

Book Reviews

Divine Election: A Catholic Orientation in Dogmatic and Ecumenical Perspective by Eduardo J. Echeverria (*Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016*), 314 pp.

THIS STUDY is an ambitious and wide-ranging effort to articulate the clear but generous boundaries of Roman Catholic orthodox teaching concerning predestination within the context of alternatives, both within and without Roman Catholicism. Eduardo J. Echeverria's interlocutors thus range from the Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) to the Dutch Reformed theologians Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) and G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996), as well as the German Protestant Karl Barth (1886–1968), Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888), and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). A noteworthy feature of Echeverria's engagement with these diverse figures is his care to provide as nuanced and sympathetic an account of their views as possible. Thus, even where there is disagreement—and in some cases it is sharp—Echeverria provides a model of principled and charitable ecumenical interaction.

Echeverria's erudition is on full display in this volume. In addition to those figures named above, who receive chapter-level attention, Echeverria brings to bear a wide array of secondary sources and commentators related to the figures themselves and their respective traditions or schools of thought, as well as to Scripture and Church tradition. If the doctrine of divine predestination has been called “a portentous, awesome word in theology” (Scheeben) and “deep waters, in which every human mind begins to flounder” (Balthasar), then this treatment does justice to its subject matter by consistently placing the reader into very deep waters indeed.

At the same time, Echeverria provides a very helpful and summative statement at the end of each chapter, as well as in the concluding chapter of the book itself, concerning the Roman Catholic orientation for the elements that have been discussed in the preceding sections. This “Catholic orientation” is one of the clear strengths of the book and provides a valuable service for those looking to, as Echeverria puts it, understand “the boundaries of confessional Catholicism” (283). As might be expected, given the disagreements over predestination and grace that were at issue during the era of the Protestant Reformation, the Council of the Trent

figures largely in drawing such boundaries.

Nevertheless, Echeverria is to be commended for making clear from the outset that predestination is itself an ecumenical topic. Much popular and even semi-academic writing has characterized predestination as a specifically Protestant, and particularly Reformed or Calvinist, distinctive. Not so, contends Echeverria. Predestination is itself a biblical doctrine, and thereby an inheritance of theological tradition from the Church Fathers onward, particularly Augustine in the West. Echeverria's book thus explores questions that are of ecumenical or universal concern to all Christians: "The topic of the mystery of God in himself and his relationship with human persons, in short, divine election and human freedom. In other words, how do we reconcile God's sovereignty of grace with human freedom, not just in general but particularly with respect to the Church's full understanding of God's plan of salvation as a work of grace?" (2).

Even if predestination as such is not solely the domain of the Reformed tradition, Echeverria does consider whether Calvin, perhaps that tradition's most identifiable figure, is culpable of the heresy of *predestinarianism*, which logically equates and holds as symmetrical God's decision to elect some to eternal life and reprobate others to eternal damnation *in the same manner and mode* (62). Likewise, the Reformed tradition, as represented by Calvin, is judged to depart from the "Augustinian Principle," which holds that human nature remains fundamentally unchanged in the states of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation (36). Because this position holds that human nature is capable only of evil in the fallen state, "this fallen state is inconsistent with Calvin's description of the created will in its pre-fallen condition" (46). Echeverria leaves unexplored how the basically Augustinian view that humanity in the fallen state is unable to not sin (*non posse non peccare*), affirmed and codified by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), differs from Calvin's view and is itself consistent with the so-called Augustinian Principle.

A characteristic feature of Echeverria's treatment of the views of figures like Calvin and Barth is the use of contemporary analytic categories to attempt to locate and identify their thought. Thus, writes Echeverria, "Calvin is a theological compatibilist regarding free will" (39), while Barth is likewise "a compatibilist regarding freedom" (160), and Bavinck "rejects libertarian freedom—i.e., the freedom of indifference—as inconsistent with divine foreknowledge, and hence embraces compatibilism" (52). A positive aspect of this approach is that it can fruitfully put figures from the past into contemporary conversations. A concomitant danger, however, is that such categories impose foreign or anachronistic modes of thought on historical figures, which can impede a sympathetic and immanent

understanding of what those figures thought of themselves and intended to teach.

I have no doubt that Echeverria has attempted in good faith and out of good will to truly and fairly represent Calvin's views of predestination. At the same time, Echeverria admits that he has difficulty seeing the coherence of Reformed views (e.g., 46, 52, 59). Part of the difficulty in understanding might be categorical or terminological. When Calvin is read as holding to "a theory of a will that is unable to produce any moral good at all" (44; per Dewey Houtenga), this is understood as being synonymous with a rejection of libertarian free will defined as "having the power of contrary choice between good and evil" (117). But might anyone other than a Pelagian really affirm that fallen humanity has the innate and natural capacity to simply choose between good and evil? In such denials of the free choice of the good by fallen humanity, Calvin is not to be read as meaning that there is no power of contrary choice in the human will in any sense. He is not talking in the first place about mundane matters of sitting down or standing up, staying in or going out. Calvin's point is thoroughly soteriological: no action by a fallen, sinful human being can satisfy the conditions of goodness. This is not to say there is no way in which mundane actions might be distinguished, or that all human action is as bad as it possibly could be. But it is to say that, whatever civil or mundane moral good might be possible on the basis of God's common grace, none of that reaches the level of what might be called Christian good, and certainly not to the level of saving or meritorious good.

Echeverria rejects this reading of Calvin, what he calls a "mixed view," in a note engaging the work of contemporary analytical theologian Oliver Crisp (39–40n30). But such a distinction is absolutely fundamental to understanding the Reformed position on human work and merit. The Reformed point is not that there is no standard by which human conduct might be judged to be relatively better or worse. It is rather that no human work is able to rise to the level of that which is truly good in its fullest sense. The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 defines this as that which "proceed from true faith, and are done according to the Law of God, unto His glory."¹ If this is the standard that defines good works, then clearly an unbeliever in a fallen state is not capable of performing good works. Perhaps unbelievers and pagans can fulfill some external aspects of some elements of the law of God. Reformers including Luther and Calvin thus

¹ Lord's Day 33, Question and Answer 91 (*Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: 1523–1693*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008–2014], 2:790).

affirm that, for example, the estate of marriage and the ordinance of government exist among the pagans, which is an acknowledgment of the universal validity and response (at least at some level) to commandments against adultery and civil injustice. But such activities, while they may be identical from an external perspective, by definition cannot flow out of a true faith or fulfill the interior requirements and final *telos* of the law.

In this way, at least one cause of the misunderstanding might be the application of terms or analytic categories in ways that distort or make unclear the purpose of a thinker in his or her original context. Calvin is not, in the first place, working out a metaphysical theory of human action relative to divine omnipotence. He is articulating a soteriological doctrine of grace and good works relative to divine election. The latter may well have implications for the former, but broader philosophical categories of human causality may be applied to specific soteriological concerns in ways that obscure or unnecessarily problematize a theologian's doctrinal formulation.

