strong that, notwithstanding the author’s statements to the contrary, his account of moral action will end up being essentially irrational.

The remaining part of chapter 1 (19–37) is devoted to a more detailed distinction between *phronêsis*, on the one hand, and “science” (or “*sophia*”) and “technique” (“skill, or art”), on the other (19 and 25). All

the specific features of *phronêsis* are “due to the fact” that it is “linked to a habitual state of desire” (26). Unlike *teknê*, *phronêsis* does not aim to results that “are tools for something else” (24). Unlike *episteme* and *sophia*, *phronêsis*: (a) “is not an exact science”; (b) “deals with things that can be otherwise”; (c) in this, it is similar to physics; (d) but its end is “action, not knowledge”; (e) therefore, “in it, particular propositions”—or the minor premises, which deal “with particular cases”—“are more important than universal propositions”; (f) for the same reason, it requires experience of life; (g) it allows for predictability, as “there is a certain consistency in human events” that permits “inferences and generalizations”; and (h) it is different than the treatise of ethics given by the philosophers (like the *Nicomachean Ethics*). Natali’s discussion is very useful but this part of the chapter is not very systematic, and the reader needs to make an effort to orderly identify *phronêsis*’s main traits. The reason is probably that the author is always too close to an exegetical approach to Aristotle’s texts, and sometimes the exegetical exposition prevails over a clear systematic treatment of the relevant concepts.

It is worth mentioning the author’s emphasis on Aristotle’s theory requiring freedom. “Practical actions do not happen of necessity” as “by nature, man is capable of behaving in contrary ways”: “Wrong, or morally unacceptable, behavior is thus more frequent than exceptions to the laws of nature, which are rare and monstrous” (32–33).

At page 24 there is something of which I cannot make sense. Natali puts together *praxis* and *teknê* by calling them both “practical knowledge,” and by saying that “practical and technical reason require that true judgment and correct desire should be made to agree.” A few lines later he says that “the two types of practical knowledge differ in genus”—but how can two species of the same genus (that is, practical knowledge) differ in genus?—and he adds that “*teknê*” can also be purposely distorted and used for a bad end. Now, this last statement is definitely correct but it clearly seems to contradict the previous line on “correct desire.”

The second chapter aims at explaining Aristotle’s thesis that, in moral action, the ends are provided by ethical virtues (desire) and the means by *phronêsis* (reason). Natali adds two main qualifications: (1) that the search for the means requires desire, too, and this is why deliberation is different than mere justification; and (2) that determination of the ends requires reason, too, and this is ultimately why moral action is not irrational. For Natali (interpreting *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6, 1144b1–17), ethical virtues without *logos* are “blind,” as they do not know “how to achieve [the good] in practice” (52); this is why *phronêsis* is essential to the determination of the ends. So far so good; but, *pace Natali*, this is not enough to

make the action rational. That the ethical virtues without *phronêsis* do not know “how to achieve the good in practice” does not mean, strictly speaking, that they are “blind” with respect to the good or end. And even if *phronêsis* were to ethical virtues as good glasses are to a near-sighted person, we could not say that *phronêsis* provides the seen object but just the capacity to see it. To be sure: Natali really thinks that, as far as moral action is concerned, ethical virtues and desire are on the *irrational* side and that the *rational* side is all about *phronêsis*. This is why he interprets all Aristotle’s references to the (practical) *nous* (not only *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6, 1144b12) as related just to the grasping “of the minor premise of the syllogism” (53); and he says that there is no such a thing as a (practical) *nous* grasping the good and the first principles of practical reasoning at the level of the major premise (see 59). Let me say that this is a strange Aristotle, in whom a train of reasoning can start without first principles known by the intellect.

