

Book Reviews

Intellectual Appetite: A Theological Grammar by Paul J. Griffiths
(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 235 pp.

AN ACCOMPLISHED philosopher, theologian, author, and editor, Paul Griffiths holds the Warren Chair of Catholic Theology in Duke Divinity School. Yet he has become liberated enough from all that to offer these reflections as a father, a spouse, and a fellow explorer of the contours of a human life lived in gratitude to the One who creates us. Framed, to be sure, by an astute intelligence, the structure of these reflections is effectively internalized so as not to distract the reader. So what results? Try the image of a series of exercises to improve our skills of improvising our way through life's obstacle course, or of a scalpel deftly used to lay bare the sinews we exercise in our daily activity. The first image focuses on practice, to which a plethora of examples constantly recalls us; the second alerts us to the fine-grained analysis we will often encounter as well. Both images call attention to grammar, as the title announces. We seldom welcome grammatical corrections until we have come to be grateful for the way they have saved us from gaffes we can observe others make. Appeals to grammar are meant to be liberating rather than dominating, however, and this guidebook into ways of knowing and loving uses careful analysis to liberate us from sentimentality, to realize a healthy relationship to what is good and true in God's creation, offering a "properly Christian account of what it is to want to know" (52), depicting "the way in which you ought to see the world if you are a Christian" (30). His skillful analysis proceeds by way of examples to alert us to healthy or to *damaging* ways we attempt to engage our *world*, focusing on creation as an unmerited *gift* in which creatures are called to *participate* through an *appetite* for *wonder*, yet always ready to be subverted by our tendency to *kidnap* beautiful things which face us so as to *own* them or turn them into titillating *spectacles* to feed our need for *novelty*, stoking our *loquacity* rather than nourishing our *gratitude*. (Italics signal the table of contents.)

Griffiths defines the "the principal topic of this book [to be] the rational creature's knowing response to the world" (76), more specifically:

“a properly Christian account of what it is to want to know” (52); and yet more pointedly: “a depiction of the way you ought to see the world if you are a Christian” (30). Yet eschewing reliance on modern epistemology (which rather takes its knocks herein), his optic on knowing is far more down-to-earth, along the lines of Jung’s apparently banal “what we do not know, we fear,” or Kierkegaard’s “children fear the dark; adults know what really to fear.” So our need to know, our “wanting to know,” as Griffiths puts it, is primary, as well as the admonitions about knowing found in biblical wisdom literature, especially Luke 14:33, which admonishes those who would prepare for the real battle of life to “renounce all their possessions.” Indeed, this admonition will guide the way he helps us discriminate *ersatz* from authentic knowing.

Griffiths explores this elementary human need topically by calling on refined discussions which have shaped the Christian tradition over the centuries, beginning each chapter with a pithy quote from Augustine. Yet his treatment of these pregnant issues is also shaped by current debate in philosophical or theological circles, yet sparing readers the usual footnotes. While that strategy is explicitly defended in the final chapter, readers by that time will have come to realize that it displays the principal point of this illuminating journey: contrasting *curiosity* with *studiousness*, or better: *mathesis* with a mode of inquiry which attends to creatures as creatures. “Advocates of mathesis seek, and often take themselves to have found the perfect method of an ensemble of spatialized, discrete objects” (149); where the “magical key is method” (148) with mastery if not ownership the goal, like the skilled seducer who views victims as replaceable objects for his insatiable appetite. Yet “the studious Christian, seeking participatory intimacy driven by wonder and riven by lament, cannot coherently seek ownership” (154), since what is brought into being and sustained by God can only be shared. Lament affects these seekers not simply because they cannot attain what they are after, but because their own propensity to grasp and to possess brings their original desire to naught. So we are presented with a searing critique, not just of the “entertainment industry” diverting our natural zest for wonder into a feeding frenzy for novelty, but of any form of schooling which hones our skills for knowing in order to satisfy a yearning for power. We are constantly faced with “if the shoe fits, wear it” by an unabashed “Christian advocate of gift, participation, and wonder” (151) towards a universe freely created by a loving God.

