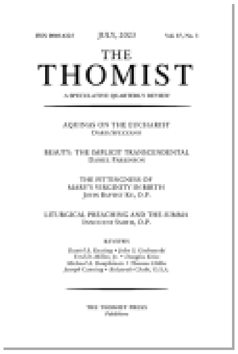
Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas by Fran O'Rourke (review)

Thomas Hibbs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"yes" to God's call in Christ and so to the reception of a new mission and a new identity. Franks is surely correct to show that Christ alone offers us the fullness of our personhood, mission, and identity. This reviewer wonders if there might also be a natural or philosophical level to the moral response to the world that needs to be recovered as well.

Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap., in the final chapter, offers a penetrating analysis of the creed of Chalcedon and its connection to evangelization. In Weinandy's brief yet erudite summary, Chalcedon teaches that "Jesus must be *truly the Son of God* who *truly exists* as *truly man*" (303). Weinandy goes on to show that this Christic and Trinitarian confession is what makes possible the new evangelization. The new evangelization is nothing other than calling for salvation in and through a personal relationship with Jesus and the resulting Eucharistic ordering and communion, our new home and destiny.

The significance of this volume is that it shows the richness and fecundity of a theological vision that begins in the uniqueness and universality of the lordship of Jesus Christ. Fidelity to Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium does not stunt theological scholarship but instead gives it a center that renders it possible, and that center is Jesus Christ himself.

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Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas. By FRAN O'ROURKE. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2022. Pp. 334 (hardback). $90.00. ISBN: 978-0-8130-6863-3.

Reflecting on the influence on artists of Jacques Maritain's Thomistic account of beauty, Yves Simon observed,

> That an artist should be interested in scholasticism . . . and should use the principles of this philosophy to understand and explain what is going on in the vanguard of painting, music, and poetry in the twentieth century, will remain one of the best surprises that ever confronted historians of philosophy. (John Griffiths and Yves Simon, *Jacques Maritain: Homage in Words and Pictures* [New York: Magi Book, 1974], 5])

The friendships cultivated by Jacques and his wife Raissa with numerous writers and artists, including Georges Rouault, Igor Stravinsky, and Jean Cocteau, prompted many artists to be intrigued by Scholasticism. Perhaps no twentieth-century artist was more of a student of Scholasticism than the Irish novelist

James Joyce. From his Catholic education in Dublin through his own independent reading of Aristotle and Aquinas, Joyce was imbued with Scholasticism. The greatest of Joyce scholars, Richard Ellman, reports on a conversation Joyce had with someone who had complained that Aquinas's work had nothing to do with them. To which Joyce responded peremptorily, "It has everything to do with us" (44). Joyce is somewhat dismissive of modern philosophers, especially in comparison to Aristotle, whom he calls the greatest of philosophers. In many of his writings, from the early unfinished manuscript *Stephen Hero*, through *Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*, right through the hugely influential novel *Ulysses*, Joyce scatters references to Aquinas, often going so far as to depict characters appealing to Aquinas in debates, sometimes quoting him verbatim in Latin, or quarreling about how to interpret his texts.

The influence of Thomas Aquinas on Joyce was explored in *Joyce and Aquinas*, a beautiful little book by the Jesuit William T. Noon (Yale University Press, 1958). But Noon was not a philosopher; where he attends to big questions in Aquinas's texts, his focus is almost always theological. Moreover, in his treatment of the sources of Joyce's knowledge of Scholasticism, his work is incomplete or even misleading. Fran O'Rourke's new book, *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*, remedies these shortcomings in Noon's study. We know that Joyce spent time during his stay in Paris writing out passages from Aristotle into a notebook, what has come to be known as Joyce's Early Commonplace Book. In the last chapter, O'Rourke includes an annotated analysis of the quotations from Aristotle that Joyce included in the Commonplace Book. O'Rourke goes further in demonstrating how attentive Joyce was to, and in how many contexts he had opportunities for, the study of Aristotle and Aquinas. Previous studies have ignored the popularity of Thomistic philosophical handbooks, which supplied not only explications of the texts and teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas but also often compared them to modern philosophical alternatives.