One of Echeverría's purposes is to lay out the boundaries of Roman Catholic confessionalism regarding predestination and related issues, and in this regard, he is correct to criticize the Reformed, who have, since the time of Trent, been beyond the bounds of Roman Catholic orthodoxy. But Echeverría is not simply interested in deciding who is out of bounds. He is also interested in exploring the diversity and dynamism of views that are within the bounds of Roman Catholic orthodoxy. In this way, he engages the early modern and contemporary debates over Molinism and middle knowledge, as well as universalism.

Echeverría rejects Thomistic negative reprobation or preterition as "a theologically problematic notion that seems to lead to the denial of the following: the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work for all men, the universality of God's salvific will (1 Tim 2:4–6), contradicting the justice of God as well as man's freedom" (73). Likewise, he affirms that "a Molinist *cum* Congruist account of the reconciliation of predestination and freedom is within the boundaries of confessional Catholicism's teaching on grace and freedom" (284). With respect to universalism, at least the "hopeful" version espoused by Balthasar, Echeverría is dubious: "Balthasar says, it is 'infinitely improbable' (citing with approval the phrase of Edith Stein) that anyone is damned, given the complete triumph of grace over all things contrary to God's love manifested in his redemptive work in Christ. This conclusion is not within the bounds of Confessional Catholicism" (273).

Echeverría has done excellent work in identifying and unraveling some of the major threads of the tapestry of predestination in the history of Christian thought. In so doing, he shows himself to be an astute and care-

ful reader of figures from a variety of traditions and persuasions. This book is particularly helpful for identifying the diversity within orthodoxy that characterizes confessional Roman Catholicism. Echeverria notably identifies this as a “Catholic form of synergism in which man’s free response participates in God’s gift of salvation” that “is neither pelagian nor semi-pelagian, which are its heretical forms” (281). Echeverria’s effort at exploring and articulating a nonheretical form of synergism according to Roman Catholic confessional standards is salutary. The broader ecumenical question remains of whether there is a nonheretical form of monergism that might be identified as legitimate, whether for Roman Catholics or for Christians more broadly. As a Reformed theologian, I find this to be one of the most salient features of these debates over the last half millennium, as confessional orthodoxy concerning predestination has been more narrowly defined by differing ecclesiastical traditions and is increasingly identified along denominational lines. N. V.

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Exemplarist Moral Theory by Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2017*), xiii + 274 pp.

THIS BOOK is the long-awaited culmination of Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski’s work over the past decade on a comprehensive moral theory grounded in the admiration of concrete exemplars. The theory appears in inchoate form in her 2004 book *Divine Motivation Theory*, in which Zagzebski first defends the claim that the emotion of admiration is the primary vehicle by which we apprehend goodness in moral agents. In a 2010 article,¹ she provides a more detailed elaboration of the theory and its transformative potential for the field of moral philosophy. Her 2015 Gifford Lectures, collectively entitled “Exemplarist Virtue Theory,”² present an even more mature version of the theory and establish the itinerary that comes to structure the chapters of the monograph. Zagzebski sets out five distinct aims for the book. The following paragraphs will consider each in turn.

The first and most general aim is the construction of an ethical theory that can provide the exhaustive account of human action and perform

¹ “Exemplarist Virtue Theory,” *Metaphilosophy* 41, no. 1–2 (2010): 41–57.

² giffordlectures.org/lectures/exemplarist-virtue-theory.

the same sort of evaluative tasks as deontological, consequentialist, or virtue-based theories. That Zagzebski acknowledges from the start that her book can provide only the initial framework and agenda for this theory makes this goal no less ambitious in scope. The premise most fundamental to the project is Zagzebski's claim that "there are elements of our pre-existing moral practices of which we are more certain than we are of any theory" (8). While recognizing that certain practices or judgments may change for the better when subjected to the scrutiny of ethical reflection, Zagzebski insists that ethical reflection itself cannot begin without some set of prior convictions that are formed within the context of personal encounter and that are more reliable than any theoretical mechanism by which we might try to justify them. Chief among these convictions, and the most basic element in exemplarist moral theory, is the admiration we feel for certain people whom we encounter in the world: "I think we are more certain that Confucius, Jesus, and Socrates are admirable than we are of claims about the good of pleasure, of what human flourishing is, or the good of doing one's duty, or any of the other claims that are used to ground a moral theory. In fact, I think that we are more certain that they are admirable than we are of *what* is admirable about them" (10). The emotion of admiration is the most immediate effect of our encounter with moral goodness in the world, and as such, it should form the basis of our account of moral reflection.

Even before we are able to speak about an instance of moral goodness, the emotion of admiration gives us evidence that we have encountered it. Thus, we identify exemplars of goodness or virtue through admiration just as we identify natural kinds such as water through sense perception. Zagzebski defends this claim by appropriating the direct-reference theory developed by Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke in the 1970s for the use of moral terms such as "wise," "brave," or "just." Just as "a natural kind term like 'water' or 'gold' or 'human' refers to whatever is the same kind of thing or stuff as some indexically identified instance," so basic moral terms such as "good person" emerge not through conceptual definitions, but rather through acknowledged acts of direct reference (11). In the same way that people who were unaware of the chemical composition of water were nonetheless able with consistent success to refer to instances of H₂O within the natural world, a community can reliably identify the kind "good person" by means of direct reference to prototypical individuals whose conduct elicits certain characteristic effects. A good, wise, just, or courageous person is a person like *that*, where "that" effectively refers to an exemplar to which a group has common access. Such exemplars can be so described not because they satisfy the definition of a moral concept, but

rather because they themselves embody what these concepts seek to name. They therefore do not correspond to any prior conception of “wisdom,” “justice,” or “courage,” but rather fix the meaning of these terms by their own lives and character.

Exemplarism is thus a foundationalist ethical theory built on the emotion of admiration toward others, rather than any abstract concept, definition, or principle. According to this approach, moral reflection not only emerges through this sort of interpersonal encounter but also remains continually accountable to it as a regulatory point of reference. How we understand what it means to be good and act well ultimately depends on what makes us admire certain individuals we encounter in the world. Reflecting on the nature of morality means reflecting on who these people are and what it is about them that so attracts us. Yet, even if we succeed in identifying a trait or pattern they all share in common, Zagzebski will insist that it is the exemplars *themselves*, rather than what we take them to exemplify, that must anchor our moral analysis. This approach places the encounter between individual persons at the center of ethical reasoning, such that the identity of the particular “other” can never fade entirely into the background. Other ethical concepts such as “virtue,” “good motive,” “right act,” and “duty” retain their basic meaning and function within the theory, but only insofar as they inhere in exemplars to which we can directly refer. A virtue is a trait we admire in a person like *that*; a good motive is a motive of a person like *that*; a right act is what a person like *that* would decide to do in a given set of circumstances; and so on.