So this work is to be pondered, as befits its elaboration, as it traces those propensities, shaped by our culture, which so easily captivate our appetites and distort them. What is at stake is the operative sense faith can give us of ourselves:

A Christian understanding of creatures as *imagines dei*, especially intimate participants in divine gift, is different in almost every interesting respect from an understanding of humans as autonomous beings possessed of a rational will capable of universal species-wide legislation. And each is equally though differently different from an understanding of humans as desire-driven congeries of causally connected event-continua. (116)

What marks the principal difference from a Kantian morality or a materialist ideology, and the only thing that can, lies in realizing the implications of avowing the universe to be freely created by a loving God. Yet that is hardly Pollyannic, but rather to be utterly realistic:

Our pride, complacency, violence, fear, and so forth, are like . . . a genetic defect or an infection, we tend towards these like second nature, whether we like it or not. [Yet] this damage is not restricted to sentient creatures, much less to rational ones. It afflicts the entire cosmos, as Christians should never forget: the cosmos in its entirety groans in anticipation of its salvation to come. (90–91)

The difference which Griffiths is intent on articulating finds primary expression in our characteristic ways of knowing:

Thinking and speaking of creation as the gift of being from nothing, and of creatures as recipients of and participants in that gift, suggest some things to say about what it is for creatures to . . . perform the act of knowing. By definition, this act must establish a relation between knower and known, and this relation will inevitably be . . . a relation between one participant in God and another [since] knower and known share a fundamental likeness and intimacy because each participates in God. (129)

Griffiths acknowledges that “participation” is not a *category* but a *figure*, the point of which

is to indicate that it is part of the grammar of the Christian account of things to say that no account of what it is for things to be can be given that does not begin and end with God. This is exactly to reject ontological system and to place ontology where it belongs, which is a part—and always a derived and subsidiary part—of theology. (87)

He displays that he knows his “ontology” by showing how those who propose to think

about God in terms of existential quantification and necessity, . . . when pressed tend exactly in the direction of participation, [maybe even sensing] that [their] thinking does not suggest, and tends to contradict, the

intimacy between God and creatures intimated by talk of creaturely participation in God, and along with it, an understanding of the intrinsic goodness of creation. (84–85)

These illustrations are offered to help us taste how the prose this work exhibits is itself an icon of the *intimacy* associated with a conception of knowing which has deliberately replaced a modern fascination with *representation* with a classical predilection for *participation*. And that move is executed by an exacting analysis of what it means to be *gift*, enabling us to approach gingerly and modestly the daunting task of speaking of the universe as gift. For

thinking analogously about God's being is more difficult than any other intellectual enterprise: we grope, we fail, and our failures are magnified by our unwillingness to recognize the depth and scope of what we do not know and of the errors in whose truth we have confidence. (69)

Philosophers of religion, take note: this extended essay reads like a meditation of one who has come to appreciate the limits of academic study of religion, and would initiate others into the set of attitudes and practices which can nurture wonder and even intimacy with God. So it can only be read in the spirit of Griffiths's earlier *Religious Reading* (1999), offering academics a challenging transition to *lectio divina*.

Perhaps the best way to prepare readers for this mode of inquiry (if the author will forgive me) is to compare it with Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, as one might liken some of Griffiths's earlier work (to continue the trope) to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Nor is the comparison as outrageous as first one might feel. Indeed, a transformation of this sort might even be expected of those reflecting on "things divine" (*in divinis*), much as (reaching for yet another touchstone) John of the Cross signals a normal development towards a more intimate mode of knowing on the part of those who are brought to levels of detachment which foster it. Yet such detachment is not something we undertake, but something which happens to us: the very etymology of "suffer." Here the cumulative images suggesting the intimacy of this mode of knowing certainly move in this direction, as opposed to the ordinary Western metaphor of "dealing with" things. I am often reminded of Aquinas's prescient statement that our best efforts in speaking of God amount to "imperfectly signifying divinity" (*Summa theologiae* I, q. 13, a. 4), which means that most of the time we get it wrong. That is the quality of intellectual humility which this inquiry into intellectual appetite intends to foster. Yet the work is hardly limited to or even primarily directed to philosophers of religion,

nor can it be reviewed in such a way that one may content oneself with reading the review. For we are offered a guidebook inviting mature and searching human beings into attitudes appropriate to a universe said to be good by its gracious author, yet one which our possessive propensities ever seek to own and exploit for our own ends, leaving us all face to face with what we have come to call “the ecological crisis” yet now become painfully aware of its source. So we had best equip ourselves to meet it head-on. N.V.

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Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures (1988–2007) by Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) xxvii + 546 pp.

