

Book Reviews

Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes by Gregory T. Doolan (*Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008*), xviii + 277 pp.

IN THIS extensive work, ostensibly re-cast from his dissertation with John Wippel at Catholic University, Gregory Doolan explores Aquinas's exposition and use of "divine ideas," offering an admirable *tour d'horizon* of this contested subject. He canvasses Aquinas's works thoroughly, explicitly highlighting *ideas* as exemplar causes, their very existence and their multiplicity, before identifying exemplar ideas, along with the causality proper to them, to finally broach the ways Aquinas uses divine ideas to elucidate his critical strategy of participation. Daunting metaphysical issues all, and those who are drawn to explore them will find a virtual roadmap for Aquinas's treatment in this well-composed study. So the suggestions which I shall offer, for author and readers alike, are meant to assist in the quality of inquiry which he initiates, realizing that it will never be finished (see Thomas Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphysics and Practice* [Bloomington IN: University of Indiana Press, 2007]).

Building on Etienne Gilson, the author insists that "to have a complete understanding of Thomas's metaphysics, . . . one must be familiar with his account of the divine ideas as exemplar causes" (xiv). So we are offered a study in Aquinas's metaphysics, yet the causality in question can only be that of creation. So neatly bifurcating "philosophy" from "theology" cannot work here, though the author presumes it in a crucial passage culminating chapter three on the "multiplicity of divine ideas":

[W]e now have a sense that for Thomas, the doctrine of divine ideas is no mere theological concession to Augustine. Indeed, it is not principally a theological doctrine. Rather it is a *philosophical* one that plays a key role in Thomas's metaphysical thought (122).

Yet if we recall that the causality in question must be that of creation, and in Aquinas's context, free creation, the sharp bifurcation between philosophy and theology (imbedded in Catholic institutions of higher learning since *Aeterni Patris*) is not only anachronistic for Aquinas but counter-productive as well, as Josef Pieper reminded us, to the effect that the "hidden element in the philosophy of St. Thomas is free creation." Nor is this a quibble, for recalling how artificial is the bifurcation that we have come to presume should allow us to exploit the richness of Aquinas's account of the causality of "divine ideas" precisely by imbedding it in his nuanced teaching on creation. In other words, showing how the effective context for the "divine ideas" is that of creation will offer us a better chance of adopting Aquinas's presumptions in reading him, and save us from importing our own—an essential initial hermeneutical step.

My next observation is more explicitly philosophical, and has to do with the author's blithe use of "possible" as a substantive—a move which should alert philosophical readers to expect hidden antinomies in the ensuing discourse. As he canvasses Aquinas's various discussions of this issue, the author inadvertently lays out the antinomies but seems rather oblivious to their import:

[A]ccording to the strict sense of the term, an idea belongs to practical knowledge, either actual or virtual. Thus, the ideas that belong to actually practical knowledge pertain to those things that God makes at some point in time, but those that belong to virtual practical knowledge pertain to those things that God can make but never does. The difference between the two types of ideas is that those things toward which the possibles are directed are not determined to exist by God's will. For this reason, Thomas concludes, the possibles are in a certain sense indeterminate ideas. Thus we see in the *De veritate* Thomas allows for the divine ideas of possibles (140–41).

This passage implicitly defines "possibles" as "those things that God can make but never does." At the risk of verbosity, it would be best always to substitute this phrase for "possible," to emphasize the ambiguity which Aquinas always respects in employing "thing" in this context; for if they are considered to be "things," they are at best "indeterminate things"—whatever that might be! Now we have no other recourse in such metaphysical thickets but to respect the limits of our language, as both Aristotle and Wittgenstein remind us. Which Aquinas does, so the author simply cannot conclude, as he does, that "Thomas allows for divine ideas of possible," since the 'idea' in question must be "indeterminate," so Aquinas deliberately substitutes the Latin *notio* to inscribe this difference. So one cannot

be true to Aquinas in speaking of “two types of ideas,” for a *notion* is not equivalent to a full-fledged *idea*, as we have already been told. Again, close attention to language—ours and Aquinas’s—is indispensable lest we deceive ourselves in this arcane domain. So what might an “indeterminate idea” be, and what sort of *thing* would “those things toward which the possibles are directed” be? Again, these antinomies leap out from a page which pretends to offer a simple exposition of Aquinas, while my own struggle with these matters has convinced me that Aquinas himself was quite aware of their presence (see *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993]).

