

of Gothic influences from north of the Alps as well as their return to classical models, an influence coming from Nicola's place of origin in the kingdom of Ferdinand II.

There are many fascinating details. The first monumental male nude since antiquity is found on the Pisa Baptistery pulpit, its influence to be seen later in Jacopo della Quercia's *Adam* and Michelangelo's *David*. The Pistoia pulpit shows Saint Joseph in the guise of an ancient philosopher and Mary as pregnant on Calvary. That she suffered the pains of childbirth at the crucifixion was, apparently, an idea found in early mendicant preaching. The Pisa Cathedral pulpit shows Mary on the side of the damned, gesturing to Christ, while cupping her breast.

The final chapter traces the legacy of the Pisano pulpits. Their most important and visible impact was on later masters, not so much on pulpit typology as on the sculptural vision and carving techniques of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century masters. Michelangelo knew of them through his work on the tomb of Saint Dominic at Bologna, originally sculpted by Nicola Pisano. Michelangelo's never-executed plans for octagonal pulpits in the Duomo at Florence and for the tomb of Julius II show the influence of the Pisanos. And so do his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, his *David*, and even the statue of Moses (a part of Julius' tomb that was made).

Although it promises more to the theologian than it manages to deliver this book achieves its main goal: to offer to a popular readership a detailed introduction to what must be the most interesting pulpits in the world. The power of the narrative reliefs is irresistible, however, supporting theological reflection for those who are so inclined and certainly encouraging meditation on the mysteries of God incarnate.

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**BY KNOWLEDGE AND BY LOVE: CHARITY AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE MORAL THEOLOGY OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS** by Michael S. Sherwin OP, *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2005, Pp. xxiii+270. \$54.95 hbk.*

'Vision and choice in morality' says it all, almost. Published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* in 1956, this was the title of a seminal paper by Iris Murdoch (she was 36 and had taught philosophy at Oxford since 1948). Her target was the 'current view' in moral philosophy, as it was then: 'morality is essentially rules'; 'the moral life of the individual is a series of overt choices which take place in a series of specifiable situations'; and moral words cannot be defined in non-moral terms because the agent freely selects the criteria. In contrast with all this, Murdoch sought to highlight the 'conceptual background' of choice, and the 'vision' of the chooser, which led her to defend a certain 'naturalism': 'The true naturalist (the Marxist, for instance, or certain kinds of Christian) is one who believes that as moral beings we are immersed in a reality which transcends us and that moral progress consists in awareness of this reality and submission to its purposes'. She developed this theme in two lectures delivered in 1962 and 1967 respectively, reprinted in 1970 in *The Sovereignty of the Good*, one of the classics of modern English philosophy.

Enter Michael Sherwin, currently teaching at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, framing this beautiful study of Thomas Aquinas's account of the virtue of charity in terms of a parallel contrast in Catholic moral theology. The widely used pre-Vatican II seminary manuals viewed the moral life primarily in terms of rules and their application to cases, sometimes quasi-deductively, to determine the merit or sinfulness of acts. 'Invincible ignorance' might mean that a person's subjective relationship with God could be good even though his or her

actions were objectively wicked. Indeed, encouraged by the great eighteenth-century moralist St Alphonsus Liguori, a person doing something objectively wrong from an invincibly erroneous conscience could be acting from charity, and so certainly not sinning, probably even acquiring merit. Reacting against this kind of thing, a new generation headed by the likes of Josef Fuchs and Karl Rahner SJ shifted the emphasis on individual acts to focus on the person's 'fundamental option'. In particular, we have to distinguish between 'categorical' choices and one's self-realization in 'transcendental freedom', that is to say, at the deeper level where one opts for God, whether one's acts are objectively right or wrong.

While granting that he may not have got Rahner absolutely right, Sherwin is less circumspect about Fuchs. Basically, the manualists' preoccupation with moral acts has been replaced by a conception of a 'deeper', morally significant self-commitment that is not determined by any specific object of cognition and which transcends the level of practical reasoning about means and ends.

This is where the comparison with Murdoch is instructive. There cannot be 'choices' independently of one's knowing something of the goal — otherwise we succumb (Murdoch would think) to some form of nihilism. In order to engage in an act of virtue a person must have some knowledge of the goal of that virtue and of what actions count as realizing it. (In 'Vision and choice' Murdoch lists Pierre Rousselot SJ along with Maurice Nédoncelle and Gabriel Marcel as representing the view she endorses but without space to elaborate, though adding it may be related to 'certain aspects of Thomism'.) For Sherwin, if a person can be united with God in charity at some deeper level regardless of his or her particular acts, we have an unacceptable split between charity and knowledge, a conception of the will's autonomy in a kind of void, much like the charge that Murdoch lays against Stuart Hampshire, as well as Sartre. (*The Sovereignty of the Good* is dedicated to Hampshire.) At one point Sherwin even wonders whether the historical relationship between modern (post-Cartesian) philosophy, the Catholic moral theology manuals, and theologies like those of Rahner and Fuchs, might be an fruitful topic for further study (cf page 210): a very interesting idea.

However, in writings by James Keenan SJ, and especially in his book *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* (1992), Sherwin finds many statements in favour of the view that the will has a morally significant act that is antecedent to and independent of practical reason. Indeed, so Keenan argues, Aquinas was so alarmed by the controversies at Paris in 1270 about human freedom that he developed a new theory of the will's capacity to act, independently of reason. Sherwin rebuffs this pretty convincingly, on textual grounds. While he is careful to say that he is not attempting a full treatment of Keenan's theology, there is a sense in which the rest of his book is a refutation of Keenan's picture of charity's motion as rendering us morally right with God, apart from whether or not we do what is right in our actions. Far from divorcing the will from reason, and so love from knowledge, Aquinas brings them more closely together, if there is any significant shift in his thought. Just as for Murdoch choice cannot be isolated from vision, so for Aquinas charity's act cannot be kept apart from faith's knowledge and the knowledge provided by the other cognitive virtues and gifts.

Chapter 5 offers a very rich account of the relationship of charity to knowledge in human action. Sherwin considers in turn charity as friendship with God, charity and faith, charity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, charity and the infused cardinal virtues, and charity as the form of the virtues, no doubt familiar topics to students of St Thomas but lucidly and freshly analyzed. For Aquinas, in the *Summa contra gentiles*, 'the goal and ultimate perfection of the human soul is by knowledge and by love to transcend the entire created order and to attain the first principle, who is God'. Somewhat later, in the *Postilla super psalmos*, he reiterates the same view: 'the knowledge and love of God are the principle of all good

actions: extinguish the knowledge and love of God, and the good life in its entirety perishes’.

We know far more than Aquinas about the genetic, psychological and social factors that can limit freedom, as Sherwin reminds us. Aquinas’s account could not be regarded as the last word on the moral life. On the other hand, ‘a core Thomistic principle remains true: when grace elevates and heals wounded human nature, it does so in a way that respects that nature’. That takes us back to the picture that we have of human nature: if analytic philosophy in Murdoch’s young day needed to be provoked into serious engagement with philosophical anthropology, Michael Sherwin has demonstrated that, with the help of Thomas Aquinas, Catholic moral theology needs to confront much the same fundamental questions.

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