

Therese Scarpelli Cory & Gregory T. Doolan (Eds). *Summa metaphysicae ad mentem Sancti Thomae: Essays in Honor of John F. Wippel*. Catholic University of American Press 2024. 500 pp. \$75.00 USD (Hardcover 9780813237275); \$75.00 USD (eBook 9780813237282).

His students called him Fr. Wippel. Behind his serious expression, expansive intellect, and incredible work ethic, Therese Scarpelli Cory offers the best description of Fr. Wippel as a “priestly father.” Fr. Wippel earned this combination of affection and admiration from students and scholars. In 2008, The School of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America (CUA) hosted a series of talks in honor of Msgr. John F. Wippel. That series included speakers such as Eleonore Stump, Jorge Gracia, James Ross, Marilyn McCord Adams, and Robert Sokolowski, and it resulted in a fine *Festschrift* entitled, *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations* (2012), which was edited by his former student and colleague, Gregory T. Doolan.

We are indebted to Cory and Doolan for this second, very different *Festschrift* in honor of Fr. Wippel, completed months after his death. For one thing, it offers an exquisite biography based on an interview (373-380). We learn that he grew up in a neighborhood of Wippel family farms in Appalachian Ohio where he was continually put to work shoveling snow and driving tractors. He later played in two semi-professional teams in what he saw as a “philosopher’s game”: baseball. As a seminarian, his summer work was equally industrious in painting guardrails, hand-shaping the steel tops for Jeeps, and signalling to trains late at night with an electric lantern for them to slow down or speed up. We learn that of all his publications he was most proud of his *Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines: A Study in Late Thirteenth-century Philosophy* (1981) and his *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (2000).

In both works, Wippel presents a system of metaphysics from the writings of what are effectively career theologians. He rejected Etienne Gilson’s characterization of Aquinas’s work as a “Christian philosophy.” His *Metaphysical Thought* briefly introduces the term, *Summa Metaphysicae*, to describe his effort at synthesizing Aquinas’ own metaphysics, as proceeding by the light of reason independently of the data of revelation. Whereas Gilson’s hermeneutic starts from the “I Am” of Exodus 3:14, Wippel begins from finite Being and proceeds to Uncreated Being. The editors shape this series of twelve essays accordingly (xiii). Part one is about “Metaphysics as a Science.” Part two is about “The Problem of the One and the Many in the Order of Being.” Part three proceeds with “The Essential Structure of Finite Being.” Part four ends with the “First Causal Principles: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being.”

There are many schools of Thomism, which focus on one or another important aspect of St. Thomas Aquinas’s thought, but Wippel’s approach may be called, “textualist.” He forced us to ask as the primary if not the only question: what do the texts say? Graduate students’ first papers with him were riddled with question marks asking for citations to the Leonine’s critical edition. What we want Aquinas to say is irrelevant: We are to understand Aquinas’s thought based on what Aquinas says. The humble, careful reader should dive into the *Corpus Thomisticum* and analyze all the relevant passages in their contexts chronologically, from the *Scriptum* to the *Summae*. Wippel’s *Metaphysical Thought* (2000) proceeds accordingly and provides an important resource that any



serious scholar in Aquinas's metaphysics should refer to, but it is as Michael Rubin writes in his essay, "the careful textual analysis and solid reasoning for which Wippel is justly celebrated" (317). In the rest of this review, I select in their order of appearance a few entries based on the following qualities: most 'Wippelian,' most significant, and most striking.

The most 'Wippelian' contribution is by Mark D. Gossiaux, "Thomas Aquinas and the Origin of the Controversy concerning the Real Distinction between Essence and Existence" (67-95). In addition to being about the real distinction, a "signature theme" for Wippel (3), Gossiaux follows a textual and chronological method in discussing Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Siger of Brabant, and Henry of Ghent. Gossiaux's textual method allows him to paint a profile of Giles, which is unfavorable. In his *Ordinatio* I (1271-1273), Giles' criticism of Aquinas's *De potentia* omits "a key step" in the argument where Aquinas explains why the "proper effect of any cause proceeds from it according to the likeness of its nature" (73). Since the proper effect of God is existence (*esse*), then *esse* must be of his essence. Furthermore, according to Gossiaux, Giles's criticism of Thomas's use of the *De causis* is "somewhat uncharitable" (75), because Giles finds fault with his own misreading of Aquinas. In addition to the textual approach, Gossiaux's chronological method allows him to say that Giles's earlier writings are similar to Aquinas's, but when writing the *Theoremata de corpore Christi* (1274), Giles has the "beginnings of an evolution" (78) in his thinking when comparing the extension of quantity to the existence of God. Incidentally, Gloria Frost (215) and Brian Carl (315) also note in their essays a "development" in Aquinas's thought, at least in terminology, based on this chronological method.