Natali thinks that there is no vicious circle in his interpretation of Aristotle because “*phronêsis* and virtue belong to two different parts of the soul, and their collaboration poses no logical problem” (55). Does he not see that this *separation* is exactly the reason why his interpretation cannot logically work? If the ends are not known as such by the part of the soul endowed with intellectual power, reasoning about them will never start. As Descartes with *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Natali, in order to give the ends to the *logos*, has to *create* a link between rational and irrational parts of the soul, and his solution is astounding: “Our hypothesis, then, is that, according to Aristotle, virtue in general can, in a given situation, take some non-practical, pre-existing *doxa* as a practical principle, making it into an object of desire, and therefore, turning it into an end” (60). If this were so, the choice of one *doxa* instead of another would not be a choice at all but an instinct-like event, and our practical principles would be radically irrational. But why should our intellect accept this event as the *principle* of its own activity in the first place? Let me add that there is a formal contradiction between maintaining: (1) that *logos* grounds the rationality of desire by making the virtues see “how to achieve the good in practice” (here *logos* grounds the rationality of desire); and (2) that desire gives the start to *logos* by transforming a *doxa* into a (rational) practical principle (here desire grounds the rationality of *logos*). At any rate, given this approach, we should already expect Natali to give an account of the practical syllogism in which the major premise is substantially deprived of any real role. Let us see.

Chapter three starts with a defense of the formal syllogistic structure of the practical syllogism that, in turn, determines the main organization of

the chapter itself: “The Major Premise” (section 2), “The Minor Premise” (section 3), “The Link Between the Two Types of Premise” (section 4), and “The Conclusion Is an Action” (section 5). As for the major premise, Natali locates it in the calculative part of the soul (see esp. 69); this is his basic way to reduce the major premise to the minor premise. He repeats at length that the first principles of practical reasoning are not acquired by “noetic intuitions” but by “habits” due to social education, rewards, and punishments (73–75). I think Natali missed a distinction here between the (very) first principles of practical reasoning—which depend on experience but must precede reasoning—and major premises (first principles of the syllogisms), which depend on both experience and (*scientific*) reasoning (*dianoia*).

As for the minor premise, Natali identifies it with “deliberation” (“the search for the middle term”). This leads him to portray three cases in which, having no need for searching the middle term, there is supposedly a practical syllogism without minor premise: namely, (1) in the case of “exact and autonomous science” such as grammar, as “we are in no doubt about how to write”; (2) when “*akrasia* [weakness of the will] is the result of impetuosity,” and “one passes directly from the perception of a particular situation to action”; and (3) when “the minor premise is so obvious it need not be formulated” (76–78). Of course, if we conceptually distinguish “middle term” from “search for the middle term,” cases 1 and 3 fall immediately apart because case 1, to be sure about the right means, does not make the knowledge of it (that is, the middle term) unnecessary to the action, and case 3, not to formulate the minor premise, does not mean that we do not know what we do while acting—as when we say “Too late!” we know that time cannot go backward even if we do not focus on this truth explicitly. As for case 2, it is very difficult to say that there is anything there resembling a practical syllogism at all. In any case, the identification of minor premise and deliberation process explains why Natali talks finally about “middle terms” in the plural (for example, 97) and reduces the practical syllogism to be no more and no less than practical reasoning (95–96). In the end, in Natali’s account, there is no real distinction between major and minor premises; actually, there is no minor premise at all. Practical syllogism is a reasoning process in which a practical premise (that is, a mix of *doxa* and desire) is the more and more specified until becoming so concrete that it leads automatically to action. Desire is the engine of the whole process. Sometimes no step is required, sometimes many are: This does not change its nature. But . . . is this Aristotle?

In chapter four, Natali offers a useful survey of the dominant-vs.-inclusive-end debate and an interesting comparison between Aristotle’s

position and the positions held in Plato's Academy (111–24). He gives special importance to the distinction between (component) “parts” and “necessary conditions” of happiness, because the definitions given by Aristotle “mention only the component parts and not the necessary conditions” (126). For Natali, “Aristotle's theory of happiness has [a] a formal part, which consists in the identification of happiness with” active life and “in the distinction between the component parts and the necessary conditions”; and [b] a “substantive” part, which “provides indications regarding what the most important of all the virtues activity is” and “what is the most important amount of external good or necessary conditions of happiness” (165).

