

St. Thomas Aquinas Political Writings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002

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Artículo

nido porque ésta desconoce el mejor texto conservado de las obras de Lantbert. Se trata del Codex London, British Library, Add. 26788, cuyo núcleo proviene del siglo XI y que fue escrito parte en el convento de Deutz y parte en el convento San Lorenzo de Lieja. El manuscrito junto a la *Vita Heriberti* contiene también los *Miracula Heriberti*, un oficio de Heriberto con neumas (misa de Heriberto), un oficio de Hadalino (misa de Hadalino) en honor del santo Hadalino de la región del Mosa, una secuencia neumada en honor de san Lamberto de Lieja y, como obra temprana de Lantbert, los *Versus fratris Lamberti in monasterio sancti Laurentii*, 22 breves poesías que se refieren a la decoración de la iglesia conventual San Lorenzo de Lieja.

Con estos textos contamos ahora con la obra total de Lantbert unificada en una edición impecable. Junto a una extensa introducción para todas las obras se documenta la tradición manuscrita (otros manuscritos además del Codex 11 de Londres) y se presenta la historia de la transmisión. Un extenso índice de fuentes y bibliográfico, un minucioso aparato de notas así como un registro de manuscritos, nombres y palabras cierran esta excelente edición que será indispensable en el futuro para quienes se ocupen de la obra de Lantbert von Deutz.

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St. Thomas Aquinas Political Writings, edited and translated by R. W. Dyson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 312. ISBN: 0-521-37569-X.

This title belongs to the series Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, in which R. W. Dyson (Durham) had already published in 1998 a complete English translation of *The City of God*, Augustine's most important, monumental political work. Along with the writings of Eusebius of Cesarea, these are the earliest works of Christian political thought. But with Aquinas we are now far from the Byzantine and Augustinian world. From an historical and intellectual point of view, there are quite a lot of differences between the Byzantine, Augustinian and the Thomist cultural contexts. First, we are no longer in the later ancient world, but in the medieval; therefore, the philosophical and cultural frames are different. Second, we are in a medieval world, in which the reception of the Aristotelian works has already been completed; therefore, the theoretical basis on which medieval thinkers formulated their ideas, began to become –not exclusively, but predominantly– Aristotelian. In 1265, during Aquinas' life (1225-1274) practically all Aristotelian works were known, including the *Ethics* and the *Politics*.

Above all on this Aristotelian basis Thomas wrote what can be called "political" in his thought. In view of the fact, that he was "professionally" a monk, it is really quite difficult to say, that his aim was to write on political subjects. In fact, he wrote only one political treatise, the short *De regimine principum* (known too as *De regno*), whose goals and authenticity continue to elicit discussion and controversy (see on p. xix, note 4, a correct selected bibliography on authorship, date and authenticity). It may be, that his "profession" was not the only reason why Aquinas, in comparison with other medieval later thinkers, didn't reveal many political ideas of his own. Perhaps "the fact that he was not himself involved in any particular political controversy" (p. xxviii) or the historical situation of his time, which cannot be considered here, also contributed to his scant production of political ideas. Nevertheless, his few political ideas are dispersed in his different treatises, and although they are few,

this does not detract from their quality and great insight, which can be compared with the high level of his philosophical and theological thought.

In the work under review the public devoted to medieval political thought will find, more than a selection, a very well assembled collection of the texts that Aquinas wrote –almost all the most important texts– on political subjects. The volume consists primarily of two parts, a short Introduction and the Aquinas' texts, but it includes furthermore a Bibliography of primary and secondary sources, a biographical Glossary of persons mentioned in the book, and an Index of important subjects and names. I will analyze only the most relevant parts, that is, firstly, some topics of the Introduction and then, the collection of texts. The Introduction can be read as articulated in three parts.

In the first part, after a short notice on Aquinas' life, the author explains the criteria justifying his selection: "to choose... material...accessible to readers who have no specialised background in scholastic philosophy"; to avoid "repetition by selecting the passages which...make the point most clearly" (p. xviii); as he notes especially concerning the *Summa theologiae*, to avoid "excessive condensation" of the selected texts and therefore to let Thomas "speak with an uninterrupted voice as far as possible" (p. xx); and to include texts, that although they might seem irrelevant to Aquinas' political ideas, in fact, contribute to a better understanding of the development and structure of his thought.

