

developed. Every reader interested in Aristotle's scientific thought and its philosophical foundations owes it to themselves to study this book carefully.—James Lennox, *University of Pittsburgh*

DEELY, John. *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poincot*. Second Edition. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2013. 640 pp. Cloth, \$85.00—The second edition of the *Tractatus de Signis* of John Poincot (traditionally, John of St. Thomas) represents an updated release of the original printing of this interpretive translation made by John Deely. In order to appreciate this text, it is necessary to bear in mind Deely's explicit remarks regarding his project in compiling the *Tractatus*. Like the first edition, this second edition aspires to be a source text in the theory of semiotics. Therefore, Deely does little to add to the semicritical edition of Reiser and likewise provides only a relatively brief historical study concerning Poincot's sources and the controversies relevant to the context of his text.

The main body of the *Tractatus* is comprised of questions twenty-one through twenty-three of Material Logic of Poincot's *Cursus philosophicus*, renumbering the texts into three independent "books." In their original context, these books are devoted to the section of the *Ars logica* treating matters of signification arising in the context of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*. These texts are presented by Deely in the explicit context of Poincot's metaphysics of relation. As such, the *Tractatus* draws attention to the aspects of these texts that exceed the limited concerns of the logician. Instead, as Deely's own commentary stresses, Poincot's treatment of signification actually straddles the order of mind-dependent being (*ens rationis*) and mind-independent being (*ens reale*). This doctrine is defended at length throughout the course of the first book of the *Tractatus*, which is concerned with the metaphysics of the sign relation as well as the causality proper to the being of a sign as such.

The second book of the *Tractatus* considers the divisions of signs. The first portion of this text is devoted to questions of cognition that require significant mastery of Poincot's metaphysics of knowledge. To the Thomist readers of the text, it is necessary to have intimate familiarity with Aquinas's treatment of the *verbum mentis* or *intentio intellecta* if Poincot's arguments are to be understandable. In footnotes to Poincot's text, Deely provides a number of excerpts from Poincot's treatment of cognition in the sections of the *Cursus philosophicus* dealing with questions pertaining to the *De anima* of Aristotle. For readers who are not expert in these matters, it is recommended that other works be consulted. In addition to other works by Deely, such matters are also treated well by John Peifer, Yves Simon, and Jacques Maritain.

Beyond the baroque complexities of Poincot's noetic and semiotic, the second book is also devoted to questions concerning the distinction

among natural, stipulated, and customary signs. The two brief questions dedicated to these topics are pregnant with implications for a healthy and realistic postmodernism, one that can build upon the topics covered in the first book of the *Tractatus* to formulate a view of experience that at once acknowledges the role of social construction in human existence while also providing the appropriate metaphysical doctrines for relating human experience to mind-independent reality. The third book of the *Tractatus* helps to provide specifics for this relationship, treating of important matters concerning formal signs pertaining to the awareness of mind-independent realities. These topics are treated in the context of controversies concerning intuitive and abstractive awareness, direct and reflex concepts, and ultimate and nonultimate concepts.

To these main books, Deely adds several preamble selections. In addition to brief excerpts from Poinset's formal logic *summulae*, these texts contain portions of the second and seventeenth questions of the Material Logic. The first set of texts is concerned with matters pertaining to *entia rationis*. While these texts are devoted primarily to matters pertaining to second intentions, they do provide important context concerning the nature mind-dependent being and its relation to mind-independent being. The second set of texts is devoted to Poinset's doctrine of relation. (An appendix text, taken from the same question of the *Cursus philosophicus*, supplements this preamble selection.) These texts are critically important for understanding Deely's editorial choices and should be read with care, especially by the reader who has not specialized in scholastic controversies concerning the nature of relation.

This second edition of the *Tractatus* offers little new content for those who have read Deely's earlier edition and are familiar with his continued work on Poinset. It does include a new introduction, which is helpful to the reader who is not adequately versed in the disputes that function in the background of Poinset's context. More importantly, the introduction helps to clarify Deely's own editorial perspective, which is important for understanding the aims of the text as a whole. For those who are not familiar with Deely's work, the *Tractatus* does represent an important introduction to the particular semiotic worldview that Deely believes he can defend from the perspective of Poinset's work. The volume requires devotion if it is to be understood in anything less than a superficial manner. Deely's appendices, which are largely the same as those found in the first edition of the text, provide aid to readers in need of such guidance through the difficult texts of the body of the *Tractatus*. Although Deely has chosen to place these editorial remarks at the end of his work, it is highly recommended that the reader consult them before working through Poinset's labyrinthine prose. Finally, while Deely's editorial work provides little to assuage the desire for historical source scholarship, his extensive index is a veritable gold mine for topics treated in the *Tractatus*.

Poinset's *Tractatus* may not express itself in a medium that is immediately congenial to the reader who is not an expert in late

scholasticism. Nevertheless, it provides a rich set of claims that help to bridge the gap between *ens reale* and *ens rationis*. It provides the conceptual apparatus needed for interfacing a robustly Latin-Aristotelian viewpoint with the concerns of postmodernity. To the reader who devotes adequate attention to this difficult text, this payoff is well worth the time spent digesting it.—Matthew Miner, *The Catholic University of America*

DREYFUS, Hubert and Charles TAYLOR. *Retrieving Realism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015. 171 pp.—“The modern epistemological tradition begins with Descartes.” So opens this collaborative volume by Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor. Hegel previously declared René Descartes to be “the Father of Modern Philosophy.” The present authors confirm that judgment. In radically distinguishing between mind and body, in effect making substances of both, Descartes generated not only the problem of the unity of the human being but also the epistemological problem of how our ideas represent things. It is the latter problem that Dreyfus and Taylor address in this volume.

In their account, Descartes created what they call a “mediational” problem, for if knowledge consists in the form of ideas held by the mind, ideas that purportedly represent the world outside the mind, how is it possible to show that these ideas which exist in the mind do in fact put us in touch with the real?

What provides the connection? The reality I want to know is outside the mind; my knowledge is within. I know things only through the mediation of internal representations. This knowledge consists of states of mind, beliefs which purport to represent accurately what is out there, but even so, I can be said to have knowledge only when I am convinced that my ideas correctly and reliably represent reality.

To rise to the level of knowledge, my belief has to be justified. I must have good grounds for holding it. I am obliged to account for my confidence that my belief is true, which I can do in terms of a finite number of features that I can separate out, isolate, and treat as criteria. My suppositions may be reinforced by others, by sentences that circulate in the public domain between speakers who hold that those sentences correspond to reality. Even with this collaboration, I must still admit the vulnerability of my supposed knowledge of external reality and unavoidably remain open to skepticism. The only thing I cannot doubt is the content of my ideas.

Descartes’s skepticism was employed not to further the skeptic’s agenda but to establish his own conception of the self, mind, and the world. It differs from ancient skepticism insofar as ancient skepticism attempted to show how little we could really know. Descartes wants in everyday knowledge the certainty found only in mathematics.

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