

Book Reviews

Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom by David Bradshaw (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004*), xiv + 297 pp.

WELCOME TO an amazingly erudite work, ranging from Aristotle's prime mover to Palamas's "divine energies," with a sustained focus on the uses of *energeia* (with its Western counterparts—*act*, and *esse*) as its uses expanded from Aristotle through Philo, Numenius and Alcinus, to Plotinus, and (thence in the West) from Porphyry and the anonymous Parmenides commentary to Marius Victorinus and Boethius; returning then to Eastern sources—the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Iamblichus, and Proclus. This background presentation testifies to the rich resources the Cappadocians—St. Basil of Caesarea, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory Nazianzen—could draw upon for their initiatives in trinitarian theology, notably in developing the key notions of *energeia* [*act*] and *ousia* [*substance*], culminating in *participation*, especially as this notion structures the dense inquiries of Dionysius the Areopagite. These philosophical strategies bore fruit in the work of St. Maximus, St. John of Damascus, and Gregory of Cyprus. At this point we encounter Augustine, to set up a kind of exchange between Thomas Aquinas and St. Gregory Palamas; an attempt at exchange that introduces the culminating chapter, where the author takes stock of his endeavor, leaving us with a challenging agenda to assess the potential for mutual illumination between East and West by articulating central philosophical strategies needed to elucidate our shared Christian heritage. This impressively scholarly endeavor not only intends to inform us of the philosophical landscape of theologies of the Christian East, but would lead us to learn from their practice by undertaking comparative explorations, exemplified by the exchange he sets up between Aquinas and Palamas.

The initial eight chapters of the book, five of which stem from Bradshaw's doctoral dissertation in the ancient philosophy program at University of Texas in Austin, abundantly serve that first intent, testifying as well to the richness of his philosophical formation. We are instructed throughout, and

in a manner that works to display how these *ideas* can serve as *strategies* for elucidating of theological conundra, thereby offering more than a “history of ideas” narrative—though the presentation will serve that purpose as well for those of us who sorely need it. So it is disappointing that the second intent, of mutual theological illumination, fails to exploit this rich background, skewed as it is by an apologetic goal of showing the inherent superiority—religiously as well as conceptually—of the Eastern tradition, largely by relying on quite dated “neo-Thomist” readings of Palamas’s interlocutor, Thomas Aquinas, while overlooking recent retrievals of Aquinas’s theological resources. One cannot but miss (in the bibliography) secondary sources like Edward Booth (1987), Rudi teVelde (2000), Peter Adamson (2001), and Gilles Emery (2002), to mention but a few. Moreover, among Aquinas’s texts, the omission of the highly formative *Liber de causis* is especially telling, as it might have kept the author from taking (at face value) Aquinas’s “loose” use of *efficient cause* for God’s creating and sustaining action, to read it in the decidedly un-Aristotelian mode of a “cause of being.” Nor is this a pedantic contention (though it may be unfair, since some of these may not have been available before this work went to press), for this growing body of work (see Levering 2004) offers author and reader alike an Aquinas more amenable to Palamas’s intent in invoking “divine energies” than the neo-Thomist “purely philosophical” construct could ever hope to do. Moreover, when the culminating chapter attempts an exchange between East and West in the persons of two giants, Aquinas and Palamas, and fails to inform itself of this work, it will inevitably fail in its intent, for it contrasts a richly contextualized Palamas (who could invoke a historically articulated sense of *energeia*) with a flatly “philosophical” and ahistorical Aquinas, whose understanding of the unique relation of creatures to their creator is left unexplicated, notably in the discussion of (divine and human) *freedom* where modern “libertarian” constructs are simply presumed. So, for example, his critique turns on a relatively untutored polemic against Aquinas’s insistence on divine simpleness, which will conclude that “the difficulty with such a view is that of reconciling it with God’s capacity for free choice. I have argued that Aquinas failed to resolve this difficulty” (267–68). Yet work on “divine simpleness” by Timothy McDermott, Brian Davies, and others identifies it primarily as a philosophical strategy to articulate what Robert Sokolowski dubs “the Christian distinction,” so securing the unique creator/creatures relation shared by all Christians (as well as, analogously, by Jews and Muslims).

The resulting imparity in treating these two paradigmatic East/West figures also impedes this reviewer from helping to advance the question by taking issue with particulars in that attempt, since doing so would

require engaging in a didactic pedagogy of filling in the gaps—particularly unseemly with regard to an inquirer whose work I had already come to find a valuable resource in these recondite domains.