A similar blind spot leads the author to misrepresent James Ross’s trenchant criticism of “a ‘photo-exemplarist’ reading of Aquinas’ divine ideas, [namely] that God has a multiplicity of ideas, each acting like a photograph or blueprint for both actual and possible things” (112). It must be noted that the author is stepping into a sharp dispute between Jim Ross and his mentor (John Wippel), which may have hindered him from exploring Ross’s real objections, which he limits to the multiplicity of “divine ideas.” To that in a moment, but first note how his own description of Ross’s objection turns on “each [idea] acting like a photograph or blueprint for both actual and possible things.” So the burden of Ross’s objection turns on what we have just noted: speaking in the same voice of both “actual and possible things,” and so of “two types of ideas.” And I have suggested why that cannot be Aquinas’s way of proceeding, given how he sharply differentiates between *idea* for actual things, and *notion* for “those things that God can make but never does.”

As for the touted “multiplicity of divine ideas,” the author is candid enough to acknowledge that

Henle, Gilson, and Ross are quite right that ontologically, there is but one exemplar of all things, which is God. As the fullness of being (*esse*), the divine essence is imitable in diverse ways. Still, when Thomas addresses the subject of divine ideas, it is not simply to this imitability that he is referring. Rather, for him a divine idea consists in God’s *knowing* his essence as imitable in these diverse ways. It is this knowledge which constitutes an idea. Since these ways are themselves diverse, so is God’s knowledge and, hence, his ideas (116).

I leave it to the reader to assess Doolan’s conclusion here: must the knowledge that something is multiply imitable be itself multiple? Yet beyond this muddle, Doolan’s inability to grasp the import of Ross’s objection turns on his own blithe use of “possible” as a substantive, which obscures Aquinas’s need to distinguish *notions* from *ideas*, properly speaking,

calling the former “indeterminate.” The very thought of an “indeterminate idea” referring (determinately) to anything at all should alert the reader to ask why Aquinas needs to do such fancy footwork. The short answer must be that he wants to avoid readers being misled by using “possible” as a substantive, as though there were *something* to which it referred! Ross is extraordinarily sensitive to these matters because he has had to be in conversation with philosophers whose stock in trade is “possible worlds,” a venue of which Doolan seems quite innocent.

Finally, to the subject of *participation*, which turns out to be the *pièce de résistance* of Aquinas’s treatment of creation and of the causal role of “divine ideas.” Here the author explicitly relies on Louis Geiger (1953) and Cornelio Fabro (1861), as well as his mentor, John Wippel (1984), and only tangentially on the more recent work of Rudi te Velde (1995). In fact, he only engages him in the context of a dispute between his mentor and te Velde about the activity of creating. Yet again, the point of contention is that of “possibles.” Citing from Aquinas

from the very fact that *esse* is attributed to a quiddity, the quiddity is not only said to be but to be created, since before it has *esse* it is nothing—except perhaps in the creator’s intellect, where it is not a creature but the creative essence (*De potentia* q. 3, a. 5, ad 2),

the author then concludes:

Thomas affirms precisely what teVelde claims that he does not, namely that the ideas in the divine intellect are ontologically (but not temporally) prior to created essence. It is because God bestows *esse* upon a possible essence that it is created, and the finite being that results from this composition is what participates in the likeness of the divine nature (241).

Here again, there is little recognition of the antinomy resulting from the phrase “bestows *esse* upon a possible essence.” Is this the “creative essence”; and if so, is *esse* bestowed upon an idea? We need to be aware of the limitations of our language in attempts to describe the divine act of creating, realizing that disputes may well be fueled by the resulting ambiguities, so rather than pretend that a straightforward description could resolve them, we need to engage in a kind of “intellectual therapy,” which might appreciate both sides of a dispute, to bring us to the modicum of understanding available to us in these remote regions.

But then perhaps I am asking too much of an initial foray into these recondite matters. So I must conclude by praising what Doolan has done, and recommend it as a first step to any student attempting to negotiate

these metaphysical shoals. Yet the animadversions noted will also help that reader to avoid places where the author's own presumptions keep him from noting some crucially sensitive moves of the magisterial author he purports to expound. Yet it is that author who continues to fascinate us all, and with whom this work has helped us to grapple in an ongoing inquiry. **N.V.**

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Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist by Matthew Levering (*Oxford: Blackwell, 2005*), ix + 210 pp.

IN HIS relatively short but very productive professional life, Matthew Levering's first solo monograph was *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (2002). The book under review extends the principles and results of that earlier work to the Eucharist (cf. 28n82).