O'Rourke's mastery of the relevant sources—in the primary texts of Aristotle and Aquinas; in the proximate, mediating texts available to Joyce; and in Joyce's own texts—render this a magisterial treatment, sensitive to both the obvious and the subtle ways in which Aristotle and Aquinas surface in Joyce's fiction. If O'Rourke demonstrates that Joyce had greater access to Aristotle and Aquinas than most previously have seen, he is also careful to point out the ways in which Joyce misinterprets or departs from these sources.

The influence of Aquinas on Joyce is most evident from the famous discussion of the nature of beauty in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, wherein the character Stephen Dedalus explicates the famous three marks of the beautiful. While Noon and others hypothesize that Joyce had his knowledge of beauty only through Maurice de Wulf's *Aesthetic Theory according to Thomas Aquinas,* O'Rourke shows that he likely learned of it from his conversations with his Jesuit professor of Italian. Whatever the source, Joyce, or at least his character Stephen, gives a peculiar twist to the marks of the beautiful, presenting them as stages in the knowledge of an object. Stephen says we first apprehend an object as one thing, which he equates with the object's *integritas*; then we understand its composite structure, which is its *consonantia or proportio*; finally, we apprehend the way the thing manifests its essence, which is associated with *claritas*. Such an approach, as O'Rourke shows, is foreign to the texts of Aquinas. Instead of stages of apprehension arrived at through analysis, Aquinas supposes that the "intellect spontaneously recognizes these qualities before analyzing them in detail" (186).

The peculiar approach to beauty in *Portrait* evinces Joyce's fascination with questions of knowledge and the identity of objects, especially personal identity. One can find in his texts, particularly in *Ulysses*, a welter of modern positions, from Locke's reduction of identity to memory through Hume's bundle theory of the self to versions of Berkeley's idealist thesis that "to be is to be perceived." The awareness of change haunts many of the characters. In *Ulysses*, the two main characters are, once again, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, a secular Jew, who is an outsider in Irish Catholic Dublin. At one point, Stephen muses about his own identity: "Molecules all change. I am other I now." But he is also aware that a subject endures through the changes. Stephen states: "But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under unchanging forms" (105). O'Rourke notes the similarity to Locke's account of identity as rooted in memory, but goes on to show that what differentiates the view is the addition of the notion that the self exists "under unchanging forms," as an entelechy, a term that surfaces surprisingly often in Joyce (106). Indeed, Joyce's transcriptions in his Commonplace Book of passages from Aristotle come predominantly from *De anima*. Particularly noteworthy here is Aristotle's statement on the soul as the first entelechy of naturally organic body. As much as he is attentive to mutability and alteration, Stephen the character, and even more so Joyce as author, are equally attentive to processes of growth and development, for which the teleological language of soul is apt. Ellman attributes to Joyce in *Portrait* the discovery of the gestation of the soul as a new principle of order in modernist literature (99).

The richest philosophical sections of O'Rourke's book concern the nature of the soul and our knowledge of its existence. O'Rourke demonstrates the presence in Joyce's *Ulysses* of the most influential modern conceptions of human knowledge and self-knowledge—from Locke to Berkeley and Hume. These vie with an Aristotelian view. Coming up empty in the search for the soul or self through an inspection of the contents of our consciousness, the modern tradition repudiates knowledge of the soul, except as a kind of pure hypothesis: Locke's "I know not what" that underlies our conscious awareness and its activities. As O'Rourke notes, for Aristotle and Aquinas, the human substance is not known through an inspection of isolated sense data, the arena in which Hume failed to find it. Instead, the soul is "observed in and through its activities" (122). O'Rourke depicts Joyce's characters as groping toward an Aristotelian view but hampered in that quest by apparent unawareness of the distinction between accidental and substantial change and by an occasional error in conflating potency with possibility.

