

To show the structure and style of the treatise *On the One God*, as that treatise is found in the *Summa*, as understood by the Thomistic school, our first consideration must be given to the proofs there given for God's existence, since these proofs are starting points in deducing all divine attributes.¹

Fr. White's commentary on I, 3, 4 ad 2 of the *Summa* needs more elaboration particularly in the hands of the neophyte (p. 18). It is true that man can never comprehend God in what is called a comprehensive concept so that it can be said one knows all about God as God knows himself. Even the blessed in heaven in the beatific vision are not so elevated by the light of glory that they can see God as God sees Himself in the perfection of His Being comprehensively. However, even by natural reason we do possess an objective knowledge of God, Creator and Destiny of Created Nature. The "neti, neti" of the Hindu is indeed a far cry from the way of remotion in our abstract process of knowing God with the most imperfect of intelligences.

Aside from this plea for further elaboration, Fr. White has written an erudite work which certainly merits the attention of American philosophers both scholastic and nonscholastic. The author's mood is always respectful and irenic in treating nonscholastic intellectual trends. Professor and student interested in the world of ideas today will find this book a most broadening experience.

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***Polarity.* By Louis William Norris. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956. Pp. x + 242, with index. \$4.50.**

The author is to be commended for having chosen as the topic of his book the notion of polarity, one of the most important concepts in the field of philosophy. The concept of polarity can be traced to the very beginnings of philosophical enquiry. Even though, today, its implications have often been overlooked, it remains as timely as ever.

Polarity is at the very core of Aristotelian physics, as we can see from the following text:

¹ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality*, trans. P. Cummins (St. Louis, 1950) p. 71.

This brings us to observe that all these thinkers assume as principles some 'couples' of antithetical qualities or forces, and this whether they declare the sum of things to be one and rigid (for even Parmenides erects 'hot' and 'cold,' which he calls 'fire' and 'earth,' into principles); or whether they speak of 'rare' and 'dense'; or whether with Democritus, they speak of 'solidity' and 'vacancy' (the one regarded as the 'existent' and the other as the 'non-existent'), and further distinguish the atoms by position, shape and order, all of which are expressed by *antithetical couples*: position as 'above and below,' 'before and behind,' and shape as 'angular, straight, or curved' (*Physics* 188a20).

At the present time polarity has assumed special significance due to the character of contemporary philosophy, revolutionary and destructive in its tendencies. This last statement is particularly true of Marxism, for the Marxist philosopher cannot conceive change except through the total liquidation of one of the opposites.

Norris divides his book into two sections, the first of which comprises Chapter One, which is a general statement on the nature of a calculus of polarity. The second section covers the other six chapters, each of which develops the calculus of polarity by applying it to a limited problem. Each chapter is again subdivided into three parts, in such a way that the two opposites involved are expounded and illustrated, with reference to various authors. In a third part the author presents his own personal conclusions. This book is very difficult to evaluate. In fact one could be quite unfair by reading excerpts that do not truly convey the author's convictions. The above remark should not be taken to mean that the reviewer agrees wholeheartedly at each step. Norris, though, has a right to be heard, and he presents his case very capably. Since it would be difficult to give a fair criticism of the book as a whole, the following remarks are taken from the first chapter, which is a manifesto of his position.

In the first chapter the author states what we might call the five basic points of his position. He calls them methods. However, they could be more correctly referred to as aspects or parts of a method, since polarity is *one* method in itself.

He certainly succeeds in properly emphasizing some angles which have been more or less overlooked in the past, angles which still fail to command an attention commensurate to their importance. The explanation he gives concerning the *principle of polar autonomy* is very good, and the applications of this principle to the polar relation of unity and plurality are exact and precise. What the author calls the

principle of polar tension, and which he properly opposes to the previous one, counterbalances the opposition between the extremes of the relation, so that each one is not looked upon as an abstraction, but as co-principles. Though he does not mention the fact, the author states in modern terms the traditional scholastic teaching on transcendental relation, as found between matter and form, essence and existence, substance and accident. From these two points, he infers the *principle of axiology*, thus formulating the value of each pole taken in itself. The *principles of polar augmentation* and *polar concretion* however have a limited application. The latter is more closely related to psychological and moral issues. The former acts as a check, in this sense that through this principle the limitations of each pole are made more obvious.

The fundamental aspects of the polarity method exposed by Norris are very interesting and useful. Unfortunately the book is marred by certain sentences scattered here and there, which are unacceptable. On page thirty-one, the author says that "metaphysics is not a demonstrative science, but an art to guide action." Such an assertion is not justified. Again: "The vocation of man is to answer the question: 'who am I?'" Such a proposition, if taken at its face value, is conducive to humanism of the most extreme form. Philosophy does not consider man, the absolute. The purpose of philosophy is not fulfilled by the mere knowledge of himself that man can acquire. Philosophy is essentially focussed on God, the ultimate efficient cause and the end of all reality.

Chapter Five could have been omitted. The theological problems raised cannot be treated satisfactorily according to the method used in the other chapters.

The phrase *calculus for polarity* could be somewhat misleading; however, the author explains it in such a way that he avoids any possible misconception. He notes that no question of mathematical precision is involved, and that the quantitative aspects brought into play merely shed more light on the metaphysical factors implied in the extremes of the polar relation.

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