

of two popes. Benedict XV in 1921 and Paul VI in 1965 chose centenaries of Dante's death and birth respectively to honour him and to offer, with a firmly Catholic stamp, substantial assessments of his significance. J.F. Makepeace, writing in this journal almost a century ago (1921, p. 92), could hardly have been more challenging; 'no one who has not an inner knowledge of the Catholic Church can fully understand the *Commedia*'. Whether or not twenty-first century readers are receptive to the immediate urgency of Dante's Christian ethics, Corbett hopes that his book has demonstrated, even to a predominantly secular academy, that approaching the poem as a work of ethics (as it was originally envisaged) leads to a greater appreciation of Dante's eschatological innovations and his literary genius.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATURAL RELIGION: FROM INCARNATION TO SACRAMENTALITY. ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF DAVID BROWN, edited by Christopher R. Brewer, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT, 2018, pp. x + 294, £74.08, pbk

Perhaps a mark of a theologian's impact is the breadth of responses to their work. Certainly this is the case with David Brown. *Theology, Aesthetics and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown* (ed. Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley) appeared in 2012; now Christopher Brewer has edited a Festschrift. Brown is best known as a theologian engaging with the arts, arguing for a presence of God *in* art, rather than art as only a disposable vehicle of transcendence. More controversially, Brown has argued for the continued revelation of God after and outside of the Bible. But perhaps his central concern is God's *presence* in so many areas from which theology has generally withdrawn: the arts get treated marginally (and if so, dance gets barely a mention), while other areas of human flourishing and recreation, such as sport and gardening, receive little in any serious theological engagement. Yet in traditional societies games are sacred, and to this day many people find the spiritual in their gardens. What emerges from the current volume is Brown's passionate concern with re-enchancing the world as place of divine revelation, accessible to all (or maybe rediscovering that the world is already enchanted). This makes him a far-reaching and at times provocative theologian, concerned with reason, faith, and tradition, and with theologies of the Incarnation and Trinity, as well, of course, with sacramentality and the arts. This is the structure of this collection of essays, which also, perhaps most valuably, includes a response from David Brown himself, which offers us some clarification of his necessarily complex thought.

Starting with essays on the fundamental question of faith and reason, we are given a broad context for the theology of the arts which forms the largest section of the book. Robert McSwain on Butler and Vincent Brümmer on divine agency respectively reveal Brown's refreshingly broad sense of what reason might mean and the question of divine agency and human activity. In the latter, one can sense a response to Christian/scientific fundamentalisms in which there is no truth outside of the Bible/hard logic, nor any sense of the primary/secondary causality distinction. Moving on to the Incarnation and Trinity, C. Stephen Evans's essay on *kenosis* and the question of God's loving self-limitation in the Incarnation is particularly moving, although maybe it could have gone further, including in its conversation with Brown on the question of nature, by drawing on the Eastern tradition of *theosis*. Paul Fiddes bridges to art through the Trinity: moving beyond explicit works on the Trinity, he argues that works of movement and relationality open us to the Trinity, though his notion of the idea of brokenness within the actual Godhead needs more clarification.

The range of theological approaches in the arts section is broad, with great insights along the way: N.T. Wright defends the canticles in Paul's letters (e.g. *Eph.* 1) as possibly Paul's own compositions rather than pre-existent texts, hence poetry as opening an imaginative world in which we become God's *poiema* (cf *Eph.* 2:10). Frank Burch Brown sees art as touching the heart rather than being a delivery system (thus Christianity cannot instrumentalise art), and draws on David Brown's problematic notion of the 'ongoing process of continually revised and revisable Christian tradition' (p. 123). David Brown himself in his response evokes the intriguing notion of a marriage between art and theology, which would perhaps safeguard better than his previous thought the definitiveness *and* ever-new depths of Christian revelation.

Depth is an important concept in George Pattison's exploration of Brown on the sacramentality of word, and also in Christopher Brewer's contribution on conceptual art and natural theology. The latter is a good example of much contemporary Christian engagement with the arts, finding theological themes even in non-Christian/non-religious artists, such as, in this case, Jonathan Borofsky's *Counting from 1 to Infinity*. But depth in itself does not take us to God: Brown responds to Brewer that

the negative implication is that Borofsky envisages no response ever coming from that infinite beyond. Thus, whilst the believer can use his work to instigate a discussion of what is lost, the sadness is that there is no such acknowledgement in this sort of work from the artist himself (p. 256).

Brown also insists, responding to Ann Loades on theatre dance (which includes a fascinating account of Alvin Ailey's choreographies inspired by the Roman Catholic Mass), that immanence *alone* is not enough. We humans also seek transcendence: we need, in Ailey's words cited by both Loades and Brown, 'bodies in heightened states of grace'.

So, an exciting collection that could be recommended as an introduction to contemporary ideas on the big theological questions of nature and grace, faith and reason, body and spirit, and to the role of the arts in the theologian's work. In view of this, the absence of an index is a shortcoming. Nevertheless, like David Brown's own work, this collection invites more responses. For one thing, it suggests to me that more work is needed on the hermeneutic relationships between Revelation in Scripture and Christian tradition, and the 'revelations' that people report in art, sport and gardens, *inter alia* (Brown's 'Sacrament in Ordinary'). In our increasingly broken and conflict-riven society, in which art increasingly rejects transcendence and yet is inspired by the occult (cf the Berlin Biennale of 2018), can we really say that all art is revelation of God? Perhaps, if we are to have a true dialogue between the 'depth' in people's experience and contemporary art on the one hand, and the Bible, Christian tradition, and theology on the other, we need to recover and renew metaphysics, evacuated from so many schools of theology in the later twentieth century? More work for David Brown and his ever-growing network of respondents.

DOMINIC WHITE OP

THE HUMAN PERSON: A BEGINNER'S THOMISTIC PSYCHOLOGY by Steven J. Jensen, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 2018, pp. 296, \$34.95, pbk*

What would a first-year student of psychology, somewhere in the last part of his first-year curriculum, expect to read when he looks at a book in an academic bookshop with the title: *The Human Person. A Beginner's Thomistic Psychology*? Probably he has never heard of 'Thomistic', and might wonder if this is one of the several branches of personality psychology. What would a psychologist expect, who has worked for some forty years in clinical practice and academic personality psychology, looking at the same book in the same place? Maybe, he is at that very moment not conscious at all of the influence the picture has made on his choice to buy the book. Yes, later he realizes that the picture is a modern adaptation of one of the paintings by his fellow countryman Johannes Vermeer. Is his choice a predominantly rational one, or is it more determined by sensations or emotions?

How human beings make their choices is one of the questions raised in this book on Aquinas. Referring to Aristotle that all knowledge begins with the senses, Jensen starts his introduction to Thomistic psychology with sensation. That is something which would be agreed with by most psychologists in the 21st century, and certainly by the academic community. Many of them would also agree with the importance of the