The most significant or groundbreaking piece may be Cory's, "Likeness and Agency in Aquinas: A Study" (130-174). Cory motivates her study well: "Likeness is central to Aquinas's theories of creation, nature, action, cognition, metaphysics, virtue, redemption, grace, . . . the knowledge of God," and even the diversity of being in general (132). A quick search on *Index Thomisticus* shows that Aquinas uses the notion of likeness (*similitudo*) in over a thousand places, but the secondary literature is sparse. Although ignoring his article in the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (2022), Cory cites the dissertation by Daniel Pierson on the axiom, "every agent makes something like itself" (*omne agens agit sibi simile*). And though setting aside Aquinas's own four modes of unity (numerical, specific, generic, and analogical) as "not so useful to us" (151, n. 64), she expands upon her own four kinds of likeness: "kind-likeness" (e.g., Koala A and Koala B), "ratio-likeness" (e.g., this physical horse and the intellect thinking horse), "likeness of proportions" (e.g., color is to whiteness as animal is to human), and "mere power likeness." Cory uses the puzzling case of medieval sun and heat as a central example of mere power likeness. The sun of Aquinas's cosmology cannot be hot, because it consists of incorruptible quintessence stuff, so how can it heat earthly bodies? The answer is that a unity of proportion grounds the sun-heat likeness: "heat is in the sun as its active power for heating" (164). The sun and heat have *nothing in common*, but the sun exactly expresses ("causally") what the sun's own form would be like at that lower level ("by participation"). To be an effect is to be an expression of an agent's form, even across orders of being (167).

Besides many other excellent pieces, the most striking or unusual piece may be Francis

Feingold's, "Can Angels Know Being without Judgment?" (227-275). It is not clear whether the author intends his title to be ambiguous, because he does not clarify that the English "being" can mean either the concrete participle (*ens*) or the abstract principle (*esse*). Being signified as a participle can be known without judgment. Indeed, Aquinas thinks that being (*ens*) first "falls" in the intellect, whether human or angelic. But the principle (*esse*) is more complicated. For one thing, Aquinas repeats that the intellect has two operations regarding two principles: the first intellectual operation ("simple apprehension") regards the nature of the thing, whereas the second intellectual operation ("judgment") regards the existence (*esse*) of the thing. As Feingold puts it, judgment "alone grasps a thing's real existence" (230). So, the answer is pretty straightforward: angels cannot know being (*esse*) without judgment. The author nevertheless weaves together many topics, texts, and voices (e.g., Jacques Maritain). Building upon Cory's "Embodied vs. Non-Embodied Modes of Knowing in Aquinas," the author discusses the human mode of knowing through composition ("Jack is tall") and division ("Jack is not tall"), which is identified with judgment in the human mode of knowing, but which for Aquinas absolutely does not apply to angels, who even know propositions in a simple manner. The upshot is that there is a "metaphysical composition" in finite being that explains "the irreducible distinction" between essence and existence requiring an act of judgment to be known. Feingold also discusses the controversial issue of the subject of metaphysics, being as being, which is known by human persons only through a "corrective" negative judgment (e.g., "being need not be material"), but which for Aquinas does not apply to good angels because they do not need to "correct" their judgment.

In all, the series provides a wonderful source for contemplating Thomistic metaphysical themes. The editors refine many of the contributors' entries and provide a nice summary of each in their introduction and add a helpful bibliography, an index of terms, and of names. One minor fault is that the editors claim that contributors are students and colleagues of Fr. Wippel, but several colleagues are such only because they have published in the same field (i.e., Aquinas's metaphysics).

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