Zagzebski’s second stated purpose in constructing the theory is to provide a way for the emotion of admiration to exert its full force within the context of ethical reflection. Integral to the experience of admiration is an attraction toward the one admired that impels the admirer to bring about in herself the goodness she perceives in another. To this extent, placing admiration at the center of the theory cannot but motivate agents who reflect on their admiration to imitate those they hold up as exemplars. In this way, exemplarism not only pinpoints and dissects right action but also moves those who undertake ethical reflection to become better people themselves. Indeed, it cannot help but do so because its point of departure is reflective attentiveness to the admirability of concrete exemplars: if the exemplar in question is truly admirable, she motivates those who attend to her life to live their own in a similar way; that is an integral part of what makes her an exemplar.

The regulatory role of the phenomenon of admiration gives rise to another of Zagzebski’s main purposes in forming the theory, which is to build a bridge between what she calls the “*a priori* side of ethics” and

contemporary empirical research in fields such as psychology and neuroscience. Central to this aspect of the theory is Zagzebski's analogy between the physical structure of natural kinds and the "deep psychological structure" of those identified as exemplars. While claiming that "the exemplarist approach has the advantage that substantive matters about what makes a person good need not be settled at the outset," Zagzebski nevertheless presumes that those taking this approach must "think in advance that what makes good persons good is their deep psychological structure, just as we think in advance of investigation that what makes water *water* is its deep physical structure" (18). Advancing this analogy allows her to delegate a great deal of work to empirical studies in psychology and neuroscience, many examples of which she takes up in the second and third chapters of the book. One need not entirely grant that exemplars' "deep psychological structure" exhaustively accounts for what makes them admirable in order to appreciate how much empirical studies can add to philosophical or historical accounts of exemplars. Zagzebski's own remarkable ability to synthesize the findings of such studies with accounts of exemplars taken from other disciplines is a testament to the potential fruitfulness of this link between theoretical ethics and empirical science. She makes particularly good use of Jonathan Haidt's work on admiration, as well as various psychological studies on Holocaust rescuers, such as those by Samuel and Pearl Oliner, Anne Colby and William Damon, and Kristen Renwick Monroe. These studies focus principally on common characteristics shared by people identified as moral exemplars. They suggest that common features of exemplars' psychological structure can help explain what makes them capable of such admirable actions.

Empirical research also plays a central role in the fourth distinct goal of the project, which is to construct a theory that can more accurately track the process of moral development. Zagzebski addresses the relation of exemplars to moral development most directly in chapters 5 and 6 of the book, entitled "Virtue" and "Emulation," respectively. Although Zagzebski relies less heavily on empirical research for her arguments in these chapters, she is certainly aware of the extent to which such studies could illuminate the role exemplars play in the development of practical reasoning and the cultivation of moral dispositions. The crucial claim here is that, in the course of every human life, concrete exemplars precede the concepts we eventually come to associate with them. "The meaning of 'good person,'" Zagzebski insists, "is determined by something outside the mind—exemplars, or the most admirable persons," such that "the meaning of the other terms of most relevance to the moral life are determined by the features of moral exemplars" (100). By observing or hearing about the actions of good

people, we come to formulate distinct categories of moral goodness that we collectively call the virtues. The meaning of these concepts emerges by way of common reference to these exemplars and remains accountable to their concrete embodiment as we employ them and reflect on them. Thus, if our abstract definition of a virtue comes to be at odds with the exemplars from which the concept arose, our first task should be to reexamine the concept, rather than exemplar: "Exemplars are not simply stand-ins for abstract virtues whom we can ignore once we learn the virtues. We need exemplars all the time" (154). The primacy of exemplars in moral reflection simply mirrors their primacy in the process of human moral development. Virtues provide a name to the particular forms of goodness we encounter in them. We come to reflect on virtues only because we see them displayed in the lives of concrete individuals. Such is the way we learn to speak of any virtue, and also the way we begin to acquire any virtue: we must first see it and admire it, and by admiring it, we are drawn to emulate it, and so cultivate it in our own lives.

Exemplarist moral theory therefore tracks human moral development both by acknowledging the way in which exemplars precede ethical concepts and by characterizing *mimesis*—which Aristotle rightly identifies as the chief mechanism for acquiring virtue—in terms of admiration. The imitation of acts by sheer command has an important provisional place in the cultivation of virtue, but it is only emulation born out of admiration that can properly ensure the development of true moral goodness, for it aligns an agent's motive for acting with that of the exemplar she imitates. "She emulates the admired person qua good, not just qua something it would be fun to imitate," meaning that "part of what she admires in the person is the motive" from which the act proceeds (135). Zagzebski does well to acknowledge that, in emulating an exemplar's motive, one need not experience the same subjective resonance with that motive that the exemplar feels, but only the admiration necessary to motivate them to develop that motive within themselves. Following David Velleman, she argues that an exemplar's virtues gradually become part of one's own character as one imagines oneself acting in the role or persona of that exemplar. Zagzebski mentions the phenomenon of method acting as an example of how this process of development might work. She even provides an intriguing argument for how emotions like admiration could provide justifying reasons for a particular moral judgment. Yet she is right to call for more empirical research that may confirm or refute many of the claims she makes about the role admiration plays in moral development.

One repeated theme that might prove particularly fruitful in this regard is the dependence of moral development on an agent's immediate rela-

tional context. Exemplarism casts the entire process of moral perfection in relational terms, measuring success not by an agent's conformity to an abstract principle, but by her congruity to particular individuals recognized as embodiments of the human good in various ways. An especially attractive upshot of this view is that, unlike in so many modern ethical theories, moral growth need not track the expansion of an agent's cognitive capacity or practical autonomy. It also implicates others in the characterization of one's own moral agency in a way that makes it impossible to describe one's life as "good" without referring to the part other "good lives" have played in one's own. The inextricable dependence of one's own moral growth on the influential presence of other people reflects quite accurately, in my view, the constitutive role that others play in the determination of personal identity. Simply put, the story of who I am is the story of my relations to others, and likewise, the story of my moral development is the story of how my actions have come to relate to those of others. Not only does this approach to moral evaluation more adequately reflect the relational quality of human life and identity; it also helps to explain the full moral significance of the lives of those persons who are unable to articulate or reflect on their own intentionality as "free, autonomous agents." The moral development of those with severe cognitive disabilities may look very different from our own, but like our own, it is a story of how our agency has intersected with that of others.

