Great Philosophers: Aquinas

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1. Introduction

• Major philosopher of medieval period
• Divergent Attitudes – Russell/Kenny/Eco
• Religious/Secular Approaches
• Metaphysics, Phil of Religion, Ethics, Action
• Focus on Metaphysics
  2. Biography
  3. Metaphysics
  4. Differences from Aristotle
2. Biography

- Birth at Roccasecca, minor nobility
- Sent to Monte Cassino, ecclesiastical politics
- University of Naples – Peter of Ireland
  - Translations of Aristotle
  - Role of Averroes
  - Attitude to Aristotle
• Begins Dominican Novitiate 1244
  - issues about mendicants
• University of Paris with Albertus Magnus
• Albertus Magnus (1200-1280)
• Cologne with Albertus Magnus
  - Neoplatonism
  - Aristotelianism
• 1252 Teaching and Theology at Paris
  - Postgraduate studies
  - Peter Lombard’s *Sententiae*
• 1256 Inception as Master of Theology at Paris. Magister in Sacra Pagina. Conflict
  
  *De Ente et Essentia*
• 1259 Italy (Naples)
• *Summa Contra Gentiles*
• 1261 Orvieto
• Rome
• **1265 Summa Theologiae**
  - pedagogical purpose
• *De Potentia.*
• Connection with William of Moerbeke
  - translations
• 1269 Return to Paris
• *De Aeternitate Mundi*
• *De Unitate Intellectus*
• *Quaestiones Disputates*
• Sequence of Aristotelian Commentaries
• Conflict: Radical Aristotelianism
• 1271 Naples
• Scripture Commentaries – St Paul, Psalms
• 1273 Autumn – cessation of writing
• Council of Lyons, death 7th March at Fossanova
3. Metaphysics

• Investigation of Being. Most general inquiry
• Being as being – not being as x
• Being in general/Most general being
• Distinguish primary/secondary substances  
  (Socrates/Humanity)
• Problem of universals  
  (Separated/Immanent/Purely Conceptual)
• Substance – Accident
  (Socrates, his height, weight, wisdom)
• Relation of dependence
  (Subject, “of a subject/in a subject”)
• Form and Essence
• Substantial form
• Matter – Form
• Hylomorphism
• Matter as problematical
• Matter as element
• Prime Matter as pure potential – mental construct
• Potency – Act
• Theory of change
• Potency requires act
• Act and Existence
• 4 Causes – relation to substance
• Matter/Form/Efficient/Final
• Supposition of purpose - teleology
  (Rejection of teleology in early modern – big factor in rejection of Aristotelianism)
4. Differences from Aristotle

• Eternity of World
• No good phil arguments either way
• Accepts beginning on religious grounds
• Allows the possibility of thinking in new way
• Issue of absolute nothingness and coming into existence
• Allows discussion of existence as genuine feature
• Essence and Existence
• Co-principle of being
• Requires different epistemology
• No investigation of essence yields existence. (Block to Ontological argument)
• Source of contemporary debate (Frege)
• Way of making sense of participation.
• Blending of Neoplatonism with Aristotle
• Real distinction between creatures and creation
• Relation of dependence
Further Reading

- *Summa Theologiae*
  

- *Aquinas Selected Philosophical Writings*, T. McDermott (ed.), Oxford UP, 1993


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