

Louis Martz (not Marz!), he argues that Eliot's 'meditative verse' is shaped by the traditional art of meditation about which he was not only very well informed but into which he had initiated himself through years of discipline: 'an application, not only of the mind, not only of the sensibility, but of the whole being', in Eliot's own words.

It is not just that 'Burnt Norton' yields more sense the more one knows about the themes with which the poet is dealing (a particular notion of time, then). The point is rather that how the poetry *moves* is an invitation into an imaginative process, into a kind of *music*, in which a brief moment of illumination is attained—'But the experience is, for some reason, unbearable for Eliot, and it is only partly realised' (page 53).

Murray recalls the experience shared by Augustine and his mother (*Confessions*, book 10), looking out of a window into the enclosed garden at Ostia. The experience of Eliot's protagonist is, he says, 'much more hesitant and more subjectively self-conscious'. True—but could this not be because he never had the experience in the first place? Footfalls echo in the memory all right, but down the passage which we did *not* take, towards the door we *never* opened.

Of course much else emerges as Paul Murray guides us through the four poems. He quotes Goethe's remark to Eckermann: 'Thoughts that are the same as our own leave us unmoved; but it is contradiction that makes us productive'. All the new information and insight which this book provides surely settles the relationship between the poetry and Eliot's mysticism once and for all, beyond contradiction; but the author's scholarship, sympathy and enthusiasm send us back to the poems, eager to verify his readings, more free than ever to make the poetry our own.

FERGUS KERR, OP

SHEER JOY: CONVERSATIONS WITH THOMAS AQUINAS ON CREATION SPIRITUALITY, by Matthew Fox. *Harper Collins*, New York, 1992. Pp. xviii + 532. \$18.00/£11.99.

This book aims to 'resurrect Aquinas from the dead' and to rescue him from being remembered 'solely by an academic elite who specialize in obscure rationalistic nitpicking' (p.1). Aquinas, says Fox, 'has suffered long enough from persons interpreting him without heart, without cosmology, without wisdom, without mysticism' (p. 10). He needs to be read 'with right and left brain, with heart and head' (*ibid*).

After a fifty-five page Introduction, Fox offers four 'conversations' between himself and Aquinas. Centered on 'the Four Paths of creation spirituality', these are intended to be 'a treatise on spirituality in Aquinas's own words' (p.11). In them Fox offers translations of Aquinas's writings in a format which will enable 'late twentieth-century minds and hearts to hear him in a fresh way' (p.2)—i.e. the translations are extracts from Aquinas selected by Fox and reproduced with interjections from

him. They are followed by an appendix on Aquinas and cosmology (mostly an extended quotation from the Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*). The book also comes with a Foreword by Rupert Sheldrake and an Afterword by Bede Griffiths. There is a brief Bibliography, but no Index.

The result is lively and, in many ways, welcome. It conveys enormous (almost child-like) enthusiasm for Aquinas. It strongly suggests that he is exciting to read. It also corrects some (fortunately now dated) errors about him. It stresses, for example, that Aquinas was not a 'Thomist' (pp.9.f.) and that he was more concerned with Scripture than some of his commentators have allowed (p.3). It also does much to indicate that he is surprisingly modern in some of his teachings, though he lived in the thirteenth century. Few people now know anything about Aquinas. Those who know something about him often suppose him to be only of historical interest. Fox, however, rightly conveys a different impression.

Yet, despite reproducing large quantities of Aquinas's writings, he spoils matters by forcing on his subject his own very distinctive agenda and interests. He also deals with Aquinas using language which Aquinas would have found foreign and perplexing. This leaves us with a text that is several stages removed from the documents on which it is based. Any anthology will reflect the interests and views of its editor, but the problem in this one is compounded by Fox's contributions to the 'conversations'. Readers new to Aquinas are likely to suppose that these amount to serious commentary on him. Unfortunately, however, they do not. Take, for example, the following interjection of Fox on p.87: 'You seem so confident about the absolute holiness and divinity of existence itself. Where do you derive this confidence about the graced mystery of existence?' (p.87). Aquinas never says that existence as such is holy and divine. What, would it mean to say this? Fox might be thinking that God, for Aquinas, is *ipsum esse subsistens*. Yet, if God is 'existence itself', existence cannot be graced. Aquinas does not think of God as receiving grace.

Here and elsewhere, the problem here lies in careless thinking or oversimplification on Fox's part—something that also detracts from the merits of his Introduction. This is vigorous and often perceptive, but it also contains much that is questionable. What, for example, are we to make of the assertion that 'for Aquinas—as for any creation-based thinker—all of life, existence itself, the universe, all history, is mysterious and holy' (p.5)? Fox clearly finds nothing perplexing here, but his statement does little to match the care with which Aquinas usually expresses himself.

As I have noted, Fox is against 'an academic elite who specialize in obscure rationalistic nitpicking. His position can be justified, and one can see how Aquinas might have wanted to support it. Yet Aquinas was an academic who specialized in the treatment of details. Much of his genius lies precisely in his nitpicking (a virtue as practiced by some). Perhaps

that is why he is more revered today among secular philosophers than among theologians. He strongly denied that Christians need to be intellectuals. Yet he was an intellectual of a most careful and sophisticated kind. And, like all great thinkers, he is not easy to understand and learn from. He was a theological and philosophical genius, so we need people able to present him to a wide audience. *Sheer Joy*, however, does him less than the justice he deserves. Like Bertrand Russell's famous denigration of Aquinas in *A History of Western Philosophy* (which it so curiously resembles), it will probably mislead readers rather than inform them. Those who want a text-based introduction to Aquinas's thinking are still, therefore, currently best advised to read Timothy McDermott's *Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* (London, 1989). This book really does allow Aquinas to speak for himself in modern English. And its commentary on him is accurate, clear, and stimulating.

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THE GLORY OF THE LORD. V: THE REALM OF METAPHYSICS IN THE MODERN AGE by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Edinburgh: *T. & T. Clark*, 1991.

The present volume of *The Glory of the Lord* is surely one of Balthasar's most fascinating studies. On the one hand, it is a book with a simple thesis, namely that glory has disappeared from modern culture. On the other hand, it is an extremely complex book, for it takes the reader through a complicated journey involving a significant number of major literary and philosophical figures of modernity.

The thesis of the book is fairly straightforward. Modern thought after Thomas Aquinas marks a sharp decline, for the key insight of Thomas was lost sight of, namely the analogy of being. The proportion between created Being and infinite subsistent Being allowed the splendour of God's Being to be reflected in the creation. After Aquinas, two lines of development were opened up. One was the conceptual school represented by Scotus according to which Being is a comprehensive *concept* of reason. In this case the concept of Being applies univocally to God and creatures but Being is a hollow concept, for it excludes all its own determinations and hence the glory of created beings. The other option pursued after St. Thomas was the identification of God and Being. For Balthasar this seems to be the more intriguing possibility. It is reflected in the great mystical tradition represented by Eckhart. In this tradition the key virtue of the creature is indifference by which it opens itself in transparency to God. Obviously the tendency to pantheism is strong here. This path once embarked on easily leads to the tradition of German idealism where Being and finite spirit become identical. The difficulty is that in this scheme the world really becomes only a manifestation of spirit, hence it is robbed of its own glory. Thus,

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