ENCOMIA for the life-long theological work of Avery Cardinal Dulles have abounded since his death on December 12, 2008. The thirty-eight McGinley lectures collected here (delivered over the course of twenty years) stand as a testament to his substantial theological talents. As virtually all of the essays appeared in either *First Things* or *America*, many will remember the general thrust of the discrete lectures. The advantage of this collection is in its cumulative force which illustrates Dulles’s sterling qualities as a theologian: a profound indebtedness to the Catholic tradition, a willingness to revitalize old insights with creativity and élan, a legendary even-handedness when evaluating competing positions, an enviable synthetic and amalgamative power, and an expository style luminous in its clarity.

Dulles tells us at the outset that the topics chosen were “of current interest and in need of theological clarification” (xxi). And he offers some hints about his own theological approach when he states, “I have become convinced that the greatest danger for the Church and theology is to accommodate excessively to the spirit of the times” (xxii). He, on the contrary, seeks to adhere to the consensus of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church while avoiding an “unhealthy traditionalism” that would not sanction even homogeneous development, the kind of progress that is to be carefully distinguished from “disruptive change or reversal” (xxiii). While not explicitly citing Vincent of Lérins, Dulles is no doubt thinking of Vincent’s insight, offered in the fifth-century, but repeated at crucial moments in the Church’s life: development most assuredly takes

place over the course of time, but it must be development that is congruous with the prior tradition, *eodem sensu eademque sententia*.

Of course, the crux of several theological debates revolves around just this question: what is legitimate, homogeneous progression and what is unfortunate adulteration and deformation? In several of the essays, precisely this query animates Dulles's work. One issue about which Dulles registers some reservations is the move toward the abolition of the death penalty. In a 2000 lecture, he points to the virtually unanimous verdict of the Christian tradition: the State has the authority to administer proper penalties for crimes, including, when necessary, the death penalty. Yet Dulles observes that "Pope John Paul has at various times expressed his opposition" to capital punishment and some theologians have argued (citing a 1977 essay in *L'Osservatore Romano*) that the time has come for a dramatic development in the Church's teaching on this issue. Dulles himself makes clear that any such "development" would, in fact, be a "radical revision—one might almost say reversal—of the Catholic tradition" (336). Ultimately, he argues that the position of John Paul II is reconcilable with the traditional teaching since capital punishment is not theoretically ruled out by the pope, but is prudentially judged, because of its possibly evil effects, as best avoided. The cardinal returns to this point in a 2003 lecture entitled "John Paul II and the Mystery of the Human Person." He repeats that the pope does not condemn the death penalty as intrinsically evil, but his deep respect for human life "inclines him to reject capital punishment in practice" (423). Nonetheless, Dulles wonders why John Paul never quotes (as far he knows) Romans 13:4 where St. Paul says that secular rulers do not bear the sword in vain for they are God's instruments in executing wrath on wrongdoers—a citation with deep and abiding roots in the theological tradition.

Another issue provoking reflection on the distinction between homogeneous development and illegitimate deformation is, unsurprisingly, religious freedom. Dulles observes that *Dignitatis Humanae* of Vatican II, when compared with earlier Catholic teaching, "represents an undeniable, even a dramatic, shift" (349). At the council itself, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre held that the declaration was a repudiation of earlier papal teaching and, as such, overturned principles inherent to Catholicism. In response, Dulles cites Newman's intimation that teachings possessing social and political characteristics develop uniquely and even irregularly, not entirely along the purer lines of dogma. Social teaching, rather, applies the unchanging principles of the Gospel to mutable political situations. As such, adaptations will occasionally be necessary and some discontinuity may be expected. Dulles is at pains to argue that a certain modicum of discontinuity does not imply a reversal "unless the Church at an earlier time ruled out precisely the

development that was to occur under changed circumstances” (350). The cardinal does not shy away from a careful exegesis of the Syllabus of Errors of 1864. While conceding that some propositions taken from the Syllabus appear to be contrary to Vatican II, Dulles insists that a properly contextual reading of that document shows that such is not the case. Ultimately, he concludes that Vatican II does not judge the teaching of the nineteenth-century popes to be erroneous, but limited by the socio-political horizons of the time. Changing circumstances have required adaptation, but the fundamental principles remain identical. Dulles’s argument here, while forceful, is not entirely persuasive. I would have liked to have seen the issue of doctrinal development vis-à-vis religious freedom addressed in a more expansive forum given the stark differences between nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholic teaching.