Natali's main goal, in this chapter, is to harmonize the two main definitions of happiness given by Aristotle: namely, “activity in accordance with complete virtue” and “activity in accordance with the best and most perfect virtue” (117). He apparently does so by reducing the first to the second: that is, by saying that “the most perfect virtue” is “the virtue of the most important part of the rational soul,” “it includes both *sophia* and *phronêsis*,” and “it is not at all just *theoria*” (151). Is this the prelude to a watered-down concept of ultimate end? Actually, this seems to be the case if we just look also at pages 141 and 143, where Natali suggests that “honor, pleasure, knowledge, and every virtue” are “chosen for their own sake” in the sense that they can be chosen “only” for their own sake and not necessarily “also” for happiness—here happiness ceases to be an ultimate end *formally necessary* to action.

Natali's book, notwithstanding some questionable theses and interpretations, must definitely be read carefully by every scholar who works on Aristotle's ethics. It would have been a more pleasurable reading, though, if it had had a little less of an exegetical approach and a little more of a systematic approach. N.V

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Common Calling: The Laity and Governance of the Catholic Church edited by Stephen J. Pope (*Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004*), 272 pp.

THE BOOK *Common Calling* was put together after the scandals over a number of priests being found to be involved in homosexual activity (which is not referred to specifically in the book which is an interesting fact in itself) and child abuse. There is understandable anger over the scandal,

and in the book, this is, not unreasonably, attributed to a failure in the governance of the Church. But what is interesting is the premise of the book, as it is formulated by Stephen Pope in his introduction, which says: "How the current system of ecclesial governance might be improved and made more responsive to the needs of believers," (1) which is actually a different question. More about this further on.

The other authors also want to change the leadership structure in the Church. Some of the motivations, at least as they are presented, are very reasonable. For example, Michael J. Buckley, SJ, says of the choice of bishops by the clergy and people in the eleventh century: "I think that if we were to follow this practice we would get better bishops in greater numbers" (74). One would of course wonder how this logically follows from acclamation. So there is at least the expression of a longing for "better bishops." Then there are the more problematic formulations, such as those of Lisa Sowle Cahill, who claims that "the historical interpretations of Jesus that have formed official Catholic views of women participate in the sexism of centuries of cultural patriarchy" (136). These two views illustrate the real nub of the problem with parts of the book, and that is that the theology of history, which is being used, is itself flawed. This is probably the most fundamental difficulty with the book.

Let me explain what I mean: Several of the authors offer "historical" studies that are then used with various nuances to argue for changes in the leadership structures of the Church. The studies such as the ones on "Cyprian on the Role of the Laity in Decision Making in the Early Church" (Francis A. Sullivan, SJ), the "Laity and the Development of Doctrine: Perspectives from the Early Church" (Francine Cardman), and "Resources for Reform from the First Millennium" (Buckley), and R. Scott Appleby's examination of the lay trusteeship issue in the U.S., raise a web of issues, but really the fundamental question is what does history mean? Then more specifically, what does it mean to say that the Church is a phenomenon in history. Some of the authors are aware that the past cannot simply be transposed into the present. For example, Sullivan says "one cannot simply repeat history" (48). But the more radical and extremist views, such as those of Cahill, presuppose that modern Western authors have some special situation in history—as a radical feminist, for example—that supersedes any other particular moment in history and any office in the church.

Historicity is an inescapable feature of human ontology, but the historicity of the Church is of a different order. It is a history within the action of the Holy Spirit. According to the Second Vatican Council, the key signs of the Church are the Scriptures and Tradition, the People of

God, the Apostolic Succession, the hierarchy, and the sacraments. But not every one of the other elements, such as events and practices, let me call them historical artifacts of the Church, is simply “there” for future use. There is a way in which the complex of the Church moves on, even as the key elements remain. While the Church never forgets that once, for example, bishops were appointed by acclamation, at the same time it is the authentic practice of the Church at *this* point in time that bishops are appointed by the Congregation for Bishops after surveys of a number of different groups in the Church. This is authentic practice, which is to say that it fits the mandate of Christ as exercised by the present day authorities in the Church.

This brief consideration brings us to the shift in project that was alluded to above. The book starts with a totally justifiable complaint about the occurrence of the scandal and the poor handling of the scandal. The leap is then made that the structure of the Church must be changed. The notion of moral failure of individuals is not fully addressed. The further leap is that, of course, laity should have more of a hand in the leadership of the Church. I did not find any justifications for any of these leaps of logic in the book except the prevailing presupposition that this is obvious. What has happened is that current left-wing agendas are being trotted out because the Church has been wounded.