On O'Rourke's reading, the "enigma of self-identity . . . never ceases to preoccupy" Joyce. With his literary deployment of stream of consciousness, Joyce's dramatic depiction of the self eagerly explores the complex subjective conditions of our awareness, perhaps especially of our very sense of our own identity. But Joyce's vision does not lapse into a kind of idealism. Another Aristotelian motif from *De anima*, namely that the soul is potentially all things, is dear to Joyce. To borrow language from Charles Taylor, the self in Joyce's fiction is porous rather than buffered. Leopold Bloom, an outsider in Catholic Dublin, is obsessed with the fragility of the self and sometimes inclined to a Heraclitean view of the self. "Life is a stream," he observes, "No-one is anything" (73). Attending a funeral and channeling Dante, Bloom wonders to himself: "how many! All these here once walked around Dublin." Imagining the dead speaking to the living, he muses, "As you are now so once were we." He speculates at one point, "What if we were all suddenly someone else" (108). O'Rourke calls this a "manifest contradiction" and strictly speaking of course it is (ibid.). But I take this to be a hyperbolic way of making a point that O'Rourke himself makes. That we are potentially what others are now and our sense of self is in part determined by how others see us, which is a way of underscoring our inherently social nature.

If Stephen Dedalus, an aspiring writer, is in some obvious ways based on the life of Joyce, Bloom is in other ways a stand-in for the novelist, perpetually noticing affinities and coincidences between situations and characters. Like the novelist, he is attentive to the "concrete richness of the ordinary" (199), to the diverse dialects not just of different peoples but of individuals. Such discoveries lead not to the dissolution of the self or to a radical incommensurability between lives and characters. Joyce was aware of, and resistant to, certain elements of modernity. As modern as his stories and his styles may be, Joyce resists what one of his characters in *Stephen Hero* calls the "modern spirit" of "vivisection" (17). Joyce seeks the universal in the particulars. Perhaps no other writer has brought out the particularities of a single place (viz., the city of Dublin) better than Joyce. Yet he insists that he could capture the whole of the human condition, its universality, in that singular city.

Those who would reduce the self to an assemblage of sense data, memories, and an underlying suppositum strip away the sense of the mystery of concrete reality, particularly of the concrete reality of human persons. The general principle that O'Rourke discerns in Joyce, that the "*individuum est ineffabile*" (114), applies especially to persons. The mystery is also present in the strange and surprising overlaps between characters and their storylines. Here O'Rourke argues that the principle needed to appreciate Joyce's literary predilections is analogy, analogy of proportionality to be precise, which provides the novelist with a way of discerning and depicting "similarity in difference and unity in diversity" (132). The principle of "analogical similarity enables the mind to transcend duality and diversity, to perceive unity in bipolar tension"; through analogy "opposites are not rescinded nor tension abandoned" but enabled to display "mutual enrichment, allowing reciprocal comparisons and the exchange of attributes" (161).

As O'Rourke astutely shows through careful analysis of a judiciously selected set of passages from Joyce's fiction, the philosophical thought of Aristotle and Aquinas informs Joyce's reflections on a wide array of topics, including "authentic selfhood and authorial identity" (4). The poet W. B. Yeats once remarked that "Joyce's work incites to philosophy" (7). Yet that does not mean that we should go to Joyce expecting extended philosophical arguments or that what is of value in a literary work is its residue of philosophy. As O'Rourke wisely notes, "a writer who overtly uses his medium to convey a philosophical message will damage his art" (234). Too much emphasis on philosophy makes for either bad literature or bad readings of literature. Joyce came of age as an author in a period in which artistic and literary theory began to flourish, an era in which theory seemed at least as important as the text or work of art itself. Yet his accent on the mystery of concrete reality lends an anti-theoretical bent to his writings. As he puts it in *Finnegan's Wake*: "let us leave theories there and return to here's here" (109). That places Joyce comfortably within a broadly Aristotelian approach to human action, one that had already been revived by John Henry Newman, an important influence on Joyce, and that would soon become a feature of an Anglo-American movement in ethics informed equally by Aristotle and Wittgenstein.

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Infidels and Empires in a New World Order: Early Modern Spanish Contributions to International Legal Thought. By DAVID M. LANTIGUA. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 374 (hardback). $110.00. ISBN: 978-1-108-49826-5.

David Lantigua's book examines the contribution of sixteenth-century Spanish—and specifically Dominican—thought to the development of international law. His argument is that this contribution was fundamental and has been insufficiently valued so far.

On the face it, this contention may appear strange because the central role of the debate about the Indies at Valladolid between 1550 and 1551 has