Many other essays are worthy of specific mention. I note only a few in order to provide a brief sample of the texture of Dulles’s work. In a 1994 essay entitled “The Challenge of the Catechism,” Dulles reflects on a disputed question that is already largely forgotten: should there exist a universal catechism? Dulles reminds us that several theologians argued that religious truth is ineffable, hardly expressible in propositions, while others claimed that all statements are inexorably conditioned by socio-cultural concerns. Herbert Vorgrimler, for example, wondered if one could speak of a “fixed, unchangeable ‘deposit’ of teaching of faith and morals. . . .” David Tracy worried that a universal catechism would be an example of an “unwelcome and unacknowledged Eurocentrism in a polycentric world church” and Johann-Baptist Metz warned against “official centralism as a defensive protection for unity” (160). Dulles contends that criticism of the draft of the Catechism did, indeed, result in helpful emendations. The hierarchy of truths, for example, was given greater attention so that the central mystery of the Triune God was always at the center of the presentation. But he also insists that the Catechism’s very existence (promulgated under the significant title *Fidei Depositum*) is itself a challenge to certain contemporary tendencies: an exegesis that limits itself to historical-critical methodology; a view of dogmatic theology that is historicist in kind; and a catechetical theory insisting on the primacy of local experience over universal Christian doctrine.

The essay “Justification Today” is offered as a reflection on the Joint Declaration on Justification signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church in 1999. The Christian teaching on justification remains a delicate theological issue. Not long ago (in an audience of November 18, 2008), Pope Benedict offered a brief but helpful synthesis of the Catholic position, adducing Luther’s important witness in the

process. In this lecture, Dulles argues that the heart of the Joint Declaration (paragraph fifteen) properly echoes both the Augsburg Confession and the council of Trent: we are justified by faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any personal merit; at the same time, in justification we receive the Holy Spirit who renews us and calls us to good works. Dulles endorses this as an excellent statement, even while registering continuing questions about several aspects of the Declaration. As he says, ". . . theologians have not yet been able to establish how, or to what extent, certain Lutheran positions can be reconciled with official Catholic teaching" (315). He then recounts those areas, such as the teaching on "merit," in which further work is clearly needed. It is the best essay I have read on the Joint Declaration since its promulgation ten years ago.

In 2005, Dulles offered "How Real is the Real Presence?" another example of his comprehensive theological thinking. He admits at the outset that at times he regretted proposing this topic since the very question "taxes the human mind to the utmost" (455). The cardinal observes that since the time of scripture itself, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist has been a constant affirmation of the Church. The council of Trent described this most precisely, insisting on the ontological presence of Christ in the sacrament, meaning that this presence takes place in the order of being and is not dependent on "the thoughts or feelings of the minister or of the communicants" (456). Dulles carefully notes that the word "transubstantiation" is unique and unparalleled, clearly exceeding the philosophy of substance offered by Aristotle, who believed that any substantial change required accidental changes as well. (This observation is important given that some theologians have argued that with the invocation of "transubstantiation" theology became clearly enslaved to Aristotelian philosophy.) At the same time, the cardinal is not opposed to new terms provided they protect the mystery of Christ's unique Eucharistic presence. Dulles goes on to examine several medieval attempts to speak intelligibly of the Real Presence, and is attracted to Aquinas's claim that Christ's presence in the Eucharist resembles the presence of the soul in the body. Finally, the cardinal approvingly cites the statement by Paul VI in his 1965 encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* wherein the pope says that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called "real" not because his presence in other sacraments is unreal but because such presence "is real par excellence" (461).

In the long view of history, Cardinal Dulles's primary theological legacy, I suspect, will be as a deeply insightful, first generation commentator on Vatican II, the defining event of twentieth century Catholicism. A careful reading of Vatican II is evident throughout the McGinley Lectures, placing the teachings of the great council in the context of, and

in dialogue with, the entire tradition of the Church. As such, the lectures stand as an exemplary model of Catholic theological reasoning. **NV**

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To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine by Roland J. Teske, S.J. (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008*), xviii + 289 pp.

JAMES J. O'DONNELL has said, "All of us who read Augustine fail him in many ways."¹ This is easy to do. Augustine's writings contain so many ideas, some rather strange to us, that we easily fail to grasp or even notice certain ones, especially the stranger ones. Fr. Roland Teske tackles some of the strange and difficult ideas of Augustine in this collection of fourteen articles originally published between 1981 and 2000. However, the essays are not for only a few highly specialized scholars; rather, they treat topics perennial to Christian philosophy, such as God, how to speak about God, the soul, creaturely existence, and time.