So what could we hope for, were the author to return to the drawing board? For starters, his assessment of the nefarious influence of “Augustinian assumptions,” leading, via “efficient causality [to] a kind of practical dualism . . . at the heart of Western spiritual practice” (265–66) could be nuanced by employing (rather than merely citing) Anna Williams’s work, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*—one of those “new studies” that I have recommended (268, n.8); and those “assumptions” contextualized by spelling out the telescoped narrative of cultural developments (in the West) leading to presuming “a sphere of ‘natural reason’ independent of revelation” (266). More philosophically, we “Westerners” will inevitably inquire into the ontological status these “divine energies” will require to manifest the divine essence. Is that untoward? I suspect not; moreover, responding to that inquiry would allow us to invoke traditional discussions of “divine attributes,” fulfilling the goal of “mutual illumination” among Abrahamic faiths as well as between Christians East and West. More generally, the *animus* that informs this study needs to be exposed to more judicious scrutiny. In his culminating peroration, the author reminds us that “the East has no concept of God. It views God not as an essence to be grasped intellectually, but as a personal reality known through his acts, above all by oneself sharing in those acts” (275). Yet my (1979) critical study of Aquinas made those very points (excessively polemically, I fear) precisely on behalf of Aquinas against a familiar “Thomism,” so that is hardly an East/West thing, even though such “Thomists” will perdure, where they do, in the West! He goes on: “A similar difference can be observed in regard to religious morality as a whole. For the East morality is not primarily a matter of conformance to law, nor (in a more Aristotelian vein) of achieving human excellence by acquiring the virtues. It is a matter of coming to know God by sharing in His acts and manifesting His image” (275–66). This point fairly summarizes the trenchant critique offered by Bernard Haring of the dominant Catholic moral thought of fifty years ago. The study ends with a culture critique of religion in the West, implying that its characteristic modes of “doing” theology have contributed “to the long movement of the West toward unbelief” (275). That “religion” continues to contribute to its own demise is hardly contestable; in fact, John Paul II said as much in his celebrated “confession” during Lent in St. Peter’s in 2000. But how much difference can we find between “East and West” in this regard? My social location in Jerusalem leads me to particularly jaundiced views of the roles of any of our churches in witnessing to the gospel in this

difficult place and time, but especially of Greek Orthodoxy! Yet theologies aside, each of our churches has little room for anything but *nostra culpa*. How do we say that in Greek? N V

David B. Burrell, CSC
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

Promising and the Good by Guy Mansini, OSB (*Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2005*), xii +188 pp.

THIS WORK is a reflection on the theme of promising. It begins as an analytical philosophy treatise and becomes progressively more theological, when, toward the end of the work, Christology and sacramental theology are brought into the picture.

In the early sections there are some deft comparisons of the thought of Hobbes and Nietzsche on the topic of making promises, as well as of Descartes, Suarez, and St. Thomas. Mansini observes that whereas Hobbes locates promising imaginatively in the political economy of the incipient bourgeois state, Nietzsche locates it in his construction of an antique noble society of warriors. Nietzsche takes seriously the idea that glory and pride may act as motives for promise-keeping, while Hobbes prefers to rely on the authority of the state to sanction breaches of promise. Descartes considers promising an abandonment of freedom, and anticipates Hobbes's location of obligation in state coercion, while Suarez ties obligation to command and command to the will of a superior. In contrast to all of these, St. Thomas treats the theme of promise-making in the context of his study of friendship.

Of all the juxtapositions the most stark and best articulated is that between the Christian, broadly construed, and the Nietzschean. Mansini concludes that "whereas Nietzsche makes memory the product of blood and pain, God makes use of an altogether different kind of *aide-de-mémoire*, the beautiful bow, whose arc outlines something of the transcendence of God himself" (p. 98).

In the more explicitly theological chapters, Mansini draws on the Balthasarian theme of the mission of Christ as a context for analyzing sacred promises, particularly those made at the time of marriage and ordination. Mansini takes up the principle central to Balthasar's theodramatics and de Lubac's critique of secular humanism, that we discover a self-identity through discovering our mission in Christ. Thus, whereas the Nietzschean self is wholly self-created, the Christian self is received. In baptism we are remade in Christ. And while we make no explicit prom-

ises at baptism, there is a profession of faith and a rejection of the promises of the devil. In this context Mansini quotes from St. Cyril—"when you renounce Satan, trampling under foot all covenant with him, you break the ancient treaties with hell"—and from St. John Chrysostom who likens the contract with Christ to a nuptial bond, where the profession of faith is a dowry given to the Bridegroom.