Levering's thesis is that the Eucharist in its lived practice and reality as a sacrament of Jesus Christ and his Church can only properly be understood as both sacrifice and communion. This requires sensitivity to the historical (and here Levering limits himself to the Jewish as opposed to any broader anthropological) context of the Eucharist's institution. The sacrificial and communal elements of the Catholic Eucharist draw upon parallel elements within the covenantal faith and religion of the ancient Israelites. The book serves as an attempt to draw forth these aspects of the Eucharist, with particular reference to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Levering respects for his relevance for contemporary theology.

Developments in Catholic sacramental theology over the last half-century provide the background to Levering's project. In the Introduction, the author charts an historical trajectory, beginning with reviews of Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Hegel, then turning to Schillebeeckx and Rahner. These latter two are clearly Levering's focus, for many Catholic sacramentologists have followed them. The first emphasized the Christian's contact in the Eucharist with the risen, as opposed to crucified, Christ (19–22), while the second held that the Eucharist acts as an agent whereby the community can realize the potential of grace already latent within it (22–24). Levering contends that such thoughts have led to the present state of "Eucharistic idealism" in Catholic sacramental theology, with the sacrificial aspect neglected or rejected and with the communal element disproportionately exalted. Levering characterizes "Eucharistic

idealism” as “the linear-supersessionist displacement of the Jewish mode of embodied sacrificial communion by spiritualizing accounts of Eucharistic communion with God” (8). It is of interest that Levering critiques Schillebeeckx using his 1959 edition of *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, not *The Eucharist*, which was published in 1967 and which continues further along the trajectory of Eucharistic idealism. Levering’s analysis of the departure of Schillebeeckx from the tradition of sacrifice in the first work illustrates that the thoughts of the later Schillebeeckx have roots in his earlier theology.

The first chapter examines the nature of Israelite sacrifice as atonement for sin and as creative of communion. Levering focuses on contemporary (and, through them, earlier rabbinical) Jewish understandings of the aqedah, the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Jon D. Levenson, Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, and Michael Wyschogrod have described how communion between God and Abraham personally and the Israelite people at large entails individual and/or social self-sacrifice as a precondition. Levering rejects aspects of Levenson and Wyschogrod that tend towards the idea that God actively wills the suffering of his beloved. Of overall interest for Levering in these Jewish theologies is the setting of and valuable contribution of sacrifice in a postlapsarian world. Secondly, the father-son relationship of the aqedah holds relevance to the sacrifice of Christ to God the Father. Levering ends the chapter with the conclusion that the Church follows in the pattern of Israel by finding communion—fully attained in heaven—with God through the sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God on the Cross and in the Eucharist.

The second chapter illustrates how, beyond the aqedah, the Old Testament considers the Jewish sacrificial rites to be formative of the Israelite community. Contemporary scholars diversely interpret the spiritual effects of these sacrifices, running the gamut from having no causal result upon the divine-human relationship to underpinning and restoring the relationship between God and men by the forgiveness of sins. Levering favors the latter, highlighting its communal dimension: “sacrifice is completed in feasting; far from being simply renunciatory, sacrifice is profoundly fulfilling” (65). The chapter also displays the biblical witness concerning Jesus’ death and its role in the formation of the people of God as a saintly community.

With this scriptural background, Aquinas develops his theology of Christ’s passion. Due to the obligations owed by the Creator and creatures to each other (though in different orders), the God-man’s death provides the fitting interpersonal conditions (i.e., satisfies) for the alleviation of sin and the restoration of the divine-human relationship. Some recent thinkers

(e.g., Balthasar) believe that Christ's self-offering must include estrangement from God. Disagreeing, Levering illustrates carefully how—in line with the theological tradition—the Thomistic anthropology of Christ and theology of the passion hold for the full suffering of Christ, one indeed more intense than any theoretical estrangement, precisely because of Christ's metaphysical, moral, and psychological union with God the Father (75–82). The fruits of Christ's satisfaction are made available in the Eucharist: "To share Eucharistically in Christ's sacrificial Cross means to be drawn into communion, in the Mystical Body on earth, with the risen life of blessedness" (82), a "blessedness" characterized by charity (92).

In the third chapter, Levering explores more fully this subject of charity, a virtue constitutive of Christ, the Church, the Cross, and the Eucharist. From the discussion initiated by de Lubac concerning the history of the term "*corpus mysticum*," Levering follows Aquinas in linking the Eucharistic Body of Christ and the mystical Body of Christ which is the Church.

Chapter four examines how the sacrifice and charity of Christ are made present today in the Eucharist through Christ's Real Presence, as explained by the dogma of transubstantiation. Herein Levering introduces the critiques of the Orthodox theologians Sergius Bulgakov and Alexander Schmemmann. The first faults transubstantiation for reducing the glorified Christ to the parameters of the material world (and not vice versa) and for emphasizing the change of the bread and wine rather than the transformation of communicants. The second blames transubstantiation for failing to understand how materiality was created to be deified and is deified in the Eucharist.