For Teske, as with Robert J. O'Connell, S.J., whose influence Teske freely acknowledges, much may be understood about Augustine, including many of his strange ideas, by seeing Plotinus' influence. But Teske does not reduce Augustine to Neoplatonism, nor play the Neoplatonic influence off against Augustine's Christianity; rather, he is sensitive and sympathetic to Augustine's Christian concerns. Not all will find convincing his thesis of strong Neoplatonic influence on Augustine's philosophical underpinnings (and I do not find it satisfying in all aspects); nonetheless, Teske presents his arguments clearly and provides ample citation, so that he is a valuable conversation partner.

The thesis of strong Neoplatonic influence pertains especially to Augustine's "spiritualist metaphysics." To his credit, Teske takes seriously Augustine's claim in *Confessions* 5.10.19 that the "greatest and almost sole cause of [his] inevitable error" before converting to Catholic Christianity was his inability to conceive of a spiritual, i.e., incorporeal, substance. Teske maintains that Augustine learned to conceive of this from "the books of the Platonists," that is, the Neoplatonists. Unlike those who have argued that Augustine's indebtedness to Neoplatonism means he first became a Neoplatonist and only later a Christian, Teske presents Neoplatonism as having helped Augustine into the Church, for its teaching about spiritual

¹ James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), xix.

substances provided intelligent answers to the problem of evil and that of how to interpret certain Scripture passages (see below). For Augustine, Neoplatonic philosophy was at the service of faith (cf. 264) and Christ was his highest authority (86). Accordingly, Teske's investigations include how Augustine's enthusiasm for Neoplatonism was tempered in some areas as Augustine learned of its inadequacies for the Christian faith (e.g., on what loving your neighbor means [chap. 4]), how Augustine without realizing it was sometimes limited by Neoplatonic thought (for example, on how to understand the body-soul relation [see chap. 11]), as well as how Augustine's adoption of Neoplatonic insights introduced enduring and, Teske implies, still valuable ideas into the West (for example, on divine immutability [see chap. 7, cf. also chaps. 5 and 6]; the first essay's defense of an Augustinian philosophy implies this as well).

A repeated claim in the essays is that Augustine introduced into the West the ideas of incorporeal being and of eternity as *tota simul* (and not merely as having neither beginning nor end). Before him, especially in Northern Africa, the Christian West was steeped in Stoic corporealism. Tertullian had tied existence to corporeality and thus even called God a body (*Adversus Praxeum* 7.8). Manicheanism exploited the problems with corporealism against Catholic Christianity: for example, Scripture's teaching that the human being is in the image of God meant that God has a human shape (cf. *Confessions* 6.3.4–4.6)—how else could image be understood in a corporealist scheme? Augustine's discovery from Neoplatonism that both the soul and God are incorporeal provided a way out, and provides one reason for his oft cited interest in God and the soul (and hence the title of Teske's book). That understanding the soul correctly is tied to understanding God correctly is explicitly stated by Augustine in a passage Teske might have cited (but did not) from *De Genesi ad litteram* 10.24.40:

If we but consider the soul seriously, there is no other being that can so help us to think of God, who remains immutable above all His creation, and to recognize Him as incorporeal, as the soul, which has been made to His image. On the contrary, there is nothing more likely, or perhaps nothing more logical, than that God should be thought of as a body once the soul is thought of as a body. Thus, constantly immersed in the corporeal and living the life of the senses, people are unwilling to think that the soul is anything other than a body, for they fear that if it is not a body it may be nothing. Consequently, they are all the more afraid to think that God is not a body in proportion as they fear to think that God is nothing.²

² Translated by John Hammond Taylor in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 2, bks. 7–12, Ancient Christian Writers series (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 128; translation slightly modified.

Teske does cite the next chapter of the work in which Augustine comments on Tertullian's belief that God and the soul are bodily; Augustine explains that Tertullian feared that what was not a body was nothing (203n13).

Augustine of course does not think that the soul and God have the same nature. Teske notes texts in which Augustine presents a hierarchy of being in terms of God, soul/mind, body. Corporeal things are mutable in space and time, the soul mutable only in time, and God is wholly immutable. Further, while spatial mutability involves bodily extension, temporal mutability for the mind involves a sort of extension as well, namely, the mind's distention (e.g., 150, 256n37). However, God is extended in no way; as immutable, his being is wholly everywhere and wholly "everywhen" (150–51, also 147n47). This provides another case in which Neoplatonic insights helped Augustine to understand better the Christian faith, for the Manichees had challenged the opening lines of Genesis by asking what God was doing before he created the world (see esp. chap. 9). In light of God's temporal immutability or eternity, Augustine need not give the famous flippant response, "He was preparing hell for people who ask such questions" (see *Confessions* 11.12.14), but could explain that only creatures are in time, while God is beyond it.

