

While perplexing and frustrating at times, this is an interesting set of essays, where many good things can be found. It suffers, as most Reformed theology and Catholic Modernism does, from an extremely partial reading of the history of theology, and an ironic voluntarism which is *so* deeply embedded in the Reformed psyche as to go unnoticed. With these North American essayists one also wonders if a sort of theological ‘Greyfriars Bobby-ism’ (Disney version) isn’t operating at some level: a nostalgia for a couthy, doughty, yet never-existent, Calvinist Scotland. This perhaps helps to explain the picking and choosing from Calvinist orthodoxy that the essays display: a sort of tourist, ‘Scotch’, Calvinism-Lite.

NEIL FERGUSON OP

**AFTER WITTGENSTEIN, ST. THOMAS** by Roger Pouivet, translated and introduced by Michael S. Sherwin OP, *St. Augustine’s Press* South Bend, Indiana 2008, pp xiv + 138, \$24.00 hbk.

In 1957, after a few weeks, Cornelius Ernst concluded that the only way to make Thomas Aquinas’s writings on the soul intelligible to his first-year class of Dominican friars was to re-read them in the light of the later Wittgenstein’s recently published *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). He had himself heard Wittgenstein lecture at Cambridge ten years previously.

Since the early ‘fifties the Dominicans had hosted an annual conference at Spode House, bringing together teachers of neoscholastic philosophy in seminaries and other Catholic institutions with the young Catholics (often converts) with posts in British universities, trained in what would eventually become known as analytical philosophy, much influenced at that date by Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*. The encounter, on the neoscholastic side, bore little lasting fruit apart from reviews and articles by the future Cardinal Cahal B. Daly. The most substantial interaction with neoscholastic epistemology from a late-Wittgensteinian standpoint is to be found in *Mental Acts*, brought out in 1957 by Peter T. Geach. Having studied in Rome at the Gregorian University and then at Oxford with G.E.M. Anscombe, Anthony Kenny brought both Aquinas and Wittgenstein together in a series of studies, beginning in 1963 with *Action, Emotion and Will*.

Roger Pouivet, born in 1958, teaches philosophy at the University of Nancy. His interests range widely from Polish research in logic to Nelson Goodman’s aesthetics. He belongs to the generation of French philosophers drawn to Wittgenstein, rather than to Heidegger and Derrida. Indeed, by the end of the book, Pouivet insists that Wittgenstein was ‘a far more traditional philosopher’ than he perhaps thought — more so, anyway, than Husserl, Heidegger, or those ‘who reduce all philosophy to expressions of power or resentment’, in a post-Nietzschean manner, such as Deleuze and Derrida. He acknowledges a debt to Jacques Bouveresse, whose book *Le mythe de l’intériorité* (1976), as the title suggests, expounds and endorses Wittgenstein’s famous discussion of the very idea of a ‘private language’: a language for one’s sensations that no one else could understand.

In *Après Wittgenstein, Saint Thomas*, published in 1997, Pouivet introduced the French philosophical public to the approach to Aquinas exemplified in work by Geach, Anscombe and Kenny, in connection with some of the main issues in philosophy: mind, cognition and value. Michael Sherwin, who teaches at the University of Fribourg, has translated Pouivet’s survey very readably, to direct attention to these post-Wittgensteinian students of Aquinas. While well known and respected by their peers, their distinctive approach to Aquinas has not been widely appreciated or imitated, even by committed Thomist philosophers in the English-speaking world. Only since John Haldane (of the University of St Andrews) launched what he called ‘analytical Thomism’, a decade or so ago, has interest

in their approach to Aquinas revived. The back cover of the book carries an endorsement by Professor Haldane.

Despite some outstandingly good work, especially on the *Tractatus*, inaugurated by Cora Diamond and James Conant, there is little interest among philosophers generally in Wittgenstein's later work. On the contrary, as the professional journals and books from academic presses show, English-speaking philosophy currently is split between arguments over metaphysics and research programmes in cognitive science, to neither of which would Wittgenstein's later work have much but therapy to contribute. Pouivet's argument, on the other hand, reaffirms the later Wittgenstein's importance in the history of philosophy as the one who above all showed how to end the hegemony of the modern 'Cartesian' conception of subjectivity. To put it in slogans, Wittgenstein provided a variety of imaginative moves designed to replace 'internalism', the assumption that mental states can be identified by oneself, in some privileged manner, with 'externalism', the thesis that to identify mental states, including one's own, one must refer to the interactions between mind, world, and language.

According to Thomas, the mind knows itself, *non per essentiam suam sed per actum suum* — not 'through itself, as something incorporeal' (as Augustine put it), but by means of its activity (*Summa Theologiae* 1a. 87, 1). It is by way of knowledge of material things that the mind comes to understand immaterial substances (88, 2). It is material, corporeal realities that our intellect understands, by abstraction from sense images (85. 1). Such platitudes, it should be noted, Thomas has to argue for: as regards the last, for example, he has systematically to exclude the possibilities that the soul might know material things through its own essence, or by means of innate species natural to it, or through the influence of subsistent immaterial forms (angels), or in dependence on the divine ideas (84, 2–5).

Though most of these temptations are too exotic to appeal even to first-year philosophy students these days, it takes more work on one's unexamined prejudices than might be supposed to recover Thomas's sense of the soul's interaction with the world.

With detail and supporting argument we cannot rehearse here, Pouivet is surely right in ascribing to Thomas the 'externalism' he shows us in the anti-Cartesianism of the later Wittgenstein. In brief, Wittgenstein's *Investigations* exposes and explodes the individualist, indeed solipsistic, conception of subjective consciousness that still haunts so much western psychology and especially ethics. This, in turn, enables us to recover something of the confidence in the place of the self in the world, which Thomas displays in his reflections *de anima*.

It was never an easy task. Anthony Kenny records, in an essay which Pouivet does not cite, the 'incomprehension mixed with hostility' with which he greeted Anscombe's exposition of Wittgenstein's private language argument, at Oxford in 1957–59 ('in a chilly and dilapidated outhouse of Somerville College'). She encouraged the class to express their doubts and disagreements. By the end of the term Kenny was convinced of the profound importance of Wittgenstein's considerations: 'various lines of thought which until that time I had found seductive, and which many others still follow enthusiastically, lost all their attraction and were revealed as blind alleys and dead ends' (see his essay in *Intention and Intentionality: Essays in Honour of G.E.M. Anscombe* edited by Cora Diamond and Jenny Teichman, 1979).

In Professor Pouivet's short book we have an excellent guide to an interesting group of philosophers, but also — one hopes — an essay that will provoke the kind of irritation and resistance that will in time draw readers into the philosophical tradition that Wittgenstein and Thomas Aquinas represent.

FERGUS KERR OP