such vandalism (when Cardinal Heenan showed him the letter, so the story goes, it was the name of Agatha Christie that first clicked with the Pope).

With *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) the young Leavis was the first university lecturer to uphold the importance of *The Waste Land* at a time when most readers did not regard it as poetry at all. In the second half of *Leavis and Lonergan* the author exemplifies what literary criticism helped out by Lonerganian critical-realist philosophy looks like: Frank Smith on psycho-linguistics (chapter 5); Hemingway's naturalism (chapter 6), and religious conversion in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (chapter 7). In the concluding pages of the book (pp. 196–201) Fitzpatrick reflects on the 'despondency' which afflicted Leavis in his last years, as friends and former students noted. Fitzpatrick found himself highlighting how regularly religion is described as a 'need', in the case of Tolstoy but sadly also in the case of *Four Quartets* in *The Living Principle.* The 'nullity' Leavis finds in the poetry of *Four Quartets* he attributes to sexual inadequacy on the part of T.S. Eliot – which does not seem one of Leavis's most substantial, or even particularly relevant, critical judgments. Lonergan was a much happier man.

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THOMISTIC EXISTENTIALISM AND COSMOLOGICAL REASONING by John F.X. Knasas, *Catholic University of America Press*, Washington, D.C., 2019, pp. xi + 327, £68.50, hbk

In the 1930s an approach to Thomist metaphysics emerged which emphasized the importance of *esse*. *Esse*, understood as the act of being (*actus essendi*), was construed as existential act and as such was distinct from and responsible for the reality of essence. Essence, on the other hand, merely specified the material and/or formal characteristics which categorised a thing within its species and *genera*. Essence was complete in its own order but subordinate to *esse* because it was in potency to *esse*. *Esse* alone could render essence actual in the existential order and thus able to exercise its proper function.

The scholars associated with this approach, such as Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, Joseph Owens C.Ss.R., and Armand Maurer C.S.B., became known as 'Existential Thomists'. John Knasas, a student of Owens, is their worthy successor and in this book, *Thomistic Existentialism and Cosmological Reasoning*, employs an account of *esse* as prior to and an attribute of essence first to defend a version of the cosmological argument

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and second as an interpretive key for the rest of Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God.

The first part of the book contains five chapters. In the first chapter Knasas assesses Leibniz's version of the cosmological argument and Kant's criticism of it. Knasas agrees that Leibniz's argument is defective (pp.25-26), but instead of abandoning cosmological arguments *per se* prefers to seek a 'more nuanced understanding of existence' (p.26) which will avoid Kant's criticism. The second chapter addresses that task by examining the proof for the existence of God in chapter 4 of the *De ente et essentia*. It pays particular attention to the role of *esse* in that proof, suggesting it provides the 'more philosophically nuanced view of the thing's existence' (p.32) Knasas had identified as desirable. It emphasises the role of judgment, the second act of the intellect, in grasping *esse* intellectually. It suggests *esse* is both prior to (p.36) and an attribute of (p.60) the substance it renders actual and from there reasons to the existence of subsistent *esse* (pp.59-63), God (p.31). The next three chapters focus on a number of alternatives to Knasas's approach and argue for its superiority.

In the second part of the book Knasas uses his account of *esse* to interpret the rest of Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God. He begins in chapter six by arguing that natural philosophy cannot demonstrate the existence of God and that doing so belongs exclusively to metaphysics. In chapter seven Knasas broadens his approach. Not only can one use the priority of *esse* to reason from existing substances to the existence of God, but one can also focus on the type of nature *esse* is prior to and construct parallel arguments from the presence of form in matter (p.190), from accidents (pp.205-213), and even from motion (pp.213-215). The next three chapters apply Knasas's account to the proofs for the existence of God found in the *Summa contra Gentiles* (chapter 8), the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Compendium Theologiae* (chapter 9), and the other proofs Knasas finds throughout Aquinas's work (chapter 10). Chapter eleven addresses some further objections, whilst the final section provides the book's conclusion.

Knasas's book is undoubtedly the most impressive account of Existential Thomism available from a contemporary author. It positions Existential Thomism contextually within the views of a wide range of Thomist and non-Thomist philosophers. It also seeks to make the concerns of Existential Thomism relevant to contemporary philosophy of religion. For all its strengths though, it is likely the book's readership will be experienced Thomists and it is equally likely the main points of discussion will be ones already debated within Thomist metaphysics and natural philosophy.

For instance, Knasas frequently insists *esse* is prior to its subject, essence (e.g. pp.36, 37, 62, 68). If by this Knasas means a priority in the metaphysical order, then that priority will either be a priority of time or of nature. Neither option appears viable, though. A temporal priority is straightforwardly incompatible with Aquinas's claim in *De Potentia Dei*

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that '*Deus simul dans esse, producit id quod esse recipit*"'(Q3 art. 1 *ad* 17), at least if one reads '*id quod esse recipit*' as essence or subject. If God simultaneously produces *esse* and essence, then *esse* cannot be temporally prior to essence or subject.