The latter half of Teske's essays especially explores issues regarding time: God's eternity, the eternal God's relation to creation, and creaturely temporality. Also included here are discussions of the "world-soul" (esp. chaps. 12 and 13), one of those ideas truly strange to us. The topic of the world-soul also touches on perfect contemplation and the ideal mode of existence for intellectual creatures. Some of Teske's theses in these areas are, by his own admission, tentative and come with loose ends. For example, when he tentatively argues for dependence on *Ennead* 3.7 to explain Augustine's claim that Christ saves us from time, even though elsewhere Augustine has a more positive presentation of time, the precise nature of that dependence remains unresolved (chap. 13). Did Augustine here simply adopt Plotinus's negative understanding of time or did he adjust it in some ways due to Christian concerns? And if the latter, then how so?

Further observations include the following. Teske offers an introduction that is a refreshingly frank assessment of his work. It notes his approach to Augustine (for example, O'Connell's influence), the limits of his research (the later works of Augustine, especially on grace, are not well represented), and how his essays would have benefited from subsequent literature (he mentions Ronnie Romb's book, *Saint Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O'Connell and his Critics* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006]). Moreover, before each essay Teske provides a sort of *retractatio* to put the essay "in a better perspective" as well as to imitate

Augustine's own "intellectual candor" (xii–xiii). The work comes with a bibliography and an index of names, but no subject index. Again, the articles deal with topics perennial to Christian philosophy; therefore, while Teske's focus is primarily philosophical, the topics pertain to theology. Seasoned scholars of Augustine who are already familiar with Teske's arguments may not need a collection of essays that "represent the core of what [he] learned in studying Augustine over the past quarter-century" (xiv), but students of Augustine and non-Augustinian scholars wanting a greater familiarity with the saint's philosophical thought will find the collection a convenient resource.

Thomists, in particular, might find especially interesting how, in Teske's reading, Augustine's talk of substance is especially concerned with a substance's nature—for example, in what way, if at all, it is mutable—and not simply with its existence (see esp. chaps. 2 and 6). The emphasis on nature, in distinction from existence, might suggest a more sympathetic way for Thomists to read Augustine's view that the soul is a substance. Further, the fifth essay finds a distinction in Augustine between speech, thought, and reality when talking about God that is not altogether different from St. Thomas's distinctions in *Summa theologiae* I, qq. 12–13 between naming, knowing, and reality. Given that Thomas's distinctions help avoid the Platonic error of conflating the mode of predication with the mode of existence,³ it is interesting to find similar distinctions in Augustine although he draws from the Platonic tradition. This perhaps surprising fact reminds us that Augustine can be a difficult thinker to understand. But thanks to Teske's informative essays, we can hope to fail Augustine less. N V

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Phenomenology of the Human Person by Robert Sokolowski
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 345 pp.

IN THIS BOOK, Sokolowski lets the human person show himself as an "agent of truth." As persons, we are the kind of thing to which the truth of things can show itself, "the kind of thing to whom being is exposed." This exposition happens in words; the truth is shown to us in our speaking it. Further, we are the kind of thing that can install the speakable truth in our desire and action. Most curiously, we are the kind of thing for which the truth of things

³ The point is made in Ralph M. McInerney's *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 47.

and ourselves as involved in speaking the truth can just in themselves be made to come into the light, and then we are philosophers.

The title of the book is noteworthy. It is not "The Phenomenology of the Human Person," which suggests a false finality. But neither is it "A Phenomenology of the Human Person." Neither "phenomenology" nor "human person" is qualified in any way. There is no limiting and constricting sub-title to this book. The ambition is to produce the essentials of what any and every phenomenology of the human person must in some way address in contemplating the human person in his wholeness.

The promise of the book's title is richly and comprehensively fulfilled by its contents, and assiduous readers of Sokolowski will have the pleasure of seeing the many topics he has addressed over the years—such as quotation and picturing, predication and distinguishing, parallel consciousness, moral action and friendship—inserted into the appropriate whole of which they are the parts, which is precisely the phenomenology of the human person, in an unqualified sense.

In showing how we are agents of truth, moreover, Sokolowski aims to get several other things done. First, he offers an important adjustment in how to recapitulate Husserl's work. Second, he suggests a new and less philosophically dangerous way to speak of memory and imagination. Third, he contemplates no less an achievement than the dissolution of "the epistemological problem," and a reunion of ancients and moderns. And although he does not say it, something should be said about why theologians should pay attention to this book.

