

Reviews

THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE edited by John Haldane, *Imprint Academic* (St. Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs), Exeter, 2019, pp. xiv+312, £19.95, pbk

This book is not an introduction to the life and philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe. Often an invited lecturer will be introduced by the host by saying that he or she ‘needs no introduction’. When it comes to philosophy, however, it is less that an introduction is unneeded and more that it is the last thing that is needed, in the sense that it is best kept until last. When reading a classic text, students should be encouraged to skip the introduction and go back to it only after they have struggled with the text themselves. Secondary literature should come second.

Someone who wants to know about the thought of Elizabeth Anscombe should start by reading Anscombe. Other than her slim volume, *Intention*, and a book she co-wrote with her husband, *Three Philosophers*, most of what she wrote was in the form of articles, talks, or pamphlets of which three volumes were published in her lifetime and four have been published posthumously. For someone new to her writings, these are the place to start. It is helpful that they are short and that she generally avoided technical language and even the distraction of footnotes. In many papers, Anscombe examines some feature of life or language that is quite familiar, say the idea of causality or the grammar of the first person, and does not presuppose any specialist knowledge. However, after a couple of sentences the reader (or at least this reader) is soon forced to reread and ask what she meant by some phrase or how it follows from what was said previously. Anscombe forces one to think.

It is only after one has encountered her remarkable mind directly that the present book will make sense and have value. The volume is best read not as an introduction but as a postscript. It is a collection of essays engaging with Anscombe’s thought or providing some background to her life as a philosopher. Some of these essays relate her thought to that of contemporaries (such as David Wiggins or Judith Jarvis Thomson) or examine her thought on an ancient or medieval thinker (such as Aristotle or Anselm). Some examine concepts, such as intention or immateriality.

Most of these papers were published previously as a special issue of the *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, also edited by John Haldane. However, the paper that provides a keystone that shows the coherence of the collection is that by Ulf Hlobil and Katharina Nieswandt on Anscombe’s philosophical method, and this was not part of that special

issue, though it was published the same year. Reflections on method are prominent in Guy Rohrbaugh's chapter on the human embryo and, in a different way, in Anselm Müller's chapter showing how Anscombe engaged with Anselm's *De Veritate*. Roger Teichmann exemplifies the Anscombian method, showing how a seemingly simple question about how we identify words can lead to deeper reflection on language and meaning, and then showing how Anscombe recognised and addressed this issue.

As with all collections it is uneven and disparate in style and focus. One essay, for example, focuses not on Anscombe but on Wittgenstein and, even more specifically, on the young men with whom Wittgenstein had surrounded himself at the time he and Anscombe first met. Another reminisces about the way Anscombe related to some of her contemporaries in Oxford. However, these chapters also provide clues to her great originality of mind.

All but one of these chapters have been published before, or at least a version of them, most in the special issue already referred to. Nevertheless, there is something to be gained in reprinting these as a collected volume. Especially in this electronic age, when scholars increasingly encounter journal articles not physically as parts of a particular volume and issue, but electronically as free-standing papers discovered through search engines, there is much to be said for a book. A book, even abstracted electronically on kindle, is less friable than a journal. It invites at least the browsing of other chapters. And there are still people who like to hold a book in their hands or take it from the shelf. To publish an edited volume is to put into someone's hand a collection which is more than the sum of its parts. Wittgenstein once wrote that what we believe never stands alone but always takes its place within a system of propositions: 'Light dawns gradually over the whole', if it dawns at all. So, if we are to understand better the thought of Elizabeth Anscombe, and understand better the realities of human life and meaning that she thought about, then we need to read broadly as well as deeply.

This volume is a whole but it also sits within a still larger whole, the series St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs. It is in this series that the four posthumous volumes of Anscombe's papers were published, edited by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally. The present volume is the second collection in that series that is *about* rather than *by* Anscombe, the first (edited by Luke Gormally, David Albert Jones and Roger Teichmann) having focused on her moral philosophy. There are some points of contact between that volume and this: five authors appear in both (John Finnis, John Haldane, Anselm Müller, Candice Vogler, Roger Teichmann), as do several topics (the embryo, practical truth, the spiritual nature of human beings, intention, double effect). While the first has the benefit of a narrower focus, the second has the advantage of a broader scope. Aristotle said that the mind is 'in a way all things' but it is one mind that thinks. Hence through thinking about Anscombe's thinking about distinct topics

we are led to ask not so much *what* Anscombe thought as *how* Anscombe thought and how we might get better at thinking ourselves.

DAVID ALBERT JONES

AQUINAS AND THE MARKET: TOWARD A HUMANE ECONOMY by Mary L. Hirschfeld, *Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, 2018, pp. xviii + 268, £36.95, hbk*

According to the historian of economics, Anthony Michael Charles Waterman, since the early nineteenth century economics has replaced theology in shaping political decisions about the public sphere, with significant cultural repercussions on Western society. In this context, theologians cannot ignore economic thought or limit themselves to offering generic or naïve considerations on justice and poverty, often abstracting them from the actual conditions of their practice. The value of *Aquinas and the Market* depends greatly on the author's ability to consider contemporary mainstream economics within a Thomistic framework, showing, at one and the same time, both the legitimacy and the limits of economic rationality from a theological viewpoint. In order to walk *toward a humane economy* through a dialogue between these two fields of knowledge, Mary Lee Hirschfeld – Associate Professor of Economics & Theology at Villanova University – is endowed with the rare combination of such qualifications as a Ph.D. in Economics (Harvard University, 1989) and a Ph.D. in Theology (University of Notre Dame, 2013). Because of the high specialization and the unavoidable fragmentation of the contemporary academic disciplines, it is particularly instructive to listen carefully to someone who, such as Hirschfeld, is an expert in two distinct fields. This condition is almost indispensable in the academic context of theological economics, whose purpose is not only to help believers to reconcile their actual economic activity with their faith's demands, but also to offer a 'comprehensive framework' able 'to remember that wealth is meant to serve us and not to be our master' (p. 3).

In this sense, effective theological thinking can help us to recognize the instrumental character of economic objects (material goods, services and money), instead of considering them as ends of human actions in order to achieve happiness. Correctly, in fact, Hirschfeld considers the pursuit of happiness – in its objective and not only in its subjective meaning – as the common ground on which theology and economics can meet each other, without neglecting their radical differences concerning the role of human infinite desire and the sense of happiness. From this point of view, the role of Aquinas's thought concerning the 'last end' and the virtues (in particular justice and prudence) appears clearly as the theological framework