With reference to the notion of a mission in the Balthasarian sense, Mansini argues that whereas Balthasar wants a young man to ask himself, "Am I called to the priesthood or not?," John Paul II allowed him to ask, "Am I called to the priesthood or to married life?" For John Paul II the promises of a Christian marriage do share in the mission of Christ.

Mansini further observes that promising is not an affair of freedom alone, but an affair of timed, embodied freedom; thus it is fitting that the content of life-promising concern the body—"by our bodies, we are in that realm of half actuality, where there can be such a thing as progress, a further realization of act in potency, a further shaping of what can have but does not yet have the shape of maturity"(p. 140). The whole territory of sexual ethics is not limited to a list of divine mandates and prohibitions; it includes, at a very intimate level, the promises we make to one another and the language and meaning of bodily gestures.

The middle cluster of chapters focuses on the theme of God's promises to humanity, moving from the idea of creation as surety for God's promises in the theology of the Old Testament, to the role of Christ as the fulfilment of God's promises and the Holy Spirit as both the substance and pledge of God's promise in the New Testament. Mansini notes that Christ is presented in scripture as announcing the fulfilment of past promises (Mk 1:15); as being in himself the fulfilment of past promises (Mk 14:62); as providing a covenant between God and man with his own body and blood (Mk 14:24); as the pattern of our obedience to God (Jn 15:10), the one who receives the promise of God on our behalf (Gal 3:16); as guarantee or guarantor of the promise God makes to us (Letter to the Hebrews); and last, as making promises of his own to us (The Apocalypse of St. John). (Other scriptural references are also cited).

In the final section of the work there is another series of juxtapositions, including the difference between religious and marriage vows and their capacity to be dispensed; between Christian and classical pagan conceptions of marriage vows, and between Christian and neo-pagan—or what Mansini calls "modernity's"—conceptions of marriage. Mansini notes that whereas fidelity is a common theme in Christian and classical pagan accounts of marriage, between Christians and classical pagans there

are differences in the resolution with which marriage is entered into and maintained. There are many goods of marriage that only Christians can recognize. For example, for Christians children are not merely potential civic leaders, but also potential subjects in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, the contrast of what marriage is for Christians and what it is for modernity involves something more than a recognition of different goods. The more basic issue here is different accounts of binding. For Christians and classical pagans, the good binds. For neo-pagans, or what Mansini calls “moderns,” the will, never itself bound, binds.

In his comparison of the Church’s teaching on the possibility of receiving a dispensation from religious vows and the contrasting indissolubility of marriage vows, Mansini defends the magisterial teaching by reference to the argument that whereas a dispensation from a renunciation of the goods of marriage (in religious vows) is not a direct attack on the goods for the sake of which the renunciation was undertaken, but aims at the restoration of the renounced goods; the dispensation of marriage vows would touch the very goods the vows respond to and would not amount to a restoration of a lost good.

Implicit within the essays is the idea that not enough attention is given to the meaning and purpose of human promises and the importance of holding people to account for the breach of their promises. Mansini concludes that the tendency to privatize promises has come at a huge social cost—“goods lose some of their luster where they cannot be publicly acclaimed as universally to be guarded by the commonwealth itself in its concern for the common good”(p. 83).

In this context Mansini takes on board some of the observations about contemporary liberalism of the French philosopher Pierre Manent. Manent has observed that although “modern man” is neither magnanimous nor humble, he wants to be consulted. Mansini then makes the point that the ethos of an hierarchical Church runs counter to this orientation, and that “existing in private space in the bosom of a democratised and egalitarian state, the temptation will be great to think of the Church on the lines of a modern state, where all citizens are equal, where there is rule of law, and where authority depends on the consent of the governed” (p. 82). The call for collaborative ministry and collaborative leadership constantly eats away at the charismatic and sacred authority of the priesthood and episcopacy. Mansini predicts that the relevance of different measures of holiness, of the personal authority of apostolic ministers, and of obedience to the Gospel will be harder and harder to keep focused as the democratizing tendencies of the secular world find their way into the mental outlook of the People of God. Here his comments dovetail with

those of Robert P. Kraynak, who argued, in his *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy*, that the levelling effects of democracy undermine the hierarchical doctrine of the two cities, undermining the primary claim of the city of God over the earthly city. When democratic values are championed by Catholic leaders for institutions beyond the jurisdiction of the Church, it invites the question: "Why the dramatic difference between the structures of the Church and the structures of the world?"