The book is divided into four parts. Truth appears to us syntactically, and the first part of the book shows us the structure and form of human thinking. What is the right point of entry, the right stance from which to describe human thinking? It is not, Sokolowski says, predication all by itself, saying *p* of *S*. It is rather that form of speech in which the speaker himself also shows up, declaring himself as the one who responsibly makes the predication. Not, "the pines are afflicted with bark beetles," but "I know the pines are afflicted with bark beetles." It is the second, and not the first, that is "the appropriate whole for language," because it not only gives the speaker, but gives the conversational whole in which speech has its origin and sustaining environment. The declarative use of the first person in reporting, stating an opinion, judging, making a promise, is dependent, to be sure, on the same capacity for syntax that enables the reports, opinions, judgments and promises in the first place. The core of this part of the book shows us the evocation of syntax from the perceptual matrix in which wholes and parts, things and their features, are really there, and this as opposed to postulating the origins of syntax

either with Kant in the transcendental ego or with those moderns who think of it as some sort of hard wiring of the brain. This all readers of Husserl will be familiar with. What they won't be familiar with, what Sokolowski brings freshly to the exposition of some of Husserl's basic moves, is to insert the phenomenology of the person into a phenomenology of conversation. The achievement of a categorical intuition is something "a speaker does for listener." The benefits of taking thinking as inter-subjective are developed in a chapter that builds on Sokolowski's prior attention to quotation, an ordinary but especially revealing tactic within human conversation that provides a signal display not only of syntax at work, but also of agents of truth at work with one another.

Part two moves to the analysis of the content of our thinking. Sokolowski here retrieves the ancient doctrine of the predicables. Ordinarily in our conversation, we are predicating things that are true of some subject but that need not be true of it—we are predicating an accident of a subject. But if there is a glitch in the conversation, and someone does not know what we are speaking of, then conversation backs up to essential predication: the genus of the thing is located, as probably already known, and then what distinguishes the subject from other things in the genus is mentioned. Here, Aristotle's intuition of indivisibles, what medievals called simple apprehension, finds a description within the moves of conversation. Furthermore, there is an exciting demonstration of how accidental predication always engages some property of the subject, something that, though not a part of the essence, flows from the essence, and gives us some glimpse of the essence. We do not have first accidents, and then properties. We have essentials and accidentals together. If the pines are afflicted by bark beetles, that is accidental. But that they be able to be affected by parasites is a property of living things.

In this second part we have a first important engagement with the epistemological problem. When we exercise simple apprehension, when we come to know the subject others are speaking of, do we install a concept in our mind? Have we acquired a representation of some piece of the world we did not have before, and is it this inner copy of the thing that lets us speak about it? But what would representations be, Sokolowski asks, if they are distinct from the represented? And how would we ever know they were accurate? He teaches us first to distinguish pictures from memories and imaginations, and to appreciate the identities they engage, making the pictured or imagined present across the absences that are a function of space and time. In using words, we are again engaged in making identities present, but not via some profile or aspect of a thing. The possession of a word is the identification of the

intelligibility the word names. Our ordinary conversation thus shows itself as the fine and indeed astounding accomplishment it is, the mutual making present for one another of the intelligibilities of things. Should we think of the intelligibilities so possessed, so magically present in the words of our conversation, as “in” us, just as they are also in the things of which they are the intelligibilities? But the mind isn’t a place, and it does not contain them as the Louvre contains pictures, nor even as the memory “images,” since words evoke the pure essences of things, unadorned by any accidentals available to perception. Sokolowski leaves us at this juncture with the concept as “an intelligibility taken as present to someone.”

In nailing the intelligibilities of things, words also nail their ends, and give us things as being what they should be, what they want to be when they are in good form. Thus we are introduced to the third part of the book, which begins with the body and ends with desire, volition and action, and how these things come to speech. There is first a description of the ways in which our bodies are present and absent to us. The senses are described according as they are attuned to different forms of energy—sight to electromagnetic energy, taste to chemical energy, sound to the fluid energy of the air, and so on. Sensation turns these differing kinds of energy into a single kind, the electro-chemical energy in the brain which, together with the rest of the nervous system, constitutes the material substrate of experience.