The fifth and final aim of the book is to provide an ethical theory that can adapt to the needs of different communities, and so facilitate moral discourse between them. Zagzebski demonstrates throughout the book the possibility of this sort of discourse through her own thoughtful examination of exemplars from many different traditions (figures as diverse as Confucius, Simeon Stylites, Gandhi, Leopold Socha, Jean Vanier, and Flaubert's *Félicité*). Yet the theory underpinning such cross-cultural dialogue appears in the book's last two chapters, which deal with what she calls "the division of moral linguistic labor" and "exemplarist semantics." Attentiveness to the various ways moral reflection depends on an agent's connection to a social linguistic network allows for a more nuanced approach to the different ways ethical concepts function within different communities of discourse. Zagzebski writes: "In order to know what 'elm tree' or 'diamond' means, it is not enough to speak English and to be willing to defer to experts in identifying diamond and elm trees. There is a linguistic obligation to have a certain minimal competence in the use of the term in order to count as knowing what the word means" (184). The same principle applies to terms such as "wise," "brave," or "good person." Proper apprehension of the meaning of such terms requires that

one belong to a particular community in which their content is specified by reference to “stereotypes,” which, for moral concepts like the ones just mentioned, would mean exemplars. Although communities provide exemplars of different sorts through narratives, there remains an important role for “experts” who are entrusted with the task of properly determining the exemplars most worthy of imitation. They are therefore given a certain linguistic privilege in the use of moral terms, fixing their meaning by properly orienting them to the best available exemplars. Zagzebski is not saying that the existence or nature of virtue is contingent on the determination of experts, but only that they perform a necessary task in setting the parameters within which moral discourse can remain intelligible.

Nevertheless, the necessary role that experts play in Zagzebski’s account appears to threaten exemplarism’s capacity to speak across different communities of moral discourse. If the terms and concepts used by two communities are fixed by different experts in reference to different exemplars and different shared practices, how could there be any meaningful ethical exchange between their respective members? In the book’s last chapter, Zagzebski makes the fascinating claim that her account of the role of exemplars in moral reflection and development is even more fundamental than the question of whether moral values are real or not. Regardless of whether or not we regard a particular community’s understanding of virtue and a good life to correspond to anything independent of their members’ own judgment, it remains the case that this understanding emerges only through the process of reflection, deliberation, and discussion initiated by the emotion of admiration as directed toward particular exemplars. In this way, Zagzebski makes the bold claim that the emotion of admiration can serve as a true universal point of reference for any and all moral communities.

What is more, she contends that this emotion can easily be directed toward exemplars of different moral communities in a way that establishes a common ground for discourse built on precisely the same foundation from which a community’s ethical discourse first arose. She goes on to argue that, insofar as the emotion of admiration must correspond in all cases to certain features of the “deep psychological structure” of an exemplar, one may venture to conclude that the exemplars of different moral traditions will possess many, if not all, of these features in common. “We can see our highest ideals in the face of our exemplars,” she writes, “and we can compare that with the highest ideals expressed by the exemplars of another society” (234). At this point, she again calls for more empirical research to determine whether her claim is in fact true: do the exemplars of different traditions really possess a common “deep psychological struc-

ture” that makes them admirable to everyone no matter who they are or what ethical language they speak?

As one awaits the findings of such research, one might be forgiven for expressing some skepticism in this regard and for asking questions as to the ethical significance of such universality even if it were demonstrated empirically. Chief among such questions would be whether and to what degree grounding moral discourse across communities in the findings of empirical research privileges scientific methodology in a way that effectively designates psychologists and neuroscientists as the ultimate experts tasked with determining who is or is not a true exemplar. Discrete communities whose moral discourse subsists within a particular historical tradition may assign others this task in light of their eminent competence in the language and practices of a tradition, but when it comes to discourse between members of different communities, it seems that only the language and practices of empirical science can provide sufficient common ground. Perhaps I read too much into Zagzebski’s investment in the “deep psychological structure” of exemplars, but it seems to me she too easily grants the scientific account of what makes an exemplar admirable as the definitive and final account of what in fact constitutes an exemplar.

Another seemingly attractive advantage of the exemplarist model is that, by beginning with the sheer fact of human admiration and its role in the emergence of ethical thought and practice, we can bypass the contentious issue of how to conceive of human well-being and whether there is any ultimate end or *telos* to human life generally. In my own view, to study human conduct while entirely prescinding from these questions is to undertake a form of inquiry methodologically distinct from ethics. Moral philosophy may and should take the findings of empirical research as proper objects of its own analysis and debate, but in presuming that only empirical research can definitively arbitrate the conclusions of that analysis and debate, it cedes its own integrity as an intellectual discipline. To do so would unnecessarily limit moral philosophy’s understanding of the phenomena into which it inquires. In the case of exemplars, for instance, to presume that the final answer to the question of what makes exemplars admirable must come from an empirical account of their “deep psychological structure” is to conceive of their exemplarity as residing principally within *them* as individual agents. Zagzebski herself appears to take this view. At one point in the last chapter, she remarks that “the admirable person is the repository of admirable qualities” (231). But what if we take the view that we direct our admiration most often and most powerfully not toward the exemplary actions or qualities of individual agents, but rather toward what those actions or qualities reveal of the world outside them?

"In exemplarism, virtues, right and wrong acts, and a good life are all defined by reference to what the exemplar is, judges, or desires" (231). The moral community thus looks to the character, judgment, and motives of the exemplar to inform its understanding of all the various components that govern ethical reflection. In this book, Zagzebski puts forth a very persuasive argument for this bold claim. I would only add to her account that one of the most important contributions of exemplars to moral reasoning is what they reveal about the human good itself: what a human life is for, and in what its ultimate value consists. Raimond Gaita follows Simone Weil in supposing that the measure of a saint is not so much the degree to which her actions reveal the various excellences she herself possesses, but rather the beauty and worth her actions reveal in others, particularly in those who are in some way afflicted or demeaned.³ In many cases, Gaita goes on to argue, the true value of a human person can come to light only through the love of saints who not only act as if they believed that an afflicted person possessed such value but also, through their action, fully reveal that value. In such a case, the acts of an exemplar simultaneously disclose both what it means to act well *and* what it means to be human. In revealing the priceless value of another person, an exemplar also reveals something about the final ends that befit human life itself. I am far from certain that any empirical account of an exemplar's "deep psychological structure" could adequately convey the significance of this "revelatory" aspect of exemplary action, since it presumes that admiration directs itself primarily toward the exemplar herself, rather than what her acts reveal. The thing we find so wondrous in a saint's care for an afflicted person is not primarily the virtue it displays in the saint herself—although virtue is presumably an integral part of the act—but rather the beauty and worth it reveals in the afflicted person. If this type of act is at the heart of what makes an exemplar admirable, then the relational dimension of exemplary acts becomes all the more central to the task of ethical reflection. Such acts may even suggest that the identification of the moral good on which the theory is built—"a good person is a person like *that*"—is derivative of an even more basic identification of the human good as the good made apparent in the interaction between agents. Perhaps one direction Zagzebski's impressive theory might take, then, is a shift in focus from exemplary individuals to exemplary encounters, friendships, or communities. It may be the case that these relational foci are able to embody forms of moral goodness that individuals considered alone cannot.

³ Raimond Gaita, *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 189–206.

The scope of Zagzebski's overall project in this book is staggering. Even though, by her own account, exemplarist virtue theory emerged as a variant of virtue ethics, it departs from such in significant ways, and so represents a truly innovative methodological approach to moral inquiry. Yet what makes Zagzebski's exemplarist approach so compelling is not so much its novelty or ingenuity as its intuitive plausibility. It just seems correct that what informs and motivates our moral choices in everyday life is not any conceptual ideal or worked-out theory, but rather our links to those others whom we have taken as exemplars of right conduct, as embodiments of the human good whom we trust to guide us in our own pursuit of the good. On this basic insight, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* constructs a ground-breaking approach to ethics whose enormous implications for the field have already begun to surface.