This work will be of interest to Catholic ethicists, especially those who welcome a more interdisciplinary approach, incorporating scriptural reflections, themes in systematic theology and canon law, the conceptual clarity of the analytical philosophy tradition, and even insights from political philosophy.

N V

Tracey Rowland

John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family
Melbourne, Australia

A Short History of Thomism by Romanus Cessario, OP (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005*), xi + 106 pp.

WHILE ROMANUS Cessario's *A Short History of Thomism* is indeed short, it is filled with interesting facts, significant commentary, and creative insights. After a small blip of almost thirty years following the Second Vatican Council, the study of St. Thomas Aquinas is once again flourishing, not only among Dominicans and Catholic scholars (surprisingly and often to the chagrin of his confreres, a Franciscan may be amongst them), but also among Protestants. What appeared, hopefully to some, to be the end of Thomism has given rise instead to a new generation of faithful and yet imaginative Thomistic scholars, who, I believe, are the real hope of Catholic theology today. Those theologians who began their academic careers in the late 1960s and '70s and who thought Aquinas had finally become simply a relic (though, as a saint, his bones literally are that) have themselves become irrelevant, used merely as noteworthy but bothersome theological foils for presenting a truly creative and relevant theology founded upon Scripture, Tradition, and—the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. Cessario would not be surprised by this contemporary turn of theological events for his book makes abundantly clear that while the teaching of Aquinas may have had periods of decline, it always rose again to address the needs of the Church and the culture of its time.

Cessario begins his book with a brief history of Aquinas's teaching and literary career. However, the first two interesting questions that he addresses are: Who is a Thomist? and What is Thomism? To the second question,

Cessario agrees with Weisheipl that Thomism is "a theological and philosophical movement that begins in the thirteenth century, and embodies a systematic attempt to understand and develop the basic principles and conclusions of St. Thomas Aquinas in order to relate them to the problems and needs of each generation" (13–14). While some "Thomists" over the years have developed the thought of Aquinas with "creative fidelity," others have adopted "a woolly spirit" (14). Cessario believes that there is a "wide" Thomism, that is, those who faithfully follow the spirit and insights of Aquinas. "Eclectic" Thomism is practiced by those willing "to import large portions of other philosophical and theological systems so that they are led to relativize the principles and conclusions that constitute the Thomism of Thomas Aquinas" (18). Among such eclectic Thomists are the "transcendental Thomists," who allowed Kant to trump Aquinas.

Nonetheless, the issues of "Who is a Thomist?" and "What is Thomism?" can only be answered when one delineates the central and defining teachings of Aquinas himself. Cessario does just that. Besides the judicious use of Aristotle, Thomists are faithful to Aquinas's teaching on natural philosophy, for example, that physical beings are composed of matter and form, and that the soul is the substantial form of the body. Thomists also follow Aquinas's basic principles with regard to the moral and virtuous life. They are also metaphysical realists and hold for the distinction between essence and being. They are epistemological realists as well, believing that human beings can obtain true knowledge through their senses and intellect. They equally accept that God embodies the fullness of being and so is pure act.

While Cessario gives a fuller presentation of what is required for authentic Thomism and of a genuine Thomist, what strikes this reviewer is that almost all of what he lays down as defining Thomism and Thomists is on philosophical grounds. Actual Christian or Catholic doctrine does not seem to play much of a role in the defining process. This is not so much a criticism of Cessario's delineation as a question as to why this is the case. I think there are at least three reasons. Firstly, Aquinas never espoused a theological position that is contrary to the doctrinal tradition and dogmatic teaching of the Catholic Church (even his questioning of the Immaculate Conception was in the midst of doctrinal development and theological debate). Thus, to be a "good Thomist" one simply has to be, doctrinally, a "good Catholic." However, I think there is a second and more significant reason, which is that most of the historical debates that involved Thomists were philosophical in nature. Moreover, thirdly, the revival of Thomism in our most recent history of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries consisted primarily of a renewal of Thomistic philosophy among philosophical Thomists, Maritain and Gilson being excellent examples. It is only

in our present day that we find a revival of Thomism that is truly theological and doctrinal—taking into account Aquinas's teaching on the Trinity, the Incarnation, Salvation, and so on. This is partly due to the renewed interest in Aquinas's scriptural commentaries. What Aquinas can teach contemporary systematic theologians, having allowed Christian doctrine to set the philosophical parameters, is the manner in which philosophical distinctions need to be made in order to clarify doctrine so as to make it serve the modern needs of the Church and thus make it more luminous.