The second part provides a short description and meaning of each text selected. Some of Dyson's remarks on *De regno* deserve here commentary. Dyson is of the opinion, that Thomas abandoned the writing of this text in December 1267 and that "Book I is closely based on Aristotle's *Politics*" (xix). In opposition to this opinion, on the basis that Aquinas mentions in *De regno* the last books of the *Politics* –known to him during his second sojourn in Paris–, Chr. Flüeler (cfr. *Rezeption und Interpretation der Aristotelischen Politica im späten Mittelalter*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, vol. I, 1992, p. 28) has proven that the authentic part of the treatise was concluded just between 1271 and 1273. It is therefore a mature work of Thomas. Of course, this is not the place to go deep into the affirmation that "Book I is closely based on Aristotle's *Politics*", which in itself is absolutely correct. But what does "closely based on Aristotle's *Politics*" mean exactly? Did Aquinas interpret, modify or only repeat Aristotle? As long as Aristotle's thought is unavoidable in understanding medieval political ideas –recent polemical writings by Cary Nedermann and Anthony Black, regarding Walter Ullmann's interpretation of the Aristotelian influence on the development of medieval political thought, are examples of this burning question! Perhaps, more accuracy would have been desirable on the point of the influence of political Aristotelianism and its intricated ways of transmission in the Middle Ages, especially if we consider that further on, on page 6, Dyson refers to the meaning of Aquinas' formulation "*Naturale autem est homini ut sit animal sociale et politicum*" and writes, this formulation "is taken from William of Moerbeke's Latin translation of the *Politics*" (p.6, note 17). I looked it up in Moerbeke's translation without any luck.

In the third part Dyson offers a compact and accurate summary of Thomas's political thought. A general introduction alludes to the phenomena of recovery of Aristotle at the University of Paris and of the hostile reaction of the Church to Aristotelian thought. Thomas is consequently rightly presented as a thinker for whom it was "possible to reconcile the teachings of Aristotle with those of the Church" (xxiv). But, Dyson adverts moreover to the facts, that "until the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the political and ethical thought of Aristotle was unknown in the West", and that "the study of his ethical and

political works was for many years the province of Arab commentators", that is, Avicenna and Averroes (p. xxiii). I believe, such affirmations are again absolutely correct, but improperly formulated and consequently dangerous, because they seem to suggest, that the Politics was known to the Arabic thinkers. No specific mention is made through the whole Introduction to the fact, that the Politics, absolutely unknown to the Arabs, was the great discovery of the Latin world. Moreover, although the Introduction is rich in references to the "recovery" of Aristotle in the Middle Ages, the reader doesn't even understand, why such a recovery is so important for the political theory, because in fact, the Introduction never explains the specific role played by the Politics in the constitution of the new political thought, of which Thomas is presented as the first important figure.

The collection of translated texts includes *On Kingship* (*De regimine principum/De regno*), the letter to the Duchess of Brabant (*De regimine Iudaeorum*), extracts from the *Summa theologiae* (including the important so-called *Treatise on Law*) and excerpts from the *Scripta super libros sententiarum*. All these texts are presented and accurately ordered in seven chapters. With explanatory goals, Dyson attributes to each chapter a title, that helps the reader to a better understanding of its content: 1) Government and politics; 2) Obedience; 3) Law; 4) Right, justice and judgment; 5) Property relations; 6) War, sedition and killing; 7) Religion and politics. Moreover he mentions to which part of Thomas' work each text translated corresponds, but in this brief review it would be meaningless to make an exact list of these parts.

It is perhaps most pertinent to inquire into the reasons that, on the one hand, moved Dyson to leave out some texts and into the reasons that, on the other hand, moved him to pay particular attention to other texts included in this selection. I find it completely reasonable and adequate the omission of Aquinas' *Commentary on Politics*, because, true to say, it doesn't represent his political thought, but only his own interpretation of Aristotelian political ideas. But it is a little difficult to understand some omissions; for example, the translation begins with articles 3 and 4 of the *Summa theologiae* Ia., quaestio 96, in which Thomas explains "the dominion which belonged to man in the state of innocence", but it leaves out the article 1 of *Summa theologiae*, Ia., quaestio 92, in which Thomas offers a precise and conceptual definition of dominion in the state of innocence in describing it, according with Aristotelian ideas and terms, like "subiectio oeconomica et civilis". I believe, for the reader it is not only important to know that for Thomas there was dominion before sin, but to know, too, what such dominion means and in what it consisted. I must finally emphasize the adequacy of the inclusion of the whole authentic part of *De regno* and especially its analysis and consideration in the Introduction –against the opinion of some scholars– as a relevant, faithful and true expression of Aquinas' political thought.

In spite of some critical observations that each scientific book-review deserves, Dyson's edition must be emphatically evaluated as a very positive contribution resulting from hard work, perhaps from a long work of many years. Not only the synthesis of Thomas' political ideas in the Introduction is written for the most part with property and deep dominion of primary and secondary sources, but especially the translation of Thomas texts is a genuine contribution to the diffusion of medieval political thought.

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