In reply, Levering explicates the mature Eucharistic theology of St. Thomas. "Not as an eschatological absorption of the world into divinity, but instead through a this-worldly making present and offering of the body and blood of Calvary, can the eucharistic sacrifice truly embody a participation in Christ's salvific Cross and thus in his heavenly communion" (134). In the mind of Aquinas, this Eucharistic Real Presence of Christ, best defined by transubstantiation, is driven by God's desire to bring the fruits of Christ's work to bear on the Christian's present and future well-being. Personal faith in, or "spiritual contact" with, Christ is insufficient (135). So Levering expounds step-by-step Aquinas' theory of transubstantiation, helpfully showing its similarities with and corrections of Bulgakov and Schmemmann.

There are two keys to understanding Aquinas' and Levering's thought on transubstantiation. As a methodological key, Levering states that "metaphysical *ascesis* . . . [concerning] our imagistic understanding of 'bodily' "

is necessary to see philosophically and theologically the uniqueness of the Eucharistic “conversion,” the way in which the Eucharistic consecration moment is similar to other real changes, but also different (150). This does not mean the abolition of metaphysics, but the energetic and creative use of metaphysical tools. More properly, one should say that it is not men who are creative with metaphysical tools, but God: “‘Metaphysics’ does not describe ‘being’ in a state *autonomous* from God the Creator and fount of being (as infinite, unfathomable Pure Act). On the contrary, Aquinas’s ‘metaphysics,’ as a spiritual exercise, instructs believers on the radically participatory and contingent status of created being, which is a finite created (and continually sustained) sharing in God” (156–157). From this “metaphysical *ascesis*” concerning divine creativity, Aquinas shows that the Eucharist is different from all other worldly beings in that “by God’s power, conditioned to his purposes in the sacrament, the mode of substance here sublates the mode of accidents, rather than the other way around” (154). This is the “sacramental mode” of the real, bodily, substantial presence of the living Christ, which by way of concomitance makes his soul, divinity, and bodily accidents present as well (163).

In the fifth chapter, Levering describes aspects of the Israelite sacrificial liturgies and the Old Testament prophetic critiques of sacrifice. Shifting to Aquinas, Levering delimits the virtue of communal, bodily, sacrificial worship—an act of justice that demands the living of all types of justice. Levering draws especially upon the insights of Catherine Pickstock as to how the Eucharist, towards the end of building community, is centered on the notion of “sacrificial gift-offering,” the Eucharist being God’s gift in Christ so that human beings can offer the same gift—with themselves included—to God (177). Levering shows how this is realized by walking through St. Thomas’ theological and spiritual description of the liturgy of the Mass.

Throughout the book, Levering is in careful dialogue with a range of theologians—whether Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, general systematicians or specialists in the sacraments or the Scriptures. Levering’s extensive research is shown in the footnotes. These should not be glanced over nonchalantly! They contain gems of bibliography and brilliance, especially in Levering’s assessment of various theologians. Some of the theological ideas could very profitably have been introduced into the main text.

The book is written at an advanced level, integrating the theological disciplines, such that, besides proficient theologians, it could advantageously be appreciated by upper-level university students and graduate students. This penetrating synthesis would also serve well for the clerical and lay faithful who desire to be led more fully into the saving mysteries of the Mass.

In the language of scholasticism, Levering's overall goal is to show the depth of Aquinas' theology of the *res tantum* of the Eucharist, the communion in charity between God and human beings united as the Church of Christ. As Levering demonstrates, this unity cannot occur without the *res et sacramentum* of the Eucharist, the Real Presence of Christ crucified who gives us the benefits of his sacrifice. As such, the book is noteworthy for illustrating the importance of Thomistic sacramental instrumental causality.

The physical personalism of the Real Presence of the Eucharist is not limited to the Eucharist alone. One of Levering's main terms and themes through the book is "cruciformity." It refers to how the Cross forms and molds Christians, especially in the moral life. "If the Church, as embodied in its members at a particular time and place, does not bear these sacrificial marks, then its 'communion' with its Head is a façade" (189). Beyond the idealism of some modern Eucharistic theologies and in conjunction with recent theology emphasizing the lifelong building of moral virtue, Levering nicely lays the groundwork for further study of the role of daily sacrifice—no wishing-upon-a-star moral idealism!—in the individual Christian's growth in holiness.

