

ST THOMAS AQUINAS: SUMMA THEOLOGIAE. Latin Text and English Translation. Introduction, Text, Appendices and Glossaries. Vol. XII: Human Intelligence (Ia, lxxxiv-lxxxix), P. T. Durbin, pp. xxii + 202. Vol. XL: Superstition and Irreverence (IIa IIae, xcii-c), T. F. O'Meara, O.P. and M. J. Duffy, O.P., pp. xxii + 170. *Blackfriars*. London: *Eyre and Spottiswoode*; New York: *McGraw-Hill*. 42s each.

St Thomas's treatise on the Angels, which appeared in the last batch of this series, and his treatise on human knowledge, which is now before us, are widely separated in the *Summa* but they can be profitably read in conjunction; for the former expounds *inter alia* the character of knowledge as a function of pure intelligence, while the latter discusses the highly complicated way in which it functions in the baffling psychophysical unities which are human beings. The Christianized Aristotelianism, which is St Thomas's vehicle for this discussion, is both elaborate and technical, and Dr Durbin has wisely furnished his readable and careful rendering with ample footnotes and seven appendices. The central theme of St Thomas's epistemology is, however, both simple and extremely important; it is that the sensible species (which more recent philosophies would call the phenomenon, sensum or sense-datum) is not the *objectum quod* of perception but the *objectum quo*, that is to say, the instrumental medium through which the intellect grasps the ultimate intelligible object which is the *thing*, the *ens*, itself. It is the absence of this recognition that accounts for the inability of so many modern philosophers, from Descartes and Hume to the present day, to give an adequate account of human knowledge. Either it is seen as a purely intramental act which never succeeds in reaching the external world at all, or else it is seen as a mere impact of external things on the percipient, rather like the collision of two elastic material bodies. If and when the inadequacy of these views is recognized, the philosopher tends to take refuge in the realm of words and entertains himself and his readers by investigating the grammar and syntax of perceptual language. It is the special glory of St Thomas that he holds fast to the essentially spiritual and immaterial nature of the act of knowledge as such (*Intellectus in actu est intelligibile in actu; mens quodammodo fit omnia*), while at the same time insisting that the embodied human mind, or rather the human being who consists of body and mind functioning as a unity, acquires its knowledge through the medium of the senses and expresses that knowledge in terms of sensible images (*mens convertit se ad phantasmata*). It is this insight that inspires the otherwise very dissimilar writings

of such contemporary thinkers as Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and Emerich Coreth, and, provided it is firmly adhered to, one can, I think, dispense with much of the Aristotelian machinery and still more with its elaboration by such modern Aristotelians as Jacques Maritain. (Not indeed that such elaboration is illicit, but that it should be recognized as disposable and as secondary to the central theme.) Indeed, one might maintain that it is not so much a theory about human knowledge as a simple description of it. One might wish that in his Appendix on St Thomas and the History of Theories of Knowledge, Dr Durbin had explored more fully this line of thought.

Fr O'Meara and Fr Duffy might seem at first sight to be faced with a thankless task in dealing with St Thomas on Superstition and Irreverence, but they succeed, mainly by letting the Angelic Doctor speak for himself, in showing that his discussion is much more relevant to the present day than one might think. After all, it is just where religion has declined that superstition flourishes, as is exemplified by the contemporary concern with astrology and mascots. In an Appendix on the Demonic in Contemporary Thought, the translators defend their tendency to speak of 'the demonic' rather than of 'devils' by making rather inconclusive references to Tillich, Jaspers and Jung. On p. 107 they oddly oscillate between 'grave sin', 'serious sin' and 'mortal sin' in rendering *peccatum mortale*. On p. 18 *idolatria* has been printed for *idololatria*. The amount of space which St Thomas devotes to simony reflects some of the less satisfactory aspects of medieval Christendom; it is interesting to note that he holds that it is better to die unbaptized than to pay a price for baptism, since baptism of desire (*baptismus flaminis*) would make up the lack (c. 2 ad 1m). Fr O'Meara and Fr Duffy have performed a useful task, but one would have welcomed a rather fuller commentary, for, in comparison with the series in general, this volume contains remarkably little supplementary material.

The publishers are to be congratulated on keeping the price of the volumes down, while maintaining their very high standard of production.

E. L. MASCALL