Moral theologians will likely find this approach particularly fruitful for their work, given the place it assigns to the historical particularity of traditions and communal praxis. Christian ethicists hoping to find some treatment of the unique exemplarity of Jesus Christ in this book will come away disappointed, but the possibility remains of adapting Zagzebski's general framework to a form of exemplarism that incorporates Christological doctrines. Indeed, I see in this approach one of the most promising appropriations for the theory, especially in light of the moves many past theologians have made in this direction: from St. Paul's appeals to imitation to Abelard's "exemplar model" of atonement to Livio Melina's contemporary efforts to develop a Christocentric exemplarism, the Christian theological tradition abounds in material that can be brought to bear and reread in light of Zagzebski's work. There is no doubt that this point of confluence will prove mutually enriching, but it is equally certain that the exemplarist approach will come to benefit, and likely even reshape, many other fields of moral inquiry as well. N.V

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Mother Teresa's Mysticism: A Christo-Ecclesio-Humano-Centric Mysticism by Robert M. Garrity (Hobe Sound, FL: Lectio, 2017), 208 pp.

FR. ROBERT GARRITY has written a fine introduction to St. Mother Teresa's life of mysticism in her service of the poor. In the first part of the book, he introduces the reader to the theological contexts of

Catholic mysticism that influenced Mother Teresa's mysticism. In the second part, he introduces the reader to the contributions Mother Teresa has made to the development of Catholic mysticism in our times.

Part I has eight chapters. In the first chapter, Fr. Garrity clarifies that mysticism is a genuinely experiential knowledge of God and his divine presence. For Mother Teresa, it was both a speculative and an experiential knowledge of God and his presence in the poor. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to mysticism understood as experiencing God's presence. It is, as John of the Cross states, an "unknowing" that is known, a *docta ignorantia* by which God purifies the mind and heart of the mystic.

Chapters 3 and 4 further explore this in John of the Cross and his "dark night" and the mysticism of "suffering and darkness." Mother Teresa sees this in Jesus's cry of "I thirst" from the Cross. For her, this is a thirst for love, a thirst for souls to love that Jesus redeems humanity in his suffering on the Cross. Because of Mother Teresa's letters on the darkness and suffering of her own soul, Fr. Garrity devotes chapter 5 to a detailed introduction to St. John of the Cross and his insights into the dark night of the senses, imagination, and intellect as purifying the mystic's knowing and loving as she enters a mystical theology springing from God's indwelling.

Chapter 6 sketches the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions of Mother Teresa's mysticism in her service of Christ and his Church among the poorest of the poor. Her mysticism is Christocentric in its love and service of the poor, thereby offering a new emphasis to the ongoing traditions of Catholic mystical theology. Chapters 7 and 8 conclude part I with a preliminary assessment of what is distinctive in Mother Teresa's mysticism as a deep appreciation of Christ as present in the poor. It is a mystical union with Christ in the poor that does not, as Fr. Garrity shows, in any way diminish the importance, emphasized in St. John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*, of seeking economic, scientific, and other means of improving the lives of the poor. Catholic mystical theology is not opposed to reason and science.

Part II provides eight chapters outlining the contributions Mother Teresa has made to Catholic mysticism and theology. Fundamental to these contributions is her insistence on the divine and human natures in the Person of Jesus Christ, who founded the Catholic Church with her governance, sacraments, and mission to the world.

Chapter 9 shows how Mother Teresa's mystical theology both draws on the long traditions from the Catholic mystics and provides a new emphasis on the significance of these traditions in fostering service to the poor and destitute. Mother Teresa was insistent on fidelity to the Catholic Church and her hierarchy in order to reveal to the secular world that service to the

poor is indeed at the heart of Catholic faith and fidelity.

Chapter 10 is an important clarification of Mother's experiential Christology. Fr. Garrity shows various aspects of Mother's mysticism: its intimate union with Christ on the Cross, its Marian devotion in receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, and how Mary in her earthly life excelled in faith, hope, and charity. He also warns readers that Mother now and then engaged in a "spiritual hyperbole" that resulted in misguided statements, such as that Jesus "became sin" and so was rejected by the Father (101–2).

Chapter 11 acquaints the reader with the universal soteriology of Christ's "thirst" for souls. Drawing on St. Irenaeus and St. Bernard, Mother Teresa seeks to capture the "affections" of ordinary people, including the poor, to draw them into a love for Christ as redemptive. She assists the Church in linking the ecclesial and humanitarian affections of humanity. Chapter 12 continues this exploration by showing the implicit Trinitarian pneumatology in Mother's Christological soteriology. Yet Fr. Garrity mentions that, although Mother's pneumatology is deficient in some ways, it will be pastorally effective in winning souls for Christ and his Church.

Chapter 13 provides insights into the anthropology underpinning the soteriology of Mother Teresa. Every human being is created in the image of God. So creation is always united with redemption. Jesus redeems what the Triune God has created. Fr. Garrity draws on John Henry Cardinal Newman and Thomas Aquinas to state that the spiritual, intellectual, and transcending nature of each human being has a "real dynamism toward infinite truth and goodness, toward God" (128).

The ways in which Mother Teresa has contributed to the renewal of the Church are sketched in chapter 14. Fr. Garrity shows that Mother fostered developments in the "communio ecclesiology" of St. John Paul II. The communion of the Church extends especially to Christ disguised in the poor and destitute within the Church as his mystical body. Like Pope Francis, Mother sees the Church as the "instrument spreading divine mercy" to those on the margins of societies. Fr. Garrity does not elaborate, but could also call more attention to how St. Teresa's mystical theology linked the real presence of Christ in the poor with the Eucharistic real presence of Jesus. The Missionaries of Charity follow Mother's daily two hours in prayer in the real presence of Christ in Holy Mass and in the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle. Thus, she insisted to reporters, her Missionaries were living out their faith and were not social workers.

In chapter 15, Fr. Garrity offers wonderful suggestions on how everyone can live the spirituality of Mother Teresa in many diverse ways. He counsels against an uninspired copying of specific applications of what she and

her Missionaries do. Rather, Mother's mysticism encourages each of us to deepen our life of prayer and attentiveness to what God is asking us to do for Christ in his poor. Mother's private revelation in which Jesus appeared to her with a call within her call to religious life is not an experience that others need in order to follow her self-giving love and service of the poor.

In Chapter 16, Fr. Garrity discusses the importance of Mother Teresa's mysticism for the Church as she engages in interreligious dialogue. Here too Fr. Garrity clearly outlines how Mother's mysticism enables Catholics to be fully faithful to the Church's teachings and thereby promote understanding with other world religions. He offers examples of Mother's self-giving in service of the poor evoking admiration from other religions, including Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus.