On the other hand, if Knasas opts for a priority in nature, how does one account for that group of texts which suggest form is prior to *esse* (e.g. *ScG* II c55, *ST* 1a Q.50 Art.5, *ST* 1a Q.75 Art. 6)? If *esse* follows form, then form will be prior in nature to *esse*. But since form also pertains to essence, if form is prior in nature to *esse,* then so essence will be. Knasas glosses such texts by suggesting form is a condition of *esse* (pp.62, 101) and the *complementum* of substance (pp.55, 113). However, neither gloss is convincing. Conditions can be prior in nature to that whose conditions they are and the priority of form over *esse* is not threatened by form completing substance, it just means essence will also be prior to *esse* as we have already argued. Aquinas links form as principle of *esse* with formal causality, thus confirming form as prior in nature to *esse*, whilst insisting God's efficiently causal role vis-à-vis *esse* is prior to form: '*esse naturale per creationem Deus facit in nobis nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali: forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis*"'(*DV* Q27 art 1 *ad* 3). In the metaphysical order, Aquinas's order of priority is God, form, *esse*. Any priority *esse* enjoys at best pertains to the creator's order of intention.

Another concern relates to considering *esse* as an attribute. If we do, will we not end up reifying *esse*? Knasas insists that *esse* is a *sui generis* attribute (p.139) but suppose one imagines Socrates alive in Athens in 399 B.C. This individual, Socrates, is an essence rendered actual by his *esse*: Socrates is an actualised essence. Yet if one treats *esse* as an attribute, then the actualised essence which Socrates is will just be an essence together with an attribute, its *esse*. This pushes the criterion for the real distinction of *esse* and essence towards potential separability. An attribute and its subject are separable even if in the unique case of *esse* the subject would not survive such a separation. It also weakens the unity of Socrates because if one had encountered Socrates so construed one would just encounter Socrates' actuality conjoined to his essence. That does not seem to capture the full reality of encountering Socrates or anyone else for that matter. Nor does it explain the limitation of Socrates's *esse*. If Socrates's *esse* is just attached to his essence, as opposed to being received in that essence, how does that attachment limit *esse*?

One might also question Knasas's claim that motion is an accident with its own *esse* (p.214). It is one thing to say accidents have *esse,* quite another to say motion is an accident and has *esse*. There are far too many differences between accidents and motions to justify construing motion as an accident. Motions are imperfect acts, accidents are perfect (complete) acts. Motions are the progressive actualisations of potencies for becoming. Accidents are the completed actualisations of potencies for being. The reddening of an apple is not the same as the red of an apple. Growing to 6' is

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not the same as being 6'. Travelling to London is not the same as being in London. In order for motion to be an accident it would have to be stable in being. It is not, though; therefore, it cannot be an accident and it certainly cannot possess *esse*.

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ETHICS by Dietrich von Hildebrand, [Hildebrand Project], *Steubenville*, Ohio, 2020, pp. li + 500, £16.99, pbk

This study can be recommended for many reasons. It is Dietrich von Hildebrand's most comprehensive volume on morality, and a primer for the rest of his philosophy – with insights on value-response that will, in turn, animate other notable parts of his oeuvre (such as his *Aesthetics*). It is also a richly-sourced treatise, entering into dialogue expertly with a wide variety of traditions in moral thinking – both ancient and modern – to produce an original, encompassing, and thorough presentation of its subject. But above all, *Ethics* presents the reader with a serious invitation and a challenge to strive for the highest form of ethical existence, found in the morality of the saints – a morality that rests squarely on a life of value-response.

Would an ethics that gives primacy to the morality of the saints still belong to philosophy? The fact that the book's original title (when published in 1953, in English) was *Christian Ethics* might give one pause. And yet, the shortening of the title to just *Ethics* in later editions is a move in the right direction. Not only is the bulk of Hildebrand's analyses here carried out in a strictly philosophical context, but also the reference to Christianity is asserted on the 'undeniable and manifest reality' of Christian matters that are open to phenomenological investigation and deserving inclusion – as the pinnacle of moral life – in a treatment that addresses the 'totality of morality'.

Hildebrand's *Ethics* presents a theory of objective value in general, and of moral value in particular, as necessitating appropriate volitional and affective responses, and instilling thereby an *ordo amoris* at the heart of personal subjectivity. In this sense, *Ethics* strikes a surprising chord with C.S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*. But whereas Lewis focuses on defending traditional morality and the natural law by showing the calamitous failure of the new moralities (especially Nietzsche's), Hildebrand proposes an organic re-appropriation and revision of classical moral theory in light of the crucial realisation that there is not just one monolithic hierarchy of goodness. Rather, there are three essentially different points of view

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