

theological and economic aspects, while Vázquez focused on the voluntaristic and legal foundation of rights. Brett occasionally presents these aspects as widely divergent, while most analysts (including myself) see them as sharing the same fundamental values. She states that Vázquez's work was a positive response to the achievements of the Spanish Dominicans, particularly that of Soto. However, her remark that Vázquez the lawyer "is not heir to the theology of the image of God" on which rights are based, seems to imply that he diverged from rather than complemented the views of his predecessors.

Nevertheless, I agree with Ralph McInerny, who, despite finding minor faults in some of Brett's arguments, contends that this is "a book from which anyone can learn and which proceeds with a care and taste for the truth that is wholly admirable."<sup>1</sup>

## Note

1. "On Natural Law and Natural Rights," *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review* 41, 2 (Spring 1999): 174–78.

## **The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II**

Avery Dulles, S.J.

New York: Crossroad, 1999, 204 pp.

*Review by Kevin E. Schmiesing  
Project Coordinator  
Center for Economic Personalism*

Near the end of this book, Avery Dulles contends of Pope John Paul II: "So prolific and many-faceted is his theological output that it almost defies reduction to any kind of schematic unity" (184). Dulles has demonstrated that *almost* is the operative word, performing the task admirably in this compendium of John Paul's thought.

As Dulles intimates, there are many facets to this book, but the present review will focus on those aspects most pertinent to readers of this journal. Of most interest perhaps is the fact that Dulles uses the pope's personalist

philosophical sympathies as a hook on which to hang the disparate strands of papal teaching. At every turn, Dulles uncovers the influence John Paul's personalism has exerted on the development of his theological vision. In fact, Dulles' principal thesis is that John Paul has accomplished a synthesis between Thomistic and phenomenological approaches to theological inquiry.

The personalist theme is pervasive. In his explication of papal teaching on the priesthood, Dulles writes that the pope's "dialogic personalism" leads him to emphasize the "relational quality of the priestly office." In this view, the priesthood acquires its fullest meaning only in the context of the community of faith within which the priest operates (81).

John Paul's phenomenological approach also allows for human suffering to play a central role in his theology (89). He meditates deeply and personally on the problem of suffering, reflecting on his own experiences of Nazi brutality and physical hardship. Sin, he affirms, is the root cause of suffering in the world, but its existence in the lives of individuals remains mysterious. It is only through the cross of Christ that human suffering achieves meaning, and allows for its role in God's plan to become evident (92).

The "personalist principle" means that human beings inherently deserve love, a demand that grounds the pope's understanding of human rights (147). John Paul defends the concept of individual rights vigorously but reminds the modern world that those rights must derive from a transcendent source to be truly inviolable.

Finally, personalism fuels the pope's concern with ecumenism, in which he calls for "dialogue," as the experience that allows for "human self-realization" (159). The ecumenical imperative has been a prominent theme of John Paul's pontificate. Yet his emphasis on ecumenism does not elicit a call for theological compromise; instead, he urges that its outcome be "a common meeting in the most ample and mature fullness of Christian truth" (160).

As Dulles describes it, John Paul's system is "simultaneously theocentric and anthropocentric." Nowhere is this more evident than in the pope's writings on social morality and the economy. Dulles faithfully reproduces the pontiff's thought on this complex and controversial subject, presenting a summary of papal teaching that is, like the teaching itself, devoid of ideological platitudes. John Paul approaches the economy through the lens of the human person. He notes that human resources have become more important in the modern era than physical resources (134). This recognition might be taken as his affirmation of the notion of human capital, an idea that promotes the view that human beings are productive contributors rather than just economic consumers.

The pope also stresses the intransitive aspect of human labor, i.e., the transformative effect that work has on the human subject. He thus resists the subordination of the personal to the material that takes place in Marxist and consumerist worldviews (132). His fulminations against consumerism, moreover, are founded on the fact that the “purely economic model” of humanity prevents him from “expressing personhood in an authentic way” (123).

Dulles demonstrates the central importance of solidarity in the pope’s social vision. The responsibility to care for our neighbor (solidarity) finds unparalleled support in John Paul’s personalism. It can be seen, for instance, how his belief that human self-fulfillment occurs only through interaction with others would lend itself to the concept of solidarity. With this perspective in mind, it is easy to understand the logic of the pope’s denunciation of a “capitalist neoliberalism,” which “subordinates the human person to blind market forces.” Yet, John Paul defends the morality of the economic system that “recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production as well as free human creativity in the economic order” (137).

If readers are looking for an interpretive essay on the pope’s theology, this book will disappoint. While Dulles provides insight into the pope’s thought, his main accomplishment is tying together the disparate threads of John Paul’s writings into a coherent whole. On that score, Dulles succeeds marvelously. The book is, therefore, a valuable contribution and will be of use primarily for two audiences. For those who are familiar with the pope’s teaching, it will function as a topical guide to identifying and systematizing what and where John Paul has published on selected subjects (Dulles’ citations are thorough). For those who are unfamiliar with current Catholic teaching, this book will serve as a fine introduction. Dulles has crafted a fine summary of the thought of, by many accounts, the most influential public figure of the twentieth century.