When Levering has to deal with these real and physicalist aspects of the Eucharist, he is at his finest. His presentation and analysis of Thomas' theology of transubstantiation in chapter four is the best section of the book. It marches forward with depth, asking interesting questions and answering them with clarity and resoluteness, even if it should mean the correction of major theologians such as Bulgakov or Schmemmann. It is often said that St. Thomas was at his liveliest, most engaged, and most personal when treating of the Eucharist in the *Summa theologiae*. In more ways than one, Levering follows in the footsteps of the Common Doctor. N.V

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Praeambula fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers by Ralph McInerny (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), xi + 313 pp.

IN HIS previous book *Characters in Search of Their Author* Ralph McInerny broke with the typical behavior of Gifford Lecturers, who have usually given the lectures and then worked for some years to publish something of a magnum opus developed out of the lecture material. In that earlier book McInerny had presented the lectures as they were given in Glasgow. In the

present work, *Praeambula Fidei*, we have the fully worked out account of the ideas covered there, along with a considerable number of other topics, with all of the arguments, exegesis and documentation.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is merely a general introduction. The second is a critique of some influential contemporary Thomisms. The main purpose of this section is to show that many varieties of Thomism on the academic marketplace have a marked tendency to undermine the role of the *praeambula fidei* and, thereby, vitiate the role of philosophy in its relations with theology.

McInerny begins his case by examining the attack on the Aristotelian Thomism of Cajetan that was launched by Gilson and de Lubac. Gilson argued that Cajetan had failed to see the differences between Aquinas and Aristotle in the realm of philosophy by developing his metaphysics in terms of substance, rather than *esse*. In reply McInerny offers a close reading of Cajetan in light of Gilson's points and offers a step by step defense of the Dominican commentator. Special attention is then given to comparing Cajetan and Gilson's reading of *Summa theologiae* I, question 90, article 2 on whether the soul is made or is the substance of God, and the doctrine of being in the *De ente et essentia*. In contrast to Gilson, McInerny finds a clear awareness of the several senses of *esse*, even if this is not accompanied by the kind of fanfare Gilson expected to find (51 and 55).

McInerny also provides a detailed comparison between de Lubac and Cajetan on the much discussed issue of the natural desire to see God. McInerny shows convincingly that the widely celebrated account of de Lubac is based upon a radical oversimplification of the thought of Cajetan and Aquinas. He shows that Cajetan distinguishes between the end of the human person as a rational creature and as a creature ordered to happiness. In view of this, Cajetan shows that the desire for God is natural only in the latter sense, not the former (84). McInerny concludes this section with chapters addressing Gilson's view of Christian philosophy and Chenu's assessment of Thomism.

In part three McInerny presents and defends the metaphysics of Aristotelian Thomism. This begins with a discussion of the nature of metaphysics as a science. The following chapter discusses the debate concerning *separatio* as the origin of our apprehension of being. Here McInerny argues that metaphysics as the science of being *qua* being depends upon knowing immaterial beings, against the influential reading of John Wippel. There is then a defense of a "genetic" reading of Aristotle's metaphysics, one which takes the work as a literary whole. McInerny defends his well known view that Aquinas's Aristotle commentaries not only express Aquinas's philosophical thought but also are generally accurate

readings of the Philosopher's texts. This method is then put into practice in an extended discussion of Thomas' reading of Aristotle's theology in *Metaphysics* book XII. A further chapter addresses some problematic cases: the eternity of the world, God as pure act, and God as *noesis noeseos*. The final chapter of the book defends Aristotelian Thomism as a viable alternative to Gilson's "existentialism."

Overall, McInerny's presentation of Thomism flies in the face of much that has become received dogma for many scholars today. But his arguments are clear, balanced and carefully articulated. However, it is worth noting that Gilson's shadow hangs over much of this book. In dealing with the undermining of the *praeambula fidei*, it is almost always Gilson that is either explicitly or implicitly the target of McInerny's attention. One regrets that there is no discussion of other versions of Thomism that have been highly influential in theology while, perhaps having similar problematic implications for the *praeambula fidei*. Authors such as Blondel, Marechal, Rahner, and Lonergan are not even mentioned.

Nevertheless, *Praeambula Fidei* is a profound and important work. It offers a path through the intellectual fashions prevalent amongst Thomists today and provides a solid defense of Aristotelian Thomism. McInerny's concludes this remarkable work by noting that not only would Aristotle remain silent were it not for St. Thomas, but that we cannot hear what St. Thomas has to teach us without Aristotle. This view has much to recommend itself and the time is long past due for giving it renewed consideration. N.V

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