Thomas primarily utilized philosophy not for its own sake but as a means to conceive clearly and to articulate accurately Christian doctrine, and in order to do so philosophical issues had to be addressed and philosophical distinctions had to be made that had never before been fully envisaged or articulated—the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist being examples. However, these were issues of doctrine, not of philosophy; they were issues of faith, not of reason. Yet philosophy and reason came to faith's assistance. If Cessario were to write a history of Thomism one hundred years from now, I am confident he would have to include some doctrinal components and some principles on how philosophy must be employed in relationship to doctrine that would make up the definition of genuine Thomism and authentic Thomists. It is interesting that after summarizing the various manners in which one could divide the history of Thomism, Cessario states: "Nonetheless, what united all these followers of Thomas Aquinas, and continues to unite those who seriously study his works, is the conviction that the teaching of Thomas Aquinas provides a sure guide to the truth of the Catholic faith" (35).

Chapter two is the longest chapter within this small work. Cessario treats exceedingly well the history of Thomism from Aquinas himself to the end of the French Revolution. While Bishop Tempier of Paris in 1270 proscribed thirteen problematic theses that arose from the use of Aristotle, the defense and study of Aquinas continued to grow and prosper. Thomism took root not only among the Dominicans within the most prestigious universities, but also, "by the end of the fourteenth century, Thomist authors can be found working in Armenia, Bohemia, Poland, Scandinavia, and Spain: in short, the Thomist school became active in places beyond the university centers of Cologne, Oxford, Paris, and Bologna" (58).

While I had heard that there were even Byzantines who espoused Thomism, Cessario confirms this, though he states that their work was "mostly literary," that is, translations of Aquinas's works (57). Nonetheless, those Byzantines who did the translating and those who studied the

translations must have been influenced by what they read. Would that such an ecumenical and open-minded attitude existed today.

Cessario obviously lists and treats a great many Thomistic authors through the centuries, but he gives pride of place to Capreolus and Cajetan. The former, Cessario believes, rightly deserves the title *Princeps Thomistarum* (61). The latter's place as a preeminent Thomist "is above all secured by the fact that his commentary on the *Summa Theologiae* enjoys quasi-official status by reason of its being included in the critical edition of the *Summa Theologiae* commissioned by Pope Leo XIII" (68). Cessario also rightly sings the praises of the Thomists at the Council of Trent: "The achievement of Thomist authors at the Council of Trent is expressed not only in their influence on the decrees of the Council, especially those on justification, on the sacraments in general, and on the Eucharist in particular, but also in their work on the *Roman Catechism* that was published by the Dominican Pope Pius V in 1566" (74).

Chapter three, which examines Thomism after the French Revolution, is very brief; and while it treats Thomism's encounters with Hegelianism and the rise of neo-Thomism, one would have wished for a fuller treatment of this era. This is especially true of Cessario's treatment of more modern and contemporary Thomism, especially of specific authors. I would have appreciated, for example, a little more commentary on the significance of Maritain and Gilson and their differences. Being a "Gilsonian" myself, it would have been fascinating to see where Cessario himself stood, but then, he is attempting to write objective history.

Cessario is absolutely correct, having examined the history of Thomism, when he states: "Obviously, an intellectual movement that has lasted for more than seven centuries merits a place among the great traditions of Western thought. One can speak of Thomism in the same breath as Aristotelianism, Platonism, (with all of its sub-varieties), and Augustinianism" (94).

Cessario gives us a little book that is very informative, edifying, and enjoyable to read. It testifies to the great Thomistic tradition that has provided so much light to both reason and faith. What makes it even more pleasing is when one would like to believe that one is a member of this great Thomistic tradition. Romanus Cessario surely is. N.V.

Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM Cap.
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, DC