Fr. Garrity ends his wonderful book on St. Mother Teresa's mysticism with an epilogue summing up how her mysticism draws on the great Catholic traditions of Catholic saints and how this enables her to make important contributions to the renewal of spirituality as fostering the love of God and man. Self-giving services to the poor take on many different forms in fidelity to Mother's catechetical and mystical theology. I highly recommend this book to all those seeking a deeper understanding of St. Mother Teresa's mysticism. N.V

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Ethical Sex: Sexual Choices and Their Nature and Meaning by Anthony McCarthy (South Bend, IN: Fidelity, 2016), 326 pp.

A DOMINANT contemporary attitude toward the human body might be said to be totalitarian in nature. This attitude embraces not simply the physical members of the human body; it extends its reach even to the natural inclinations. It treats human bodily reality "as a raw datum" that is "devoid of any meaning and moral values until freedom has shaped it in accordance with its design" (Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* [1993], §48). According to this view, the human body is external to the human person and, as such, simply furnishes the material condition for the exercise of free choice. The anthropology in question is dualistic in that it divorces human personhood from human embodiment. Reason is thus left free to manipulate the bodily conditions of human being, all too often in ways contrary to the indications inscribed within those very conditions themselves.

The recent significant trend in Western countries to legislate for homosexual “marriage”—or even, in the case of Ireland, to enshrine this “right” within the constitution—renders even more important the intellectual engagement with the inclination to the procreation and education of offspring, as St. Thomas puts it (*Summa theologia* [ST] I-II, q. 94, a. 2)—which is to say, sexual ethics. One reason for a rational defense of Catholic sexual ethics is precisely the fact that recent developments are the political expression of a dualistic anthropology and are, as such, as I have intimated, totalitarian in character.

Anthony McCarthy’s book, which offers such a defense, engages with a wide array of authors philosophical, theological, and literary. Included in this array are figures such as Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, John Paul II, Aurel Kolnai, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Josef Pieper, Roger Scruton, Janet Smith, Bernard Williams, William Shakespeare, Robert Sokolowski, Michel Foucault, and Peter Singer, just to mention a selection. Manifold arguments are adduced in support of what ultimately constitutes a Catholic sexual ethic, and countervailing arguments are rebutted in analytic style.

The first chapter of the book offers a sustained critique of the contention on the part of “new natural law” theorists that contraception is contralife. The author then proceeds in the next chapter to look at natural law, functions, and teleology. Arguments are adduced in defense of teleology and of the idea that any particular organism has a function. This chapter proceeds to sustain the intimate link between the functioning proper to human beings and human flourishing. In this regard, the author remains alert to the demands that attend the hylomorphic structure of human being, albeit with an exception noted below. The importance of embodiment and teleology carry over into McCarthy’s discussion of marriage and meaning. The notions of embodiment and teleology ground the objective reality of the conjugal act. Indeed, for McCarthy, “it is marriage which is that standard with respect to which sexual activity is judged to be good or not” (107). I would have to disagree with this formulation, however. Heterosexual marriage, rather, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for sexual activity to be good, a point the author would no doubt accept.

Teleological considerations flow over into the discussion of sexual desire. In this regard, McCarthy offers some useful reflections concerning pornography and fantasy. Thus, for example, with regard to the latter, he observes that “the moral demands of the real world are not being adequately met when an effect is deliberately produced which properly belongs to a different cause” (160). Teleological considerations also enter into the final chapter, on love, virtue, and vice, as also does the notion of

embodiment. McCarthy builds on Karol Wojtyła's / John Paul II's observations that the human body in itself is not shameful and that neither are sensual reactions and sensuality in general. Thus, writes McCarthy, "it cannot be objectifying simply to appreciate or be aroused by the bodily features of (in particular) one's spouse, which surely constitute the valuable sexual attributes of an inherently valuable person in a marital unit geared toward the couple's social and biological fulfilment" (187). Again, the *telos* of the sexual act, it is argued, is essentially marital. While all lack of respect or objectification is anti-teleological in nature, this is particularly so in the case of sexual activity that is not properly ordered within a marital context.

The foregoing brief delineation of the structure and content of McCarthy's book shows forth what is valuable in his work: his appreciation of the notions of embodiment and teleology in formulating an adequate sexual ethic. Many creative arguments are marshalled with a view to defending a Catholic position. In elaborating these arguments, as already intimated, he engages an impressive range of figures from the domains of philosophy, theology, and literature.

There are however some negative criticisms to be leveled at the author's laudable efforts. Thus, one gets the sense that the author at times is not as familiar with the thought of St. Thomas as one would wish a Catholic philosopher engaged in sexual ethics to be. Perhaps this lack is a downside of the wide range of thinkers with whom he dialogues. Thus, in referencing *ST* II-II, qq. 23–27, McCarthy writes: "For Aquinas, all kinds of love are grounded in the will (including desire), which provides the initial framework for seeing different forms of love as integrated" (171). Prescinding from the confused nature of this formulation (is it "all kinds of love" or "the will" that includes "desire"?), it is simply wrong to state that Thomas thinks that all kinds of love are grounded in the will. The confines of this review do not allow an adumbration of Thomas's teaching concerning love, but the following quotation demonstrates that, for Thomas, the notion of love extends well beyond the human will: "Now to love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature" (*ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 3).

A little further on, McCarthy asserts: "For Aquinas the approval expressed in the statement 'it's good that you exist' is an expression of will" (172). Thomas would, no doubt, agree with this idea, but I know of nowhere where he actually formulates it explicitly.

Another point pertains to the natural inclinations, concerning which the author arguably departs from the logical demands of a thoroughgoing hylomorphism. Thus, he writes that "a reproductive organ has a

‘pre-rational’ inclination toward its proper object (its function)” (91), in spite of his general insistence on the psychosomatic unity of the human person. (Admittedly, there are scholars of St. Thomas’s thought who espouse this view.) Elsewhere, he repeats this idea in a more general form: “While we might see certain ‘instincts’ as ‘drives’ toward the good, they are pre-rational” (259n3). In my view, however, the hylomorphic structure of the human person entails that the inclinations that man shares with other creatures are subsumed into the reality of the rational soul, the form of human being, and thus can never be simply prerational in his case. While the natural inclinations are not the result of deliberate choice, they do nevertheless seem to pertain to what Thomas means by simple willing (*simplex voluntas*).

One final observation: this book is written by a philosopher. Its deliberations begin in earnest with a discussion of “thick” and “thin” concepts, a distinction gleaned from analytic philosophical analysis. The first thinker quoted in this regard is Bernard Williams, an analytic philosopher. Given the sharp distinction between philosophy and theology that is the hallmark of much contemporary philosophy—lamentable and all as it is—it would seem that, as a matter of strategy, it would have been more effective for the author to keep a distance from quoting Catholic Church teaching. At any rate, as John Paul II points out in *Fides et Ratio*, a harmony obtains between faith and reason so that right reason naturally coheres with what the faith teaches us. A chance to evangelize contemporary culture has perhaps been lost precisely by the author’s explicit recourse to faith. This would be a pity, since his obvious philosophically ecumenical spirit deserves to be reciprocated. N.V

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Thomas and the Thomists: The Achievement of Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters by Romanus Cessario, O.P., and Cajetan Cuddy, O.P. (*Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017*), xvii + 151 pp.

RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN a large number of publications introducing Thomas Aquinas and his work to newer audiences. The sheer number of these publications attests to what Aidan Nichols referred to in his 2002 introduction as the “new renaissance” in the study of this master

in theology, philosophy, and biblical exegesis.¹ This new renaissance seems to have at least two features. Firstly, Aquinas's thought is taken on its own merits, instead of the uncritical adaptations of his thought to modern forms of thinking. Secondly, and without discarding the necessary contribution of a purely historical approach to Aquinas's thought, this renewed interest seeks to delineate Aquinas's intellectual coherence.

However, it is no coincidence that, alongside this renewed interest, one can witness a growing appreciation for the intellectual movement of Thomism that has sprung up from a continuous study of Aquinas's writings. Just as Aquinas's thought cannot be separated from his sources, as the historical approach has rightly argued, so also Aquinas himself cannot be detached from the tradition of his commentators. Such an abstraction of Aquinas from the tradition that has brought him to us would, in the words of the French Dominican Serge-Thomas Bonino, "fall into the trap that one had hoped to avoid: that is, to make of St. Thomas a thinker removed from history, and of Thomism a Platonic Idea."²

The authors of the volume under review have written an insightful and exciting analysis and a vibrant defense of the concrete reality that is the Thomist tradition. It all starts with the "unique genius" of Aquinas: his ability to lead his readers "to discover the real truth about real things that originate from the real God" (xii). In a dense but accessible analysis, the authors explain how, from the fundamental real distinction between being and nonbeing, Thomas discovered the real distinction between act and potency and how he "applied" this distinction to matter and form, as well as to essence and existence, resulting in the truth that, whereas God is his own existence, "everything else enjoys only borrowed existence" (xiii). The reader might recall at this point the vexed question regarding the essence of Thomism in which such giants as Gallus Manser, O.P. (1866–1950),³ and Norberto del Prado, O.P. (1852–1918), took part, emphasizing (respectively) the distinction between act and potency and that between essence and existence. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877–1964), harmonized both approaches and emphasized the unity of the *via inventionis* and the *via synthesis*, since both have as their *terminus* and *principium* "the supreme truth of Christian philosophy," the *clavis*

¹ Aidan Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas: An Introduction to His Life, Work and Influence* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002).

² Serge-Thomas Bonino, "Le thomisme et son histoire," in *Revue thomiste* 97 (1997): 5–8. See also Bonino, "To Be a Thomist," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 8 (2010): 763–73, and "The Thomist Tradition," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 8 (2010): 869–81.

³ Gallus Manser, *Das Wesen des Thomismus* (Fribourg, CH: Paulus Verlag, 1949).

aurea totius aedificii of the Angelic Doctor—namely, *Deus est ipsum suum subsistens*.⁴ The veiled presence of these Thomists in the opening pages of the book is but one of the many instances in which the erudition of the authors becomes apparent.

Perhaps an even more vexed question concerns the unity of the Thomist tradition. Again, the opening pages are representative of the authors' approach throughout the book. They start with an insightful negative criterion when they note that, although St. Augustine has a greater following in the Christian tradition than St. Thomas, "most will agree that those who cite Augustine make up a more diverse group than the Thomists treated in this volume" (xiv). For a positive criterion to discern "authentic followers" (xv) of Aquinas, the authors turn to his comments on John 17:17 ("Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth"), in which he emphasizes sanctification in the truth that is Christ, by faith and the knowledge of the truth as sent by the Holy Spirit.⁵ What this means for the authors is that "those who follow and interpret Aquinas faithfully commit themselves to the project as an ecclesial vocation" (xvi) at the service of evangelization. This also explains why the majority of Thomists treated in this volume belonged to institutes of consecrated life. "These persons enjoy a privileged starting point on the road toward developing a sanctified intelligence for service to the church's ministry" (xvi). Further defining characteristics are that most Thomists worked during periods of intellectual conflict and that "[all] Thomists sought wisdom, though without unnecessary accommodation to the intellectual fashion of their day" (xvi). "They also share Aquinas's conviction that one's humanity, academic achievement, and personal sanctity work together in the search for truth" (xvi). Naturally, the authors emphasize that the Thomist tradition is neither a mere repetition of Aquinas nor a monolithic unity. I would also add that it is precisely *because of* the unifying elements the authors see at work in the tradition that Thomists were and are able to apply Aquinas's thought to the questions of their time and to respond to them "from within the author's historical contexts" (xvii).

As the title of the book suggests, it consists of two parts: "Thomas, or a Story of Divine Providence" (3–43) and "The Thomists, or 'The Heritage of Truth'" (47–140). The first part, in a most eloquent manner (including the literary *Leitmotiv* of the archer), tells the story of Thomas's life and work. Relying on sound scholarly sources, the authors appreciate Thomas's

⁴ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Deo uno* (Turin, IT: Marietti, 1950), 24–26.

⁵ See also Romanus Cessario, *Theology and Sanctity*, ed. Cajetan Cuddy, O.P. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2014).

achievements against the background of the medieval context of his life, but also in light of the differences with respect to contemporary theological reasoning. The reader should therefore not be surprised to find this part interspersed with references to *Fides et Ratio*, *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope Benedict XVI, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

Two characteristic features come to the fore. First is the radically theocentric nature of theological reasoning as ordering the divine wisdom that God has bestowed, and second is the distinctively Dominican imprint of his intellectual achievements: "The Dominican way of life, which Aquinas chose, . . . favors the acquisition of sacred truth by the distinctive way that it combines assiduous study with the exercises that one associates with monastic life, especially the following of the evangelical counsels and the common prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours" (13; see also, e.g., 17, 28, and 78, as well as note 28). The authors, therefore, do not view Thomas's works as a "playing fields for intellectual gymnastics" (26), but rather as a teaching "about the living God" (26), as the work of a believer in the service of the Truth. Referring to the mature fruit of Thomas's service to the Truth, the *Summa theologiae*, they write: "Aquinas recognized that the successful portrayal of Catholic truth required more than edification by beauty, inspiration by light, and moral encouragement by exhortation and example" (33). Aquinas knew, indeed, given man's rational nature, that the only way to win him over eventually is to win over his intellect. The same harmony of faith and reason allows Aquinas, toward the end of his life, to respond to Christ's offer for a reward for his theological writings: "Non nisi Te" ("Nothing but you, O Lord"), which the authors view as having become "a motto for properly educated Thomists" (38).

