

answers to our predicament. All the same, it will not quite do. The label-words, the theories and generalizations in which this social philosophizing is shaped, have emptied it of

ST THOMAS AQUINAS: SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, Vol. XLI: Virtues of Justice in the Human Community (IIa IIae ci-cxxii), by T. C. O'Brien. xx + 232 pp. £3.50. Vol. XLIV: Well-tempered Passion (IIa IIae clv-clxx), by Thomas Gilby, O.P. xvi + 260. pp. £3.00. *Blackfriars*; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

It may be well to recall that the *Secunda Secundae* falls into two distinct and unequal divisions, dealing respectively with the virtues that are proper to all men irrespective of their special states of life and with those that pertain to particular vocations. The first of these deals with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and then with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. The volumes now before us are concerned with certain aspects of justice and temperance respectively.

It is probably true that for most readers these will be two of the less exciting and inspiring volumes of the series and indeed both the editors offer explanations that have a suspicion of apology in them. Dr O'Brien points out that by academic custom the theologian was obliged to adhere to the authoritative statements that he had inherited: 'the operation of the technique of authority, not only in the present treatise but throughout the *Summa*, often determines the language, the phrasing of problems, the argumentation' (p. xvii), but he adds that 'frequently . . . the understanding and interpretation that St Thomas intends is quite removed from that of the author he quotes, even if this be Aristotle or Augustine' (*ibid.*). He warns us, too, that 'the Questions here are not a "natural social ethic"; they are rather a theology in which it is presupposed that natural values of justice are presented still in the life of grace, and are ultimately transformed through the workings of the Gift of Piety under the Holy Spirit' (p. xix). And, in line with other modern students of St Thomas, he admits that the Angelic Doctor's thought underwent development and that his writing contains apparent, though explicable, inconsistencies. Fr Gilby in his turn admits that 'the author records without criticism the theology of his background' (p. xvi) and opines that 'his treatise would have been more compact and better proportioned had he been less deferential to his respected predecessors and less inclined to dwell on minor points. The student of theology', he adds, 'may skip through these passages, yet he will be well advised to keep

conviction. The argument, while often perceptive and entertaining, does not finally have very much to offer.

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alert, prepared to stop and take another look' (*ibid.*).

In both these volumes two of St Thomas's most admirable characteristics are more than usually conspicuous. The first is his determination to consider attentively every conceivable objection, wise or foolish, to his own position, even at the cost of tediousness and repetitiveness. The second is his anxiety to admit whatever element of truth the objection may contain and to incorporate that element into his own synthesis. Only rarely does he say: 'No, you are entirely wrong'. Almost always his attitude is: 'Well, if you mean so-and-so there is no doubt a good deal of truth in what you say, though you haven't perhaps found the clearest way of saying it'. The method of the *distinguo* is constantly applied, in a way that one could wish was more common in modern writers.

Both Dr O'Brien and Fr Gilby have provided their volumes with frequent and ample footnotes, and Dr O'Brien gives two useful appendices on the distinction between legal and moral debt and on *epieikeia* respectively. Both have translated their texts with a good deal of freedom, as is commendable when, as here, the translation is printed opposite the Latin original; Fr Gilby's renderings manifest his accustomed verve and his gift for the *mot juste*.

For all their moralism (and how can a treatise on morals avoid being moralistic?) these two volumes provide a splendid example of the way in which, for the Angelic Doctor, nature is not just a foundation on which grace can build but is the material in which grace works and which grace, working in it, does not denaturalize but supernaturalizes. Thus, for example, having discussed the virtue of humility in Question 161 and the contrary vice of pride in Question 162, he devotes the next three questions to the temptation and sin of Adam and the penalties deriving therefrom, incorporating into a moral treatise a strictly theological theme, in a way that would have been impossible to Aristotle and which the Stagyrte no doubt have thought highly improper.

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