J. J. MacIntosh. *The Arguments of Aquinas: A Philosophical View*. Routledge 2017. 208 pp. $145.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781848935983).

J.J. Macintosh offers an academically rigorous and concise introduction to the major philosophical themes of the 13th century Dominican theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). Unlike many specialists in Thomistic studies, MacIntosh is consistent and courageous in showing where he both agrees and disagrees with Aquinas and his commentators. Although MacIntosh's book is an introductory level text, it is a sophisticated piece of scholarship that belongs in the hands of professional philosophers, graduate students of philosophy, academic theologians, and Thomistic scholars. Heavily informed by the tradition of analytic philosophy, MacIntosh continuously puts Aquinas in dialogue with modern and contemporary philosophers. Several important topics are covered in sequential order in the book: necessity and possibility; time and motion; time and infinity; the existence and nature of God; divine foreknowledge and human freedom; the existence and immateriality of the soul; religious epistemology; and several pertinent issues related to Aquinas's moral theory.

One commendable feature of the book is that Aquinas is put into dialogue with non-Catholic thinkers who might overlook the contributions of medieval philosophy. As MacIntosh rightly observes: 'Too many philosophers know him only through a reading of the five ways.… And of those many, too many have misread him, often drastically. It is rather as if our views of Plato were garnered solely from a quick read through the analogy of the cave, with many deciding on the basis of that reading that the Forms were spatio-temporal' (xi). Regardless, if readers agree with the author's conclusions, *The Arguments of Aquinas* deserves a place of prominence among the current revival of publications on Aquinas.

In the first part, MacIntosh discusses some of the metaphysical issues that are necessary for properly understanding Aquinas's doctrine of the natural knowledge of God (Aquinas's natural theology constitutes the second part of the book). After discussing and elaborating upon the retrieval of Aristotelian philosophy in the high Middle Ages, MacIntosh clarifies Aquinas's multifaceted understandings of necessity and possibility (9-30). After exploring several different meanings of necessity, he writes that 'It is important to understand his different uses of necessity and possibility, in order not only to see what could count for and against his arguments, but even to understand what his arguments involve' (9). Having different uses of necessity in mind, Aquinas is able to argue for the impossibility of changing the past, the nature of the past infinity of time, and the specific way in which necessity should be understood in the conclusion of the third proof for the existence of God (as expressed in the *Summa Theologiae*).

MacIntosh also distinguishes Aquinas's view of causality from common modern philosophical understandings of the term (31-44). He succinctly states, 'His view of causality incorporates certain views of earlier thinkers–in particular Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā–and is importantly different from our usual current account of the notion, both in terms of time and causal relata. Overlooking this too often results in an anachronistic misreading of Thomas's views, particularly in the case of God's existence' (31). For Aquinas, causes are seen as necessary and sufficient conditions that generate certain kinds of effects in the present; the primary sense of causality should not be understood as temporal priority. In other words, one thing can be the cause of another without preceding it in time.

Given the hierarchical nature of the causal nexus, Aquinas argues there cannot be an infinite regress of causes. Thus, a cause without potential for additional causal change must exist. Otherwise, there is no explanation for the existence of limited beings (or for the causal chain itself). At the same

time, although there cannot be an infinite causal chain of limited beings, there can be an infinite number of moments before today (cf. 45-48; 61-79). The finite chain in the here-and-now is highlighted in order to argue successfully for the existence of a cause that sustains the created order in being.

In part two, MacIntosh covers the gist of Aquinas's natural theology. He also discusses some dilemmas related to the attributes of God (101-114) and the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom (115-134). Sometimes the objection is raised that the proofs do not tell us everything about the first cause. Perhaps the first cause is part of the material universe itself. But MacIntosh explains that Aquinas distinguishes between apophatic (negative theology) and kataphatic (positive theology) theological discourse to nuance the meaning of the first cause. With this distinction in mind, the objection misses the mark. As the author explains: 'Thomas's answer in effect allows the objection—given finite causes we can't have complete knowledge of a presumed infinite cause, but we can be sure that there is *some* cause, and from the effects we can deduce something about that cause, even though we cannot in that way know everything about it' (85).

MacIntosh believes that some of Aquinas's proofs are sound arguments for the existence of God. This is an unconventional admission to make in the world of academic philosophy. Today the majority of theistic philosophers maintain that the arguments of natural theology are probabilistic in nature, not demonstrative. At any rate, MacIntosh's keen observation that a proper understanding of Thomistic natural theology lies in understanding Aquinas's underlying metaphysical schema is to be commended. The latter allows the former to get off the ground. Similarly, the argument from 'the governance of the world' (i.e., the fifth way of the *Summa Theologiae*) is briskly granted the status of a demonstrable proof (95-97). Given the contemporary debates between intelligent design theorists and scientific atheists, MacIntosh should have spelled out the significance of the fifth way in more detail. To be sure, Aquinas' fifth proof is strategically positioned to cut through the middle of these prevailing viewpoints, which often affect intellectual and cultural attitudes in the United States. Moreover, such an exposition could have garnered significant attention from philosophers who are not familiar with Thomistic thought.

In the third and final section of the book, the reader is introduced to some themes in Thomistic epistemology and the philosophy of mind (137-148), the existence of the soul (149-165), and some pressing issues related to moral philosophy (166-186). In Aquinas's theory of knowledge, human beings can know both the particular objects (e.g., the red apple) and the universals that are abstracted from those objects in the mind (e.g., redness). This leads to a discussion of the existence and immateriality of the soul. As with the balanced view of the fifth proof, Aquinas's position on the relationship between body and soul avoids the extremes of Cartesian dualism and eliminative materialism. Says MacIntosh, 'So, for Thomas, the soul is made for *this particular body*, and while the soul can exist on its own, the *person* is the informed body: "My soul is not I, so if only my soul is saved, I am not saved," said Thomas, and notes that the same was true for everyone' (155). When one reflects on the body-soul unity, it follows that humans literally cease to exist at the point of death. Given that Aquinas was a believing Catholic, he did not believe in the possibility of immortal life (which is more at home with dualism), but held that our bodies will be reunited with our souls at the eschatological resurrection.

In summary, MacIntosh covers the major themes of Thomism as they specifically relate to major dilemmas in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. It should be recommended to scholars and serious students of Aquinas. Undoubtedly, MacIntosh's meticulous scholarship highlights the monumental achievements of Aquinas and potentially exposes some weaknesses in the great saint

of medieval Catholicism. Such a balanced treatment leaves the reader wanting to learn more about Aquinas.

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