The second part of the book immediately draws the reader into one of its distinctive features. The *Korrektorienstreit*—the Franciscan William de la Mare's *Correctorium fratris Thomae* and the reactions by five English, French, and Italian young Dominicans in defense of Aquinas's thought—"suggests that, even shortly after his death, an *esprit de corps* centered on Aquinas's teaching had begun to develop among at least some of his Dominican confreres, including the supervisors," (50) and reveals "the birth of a tradition that one rightly calls Thomist" (52). Very early on, this tradition received institutional support from the Dominican order, indicating that the participants in the *Korrektorienstreit* "did not make up an eccentric band of dissident outsiders" (53). This reasoning is probably the single most important part of the book, at least from a historical viewpoint, because it gives a persuasive argument for a determinate beginning of the Thomist tradition.

Equally observant is the authors' argument that the early-four-

teenth-century controversy over mendicant poverty and the seemingly contradictory reactions by two subsequent popes, notwithstanding differences in the question of papal teaching authority, “show unanimity” (58) in wanting to uphold the Dominican and Thomist position with respect to the vow of poverty. The subsequent pages contain Thomistic vignettes of the most influential Thomists in which both the historical contexts of their lives and works and their main contributions to the development of the Thomist tradition find concise but apt expression, always informative and engaging. We read, for instance, about Peter Crockaert (d. 1541), who at first held a nominalist position and subsequently, after having entered the Dominican order, started to teach the *Summa theologiae*. The authors write: “This work of Aquinas opens with a discussion of God as pure actuality. Architecture reflects styles of living and outlooks. The monastic cloister that the classical Dominican priory incorporated into its structure leaves an open space at its center that directs the mind beyond the skies towards God” (77–78).

Throughout their depiction of the history of Thomism, the authors are naturally aware of “fluctuations” that inevitably occur in a seven-centuries-old tradition, but they also emphasize—and rightly so—the ability inherent in the works of St. Thomas to sustain this tradition. More concretely, “what characterizes the authentic evolution of the Thomist commentatorial tradition remains its adherence to the first principles of speculative thought both in the natural and in the supernatural orders” (81). By placing the history of Thomism in its historical, philosophical, and ecclesial context, the authors are able to corroborate their claim that, even if one allows for a certain “elasticity” within the commentarial tradition, or even for the existence of “eclectic Thomists,” “it is a remarkable thing that Thomists carried on a lively intellectual existence that ran parallel to the upstart Protestant and secular initiatives” (95).

In this regard, the authors hold the “Dominican giant” John of St. Thomas in high regard for his setting down the criteria for identifying a “true disciple of Aquinas”: “One who follows those who have already commented on Aquinas, who loves his teaching and seeks to defend and develop it, who shows sympathy for Aquinas’s intuitions, who values his method of argument, and, in short, who holds fast to the commentatorial tradition” (105). This “definition” of what it means to be a Thomist does not entail the picture of an ivory-tower theologian, engaging in “abstract,” lifeless speculations. The commentatorial tradition has the ability “to sustain [not only] truth claims but also the theological life, that is, the life of Christian faith, hope and charity” (110), as is exemplified by the work of Vincent Gotti (1664–1742), facing the challenges of the beginning Enlightenment.

Another important scholarly contribution of this introductory text lies in the attention it draws to Dominican moral theologians who tried to deal with the “paradigm shifts” in moral theology towards casuistry (96–98). Mentioned in particular are Dominicans such as Bartholomew of Medina (1528–1580), John Vincent Patuzzi (1700–1769), Vincent Ferrer (1675–1738), and Antoine Massoulié (1632–1706). Their and other reactions to casuistry are aptly summarized as follows: “Thomists sought to develop well-tempered moral agents. To the extent that the virtuous person surrenders to the drawing power of the good, he or she does not require the assistance of a canon lawyer to discriminate between the permitted and the forbidden. . . . Thomists prefer to emphasize the priority of the divine initiative in human life before they begin to specify those rectified actions that lead to the possession of God’s happiness” (114).

Here, I think, lies a large area for future research that will benefit contemporary moral theology as well, given its contemporary use (or avoidance) of casuistry. For instance, the contributions in this respect of the Dominicans Benoît Henri Merkelbach (1871–1942), Dominicus Prümmer (1866–1931), and Marie-Michel Labourdette (1908–1990), whose extensive commentary on the *secunda pars* is currently being published, merit further research.

Likewise, Massoulié also provides the authors with another important defining element of Thomist identity: “Thomists should remember that Aquinas serves as his own best interpreter. Even today, the best of the commentators observe this axiom, which separates them from eclectic and even putative Thomists” (114). A number of times throughout the book, the authors write about “the self-purifying capacities” of the Thomist commentatorial tradition, meaning the ability of later Thomists to rectify earlier Thomists who fell under the sway of a particular cultural matrix, such as the introduction of the principle of sufficient reason into Thomistic philosophy. This again is a very insightful and useful concept that paradoxically allows one to discover the unity of the Thomist tradition.

It should therefore not be surprising that the authors express certain misgivings about the use of terms such as Leonine Thomism or neo-Thomism. In fact, the book’s second part on the history of Thomism does not employ the usual periodization that most often characterizes this history in terms of a rise, a golden age, a decline, and a rediscovery: “[Such a periodization] can suggest wrongly that the thought of Aquinas has only enjoyed intermittent popularity. In fact, as has been put forward in this book, Aquinas and his commentators lay claim to a continuity that dates back at least to his canonization at the start of the fourteenth century, and even earlier” (130–31).

The book closes with a commentary on the four qualities of Thomist method, enumerated by cardinal Georges Cottier, O.P.—confidence in reason, the courage of the truth, the truth of things, and wisdom—as providing “guidance for the one who would learn from the Thomist tradition” (137).

In this modest introductory text, Father Cessario, who is to be lauded for his many contributions to the history and vitality of the Thomist tradition,⁶ and Father Cuddy have done the Thomist community an enormous and groundbreaking service in at least three respects. The newcomers will find an engaging portrait of the single most important philosophical and theological tradition—a tradition that does not distort the original by accommodating it to the passing currents of thought, but rather exhibits the forcefulness of a life of the mind, led in the search of truth and holiness. The Thomist community now possesses the intellectual and motivational foundations to investigate in a comprehensive way the unity of the Thomist tradition. Evidently, such a large-scale project faces many challenges, but the authors have opened up the horizon (*Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 58, a. 5, ad 1: *ratio, secundum quod est apprehensiva finis, praecedat appetitum finis*—“reason, insofar as it apprehends the end, precedes the appetite for the end”). The Dominican community will find in this book a new stimulus for engaging St. Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa theologiae* as the normative source for doing theology within the order, as well as for exploring the specifically Dominican imprint on the history of Thomism, given that the spirit of the religious order to which Aquinas himself belonged has shaped significantly the reception and development of his thought, as Father Cessario and Father Cuddy amply illustrate. N.V

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⁶ See, in particular: *Jean Capreolus en son temps (1380–1444)*, ed. Guy Bedouelle, Romanus Cessario, and Kevin White (Paris: Cerf, 1997); *John Capreolus (1380–1444): Treatise on the Virtues*, trans. Kevin White and Romanus Cessario (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001); Cessario, *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2001), and many of his articles in *Theology and Sanctity*.