Rather than take perception as the construction of an internal model of the externally perceived object, Sokolowski embraces the “enactive theory” of perception of such thinkers as Alva Noë, according to which “perception should be described as an interaction between the perceiver and the world, not as an internal state of the organism.” It is an important corollary of considering perception in this way that the looks of things, their appearances, belong to the things and are part of the objectivity of the thing and are not some internal reaction to or copy of the thing. A further upshot is that it would be futile to try to find a one to one correspondence of mental states and brain states, which last observation plays a role in the illuminating contrast Sokolowski draws with contemporary materialism.

The phenomenology of the person finds one form of completion in the consideration of wishing and action. Another is in the consideration of what the human being is doing when he performs his most puzzling but also most characteristic act of taking the philosophical point of view, the view from the transcendental ego. The only language we have is the language we use in the natural attitude, suited to speaking about tigers

and tables and porridge and pines. Language makes *things* present but is unsuited to speaking of the *presence* of things. In philosophy, our language must be stretched to speak about issues that engage the whole of things and of the manifestation of things. Whatever language we use will be borrowed from speaking about things, and always suggest to us that things that are not things are things. When we freshly mint some strange coinage for philosophy, the freshness lasts only for a while, and we at length and again risk taking something that describes our agency of truth as if it were a tool in some spiritual carpenter box. We may very well use the metaphor of internal copies and pictures. But Sokolowski attempts to refresh our philosophical awareness with a new metaphor, something whose metaphorical status we will not readily forget. Instead of imagining ourselves to have mental images of things we perceive, he wants us to imagine ourselves as a sort of strange kind of lens.

If we think of our brain and nervous system rather as a lens than as a canvas for images, we more easily remember that our perceptual apparatus, however we are to speak of it, is a medium, a transparency, rather than a library of film-strips. The metaphor is developed at length, and in this way, Sokolowski makes a new thing, the language of “lensing,” serve an old purpose, finding some way to talk about sensing. In other places, he refurbishes the old language, as with the “light” of the agent intellect, which becomes bringing the possibilities of syntax to bear on what is perceived, or startles us with an imaginative translation, as when “species” becomes “the thinkable look.” This finding of new metaphors and reviving of old ones, is a part of the program of the reconciliation of ancients and moderns. The chief part of this reconciliation, however, is the “epistemological problem,” to which the fourth part of the book is entirely devoted.

Sokolowski begins with a patient sifting of the texts, first of Aristotle, and then of Aquinas. Both assert that the knower is identical with the known, which is not an explanation of knowledge so much as an assertion that there is such a thing as knowledge, that there is such a thing as the manifestation of being to human datives. But both also invoke the language of likeness or similitude in order to speak of knowledge, especially Aquinas, for whom understanding involves not only the passive reception of intelligible “species,” but the production of mental words, the “concepts” that seem to land us squarely in representationalism.

The trouble with talk of likenesses and similitudes arises when we stay in the natural attitude and suppose we have named things like pictures or photographs, a kind of naturally occurring mental picture. Then, speaking of interior representations and likenesses, we suppose that, rather than merely indicating the presence of what is known, we have accounted for

it. To the contrary, to have a “concept of X” is just to advert to the presence of the thing in its intelligibility to a human agent of truth. The *eidos* or species of a thing is not its representation but its intelligibility. “The intelligibility of thing is not multiplied or copied. It is one and the same in its various existences.” By the end of the book, we shall have had to think through more carefully what we really mean by the immateriality of mind.

I pass over many graceful and illuminating things. It is time to say why theologians should pay attention to this phenomenology of the human person. For one thing, it is as nice a response to the call of John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio* as one could wish for. The Pope invited philosophers to a renewed attention to truth and being, to man and metaphysics. Sokolowski’s book is wholly devoted to showing man as the agent of truth—the truth of things, the truth of himself, the truth of being. Such a consideration of man in relation to being and truth is a sort of necessary presupposition of making sense of the very idea of revelation, and so of theology generally.

More particularly, the analysis of quotation and of “recapitulation” are useful not only within a theology of revelation, but also as a means of tying together revelation and hagiography, the scriptures and ecclesial and magisterial teaching. Sokolowski’s observations on the problem of philosophical language cast light on the distinct but related problem of theological language. Language must be able to be stretched philosophically, in order to speak about presence and presencing and truth, if it is to be able to be stretched theologically to speak of the manifestation of what is beyond finite being, something that is the ground of manifestation as well as of everything that is manifested. Correlatively, the human being must be appreciated as an agent of truth if he can be a hearer of Truth; he has to be appreciated as constructing and articulating the world by his words and syntax if he is to let himself be re-constructed by the Word of God and a syntax that can articulate something beyond the world. The phenomenology of words prepares us for the theology of the Word. N·V

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