

useful contribution to the assessment of that theology and ought to encourage those not convinced by the philosophy to reassess the theology.

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**ETHICS AND THEOLOGICAL DISCLOSURES: THE THOUGHT OF ROBERT SOKOLOWSKI** edited by **Guy Mansini OSB** and **James G. Hart**, *The Catholic University of America Press*, Washington D.C., 2003, Pp. xviii + 198, \$ 69.95

This second series of essays in honour of Robert Sokolowski is dedicated to his ethical and theological work rather than to his more technical phenomenological writings. We begin with three essays on Sokolowski's recent development of Aristotle's ideas on friendship: Drummond discusses how difficulties about judging one's own case shed light on the relationship between friendship and justice and on Aristotle's remark that when people are friends they have no need of justice; friends, note, not cronies. Cobb-Stevens and Mansini develop Sokolowski's phenomenological analysis of friendship, raising questions about why Aristotle says so little (despite Plato) about *eros* (p. 25), about what specifically makes an action a moral action and about the transformation of friendship by the theological virtue of charity. Is it possible to make sense, on revised Aristotelian (and Thomistic) lines, of the notion that we can become friends of God?

We then move more explicitly in a phenomenological direction to perhaps the central theme of this book, namely what Sokolowski calls 'the theology of disclosure'. Sokolowski has introduced this phrase to refer to a type of theological thinking – distinct from both historical and speculative (scholastic) theology – whereby one can examine the way God discloses himself to us. The last essay in the collection is by Sokolowski himself enquiring how such an approach can be applied to the way Christ (in the New Testament) reveals something of the nature of the Trinity. Sokolowski recognizes that this is a rather strange expansion of the phenomenological method, but seems to suggest that it works on some sort of analogy to the analysis by Husserl and his successors of the appearances of physical objects.

Several of the essays deal with the relationship between this theology of disclosure – disclosing a phenomenon by its 'presences' and 'absences' – and what Sokolowski has called the Christian distinction: a philosophical representation of the peculiarly Christian thesis, so important in patristic times (in contrast, that is, to various

theologies of antiquity), of the radical gap between the Creator and his creatures. Basing itself on Anselm's idea that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived, the distinction proposes as a foundational thesis for theology that (*pace* Brentano) God plus the world is no greater than God alone, since God's free creative act neither increases nor diminishes the divine nature. All these essays are intended *inter alia* to illuminate Sokolowski's project of grafting a phenomenological account of consciousness on to a more or less Thomistic account of substances, thus showing not what things are (or how they can be defined) but the way they impact on us as individuals. The project is obviously important in that it forms part of a reply to the post-Cartesian critique of Thomism as having too little to say metaphysically about the significance, rights and value of the individual person as subject, as distinct from the merely numerically individual member of a species.

Of the remaining essays, one (McCarthy) deals with the limits of reason in discussions of the existence of God and the difficulties for the contemporary mind of accepting Paul's view in *Romans* of the self-evident presence of God in the world; a second (Slade) treats the difference between pre-modern and modern notions of political right, on the lines of Hegel's distinction between a natural right to be discovered (pre-modern) and a philosophically creative doctrine of right (first in Machiavelli and Hobbes). It opens with a striking quotation from Sokolowski himself urging that 'if philosophy tries to substitute for prephilosophical thinking, the result is [mere] rationalism', and raises, without resolving, the question of what it is reasonable for an argument in philosophical theology to claim to achieve without eliminating the need for faith itself. (What kind of proof, one may ask, is a proof of the existence of God?, and if such a proof is valid, why does it not command assent? A plausible answer would certainly invoke Sokolowski's concern about rationalizing away the prephilosophical preparation for philosophy which the classical philosophers always demanded).

There is also an essay on intentionality within the 'Christian distinction', but I confess that there the abstraction is so dense that I could hardly understand a word of it – except the bit about Brentano (p. 77).

On the whole this is a useful collection. Its major benefit, doubtless and properly desired by its authors, is to introduce a wider audience to the splendid and too little known philosophical writings of Sokolowski himself. I would hope that those who read it will at least go on to look at Sokolowski's *Moral Action*, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, *The God of Faith and Reason*, or *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure*.

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