

THOMAS AQUINAS (c.1225-1274)
(Grace completing Nature)

Introduction

Aquinas in and out of fashion.

Philosophical developments

Mediaeval philosophical theology seems irrelevant to 20th century. Modern philosophy not a 'good wicket' for Thomists to bat on.

Background to Aquinas

A 'dark age' receiving doctrines and elaborating them. Communion controversies and the arrival of Islam and Aristotle. Scholastic systematizing.

Personal life

Born 1225. A prolific Dominican author. Died 1274. Learn from his 'nuggets' and certain 'global' issues.

Nuggets

Global issues

Rationality v. Faith. Aquinas against Siger of Brabant, an Averroist, who taught 'double truth', a 'relativist'. Aquinas saw reality whole. Philosophical truth (truth on Monday) not against religious truth (truth on Sunday).

Nominalism

'Kinds' of things (eg the 'inanimate', the 'human') said to come from the human mind, simply human 'names'; not there as such, created by God; cf embryo debate. Aquinas opposes.

Voluntarism

Said 'good' is what God wills; God doesn't will what is good. Creation ordinances not important. Relativistic. Aquinas opposes.

Nature and Revelation

Aquinas said revelation supplements human thought. Dangerous. But critics in danger of ignoring 'creation'/'nature'.

'The First Whig'

Ordered liberty, respect for tradition, hope for modest progress (in institutions, not people).

Further Reading:

- St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae - a concise translation; ed. Timothy McDermott, Methuen, 1989.
St Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts; Thomas Gilby, Oxford, 1951.
St Thomas Aquinas: Selected Political Writings; A.P. Entreves, Blackwell, 1948.
St. Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings; M.C.D'Arcy, Dent, 1939.
G.K. Chesterton: St Thomas Aquinas; Hodder, 1962.
F.C. Copleston: Aquinas; Penguin, 1955, 1991.
Anthony Kenny: Aquinas; Oxford, 1980.