Having said this, there was one chapter that, to my mind, attempted to really identify the problem and suggest a logically consequent response. In his chapter titled “Weathering ‘the Perfect Storm’: The contribution of Canon Law,” John Beal, correctly in my view, identifies the convergence of problems that one sees in the scandal. These are (1) the resentment of the faithful and the lower clergy at the “lack of accountability, transparency, and opportunities for participation in church governance” (165); and (2) the “allegedly arbitrary and capricious treatment of [laity and clergy] by diocesan bishops” (166). This book itself is a product of the convergence of these currents. However Beal does make a further positive contribution by explaining how the Catholic Church in America developed its structures, on the one hand, to accommodate to civil requirements and how it also resisted Vatican pressure “to impose cathedral chapters, which would have provided for genuine co-responsibility in diocesan administration” (170). Then on the other hand, the church also adopted “made for business models” (170) of administration. This is a telling point and from my reading, not one that is addressed substantially elsewhere in the literature.

Whatever one finally concludes about Beal’s argument, he at least sets up a historically and theologically coherent proposal, and that is that

“canon law suggests that the church might begin by abandoning the wholly uncanonical corporation sole model for diocesan organization, and the corporation sole mentality” that goes with it (171). He has tried to identify the historical accretion—the corporation sole structure—and has done the more theologically valid task of returning to the kernel of the structure of the Church. It would take a canon lawyer to analyze his proposal further, but epistemologically his chapter is way ahead of the others in the volume.

The other chapters are more of a patchwork of genuine expressions of concern, of complaints about clericalism, and thoughts about changes in structure, and these are then mixed with forlorn hopes such as Mary Jo Bane’s: “I personally believe that a process of collective discernment, guided by the Spirit, would come to a different position on birth control than the one currently held officially by the Church” (187). Another example is Terence L. Nichol’s criticism of the Conferencia Episcopal de Latino América for not putting clerical celibacy on the agenda for the conference (123). The authors tend to leap out of the theological framework to embrace politically correct positions based on no more than a fond hope.

There are a number of theological problems scattered through the text. Let me just offer a few examples. Either one claims the mandate for completely rewriting Scripture (Cahill, above) or one demonstrates a problematic grasp of the context of Scripture itself. Witness Pope’s trotting out the old saw that the distinction between the clergy and the laity emerges only in the second century (4). The fact is that even though the words “clergy” and “laity” do not appear in the Scriptures, the acts of Jesus that gave rise to the distinction are clearly laid out in the New Testament (for example, Lk 6). Let me call Pope’s error an error in the theology of foundation. He does not grasp the completeness of the deposit of faith in the revelation of Jesus Christ. The distinction between clergy and laity then becomes a merely historical development. The erroneous implication is then that what has developed can be changed.

The same lack of proper categories arises when Pope tries to shift the clergy-laity distinction to something that he wants to base on “the equal dignity of baptism” (5). When he looks at Vatican II, the same undifferentiated “something,” because it certainly is not the Church, is supposed to be apparent in the Church’s description as a “mystery” and a “sacrament” (6). The same appeals to undoubted common features, which then are presumed to override the distinctive features in the theological complex of the Church, appear in the chapter by Appleby and his appeal to “collegiality at every level” (105) and Nichol’s claim to a “participatory hierarchy” (111).

This latter view apparently was the “kind of hierarchy Jesus practiced” (115). Now, while it is clear in the Scriptures that Jesus saw that “authority is service” (117), this does not describe the whole of Jesus’ presence, it is also clear that Jesus also said: “Teach them all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20), which is an authoritative act, and it is commanding others to act with authority since holding people to the truth is indeed a service.

It is the slipperiness with categories that is the most disturbing feature of the book since terms in theology have meanings, they indicate certain relations. Without this most basic commitment, dialog is impossible. A healthy consequence of the scandals should be a serious reflection on the Church and how it operates, but serious reflection requires taking the epistemological categories seriously! **N-V**

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