

Cajetan's intended audience, Catholics without Lutheran tendencies. After all, it would be a brave Dominican who expected his audience to have mastered both the *Summa Theologiae* and his even longer Commentary on the *Summa* in order to understand his points. Doubtless much more could be said. Still it is a measure of the richness of O'Connor's book that we can now better appreciate the nuances of Cajetan's position.

DOMINIC RYAN OP

ALL GREAT ART IS PRAISE: ART AND RELIGION IN JOHN RUSKIN by Aidan Nichols OP, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2016, pp. xiii + 613, £80.95, hbk*

Since the 1980s there has been a remarkable resurgence of interest in the work of John Ruskin (1819-1900), owing to the recognition that Ruskin in the 19th century raised questions which seem to be important today; it is also due to the wider academic revival of interest in Romanticism. Fr Aidan Nichols's work is an excellent contribution to this ongoing reappraisal. As this book shows, Ruskin was an astonishing figure by any standards: his interests ranged widely, but as an artist in his own right, he was most passionately concerned with the theoretical problems posed by his own empirical observations of nature and art. It was love of nature which preceded and dominated his love of art, and for most of his life Ruskin believed that nature was a revelation of God's glory designed for the moral improvement of humanity. He began to write on art because he thought he had found in Turner an artist who shared this view of nature, and because he believed in the power of art to transform the lives of people he considered oppressed by visual illiteracy rather than material needs. His motto was 'there is no wealth but life'. The title of this book, *All Great Art is Praise*, is another of his slogans. With the revolutionary approach to criticism displayed in his *Modern Painters* (1843 - on) he became the leading art critic of the Victorian era. His best-selling *Stones of Venice*, (1853), which argued that a nation's buildings and its morality are inseparable, became the highly influential bible of the Gothic style for the period. His other well-known study, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), sought to catalogue the experience of the built environment on the basis of the morality. He despised capitalism and believed in education, giving his name to an Oxford college devoted to the education of the working class, as well as to the Ruskin School of Art. And his social teaching inspired the Labour Party, Gandhi, and Tolstoy, who said Ruskin thought with his heart, as shown in the famous treatment of social justice in *Unto this Last* (1860). These pieces are representative of a very complicated and paradoxical

figure, and of his exceptional command of language. Yet despite being one of the most celebrated figures and greatest visionaries of Victorian England, his towering intellectual reputation disappeared until attention was drawn again to his importance by his lifelong student and admirer, Kenneth Clark, in his anthology *Ruskin Today* (1967).

Since Clark's time much original material in the form of letters and diaries has been published, and detailed investigation of these sources in addition to Ruskin's principal productions is one of the strengths of Nichols's book. Clark had considered every aspect of Ruskin's output, but with the deliberate omission of any consideration of Ruskin's religion, on the grounds of his own lack of expertise. It is this lacuna which Nichols fills from the particular perspective of Ruskin's relations with Catholicism. From the point of view of content and advocacy he fulfils his task admirably. He shows how Ruskin was preoccupied with religion all his life; and demonstrates very clearly how he stands at the intersection of art and theology.

The book is not for the general reader: one needs at least a superficial acquaintance with Ruskin to appreciate the author's method of procedure, which consists in close textual analysis of his chosen material. For this reason it is very long, and demands very close reading. There are none of the usual aids to understanding such as chronological tables or substantial notes, and the bibliography represents a selection. This is presumably because one of the most engaging aspects of the work and the mark of its scholarship is the author's invitation to the reader to consider his ideas, which he lays out in the form of a thesis and sub-thesis, and with which he readily acknowledges some people will disagree. His thesis – that Ruskin's writings on art and religion go together is clearly demonstrated. What is not so clearly established is the sub-thesis, that Ruskin might have become a Roman Catholic at the end of his life, if he had associated with different people and had not descended into madness.

While a reading of Nichols's evidence does show how Ruskin's attitude to Catholicism changed from an early Evangelical hostility to appreciation, due to a self-styled 'unconversion' from Protestantism at the age of 39 in 1858, Ruskin insisted categorically as late as 1888 that he had not become a Roman Catholic. Another reading of the evidence might be that Ruskin became what could be called a 'cultural' Catholic as a result of the effect on him of his experiences in Italy and France. While he undoubtedly shared with Catholic theology an epistemic approach to questions of meaning and truth, Ruskin was never systematic, and all his writings display an inability to see the wood for the trees. He always had a passion for details and lacked an interest in larger relationships, and this seems to be true of his view of Catholicism. So for example he had no time for the theological aspects of the Mass, although he appreciated the artistico/spiritual aspects of the liturgy. Being a Catholic was not an advantage in Ruskin's day but as Nichols shows, Ruskin believed

all his life in a God of wisdom and peace. So his work might seem to indicate that in his desire for an art which made large demands on humanity, he internalised the issues of the 19th century, and arrived at a view of Christianity in which an amalgam of Catholic cultural attitudes, a love of the Bible and a personal myth of nature and art provided for him an idiosyncratic spirituality. Nichols has initiated a very interesting debate.

MARY CHARLES-MURRAY SND

ON HUMAN NATURE by Roger Scruton, *Princeton University Press*, Princeton and Oxford, 2017, pp. 151, \$22.95, hbk

Roger Scruton has written more than forty books, ranging from substantial surveys of modern philosophy to analyses of beauty, music, architecture and sex, from defences of Conservatism and Anglicanism to explorations of Green philosophy and animal rights, even a philosopher's guide to wine. His mastery of philosophical arguments enables him to move easily over his varied areas of interest. In this short volume he presents his distinctive vision of what it means to be human.

The foundation of this vision is the simple fact that each of us is able to say 'I'. We have an irreducibly first-personal perspective on the world, which includes a privileged ability to know our own thoughts and feelings. A purely scientific, third-personal analysis is unable to reveal the whole truth of things. Moreover, I cannot say 'I' in a vacuum, as if we are thinking minds without a context. I need another who says 'You': it is in face-to-face encounters that we become and learn to be 'I's. '[T]he word *you* does not, as a rule, *describe* the other person; it summons him or her into your presence, and this summons is paid for by a reciprocal response. You make yourself available to others in the words that call them to account to you' (p. 69).

On this view, the self, the 'I', is not some kind of spiritual addition to body, meaning that organism plus soul make a human person. Rather it is a perspective on the world that emerges in a creature with a certain set of complex capacities, similar to the way in which a picture emerges from the complex of patches of colour that make up the physical content of a painting.

Negatively, this account enables Scruton to reject the imperialist claim of some evolutionary biologists (Dawkins is the best known example) that functional value is the total explanation of our rational capacities. The 'trivial truth that dysfunctional attributes disappear' does not justify the 'substantial claim that functional attributes exist *because* of their function' (p. 16). Evolutionary explanation is compatible with the