

Symposium Thomisticum

Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris – 23-25 June 2016

From 23-25 June, the Institutum Thomisticum held what it hopes to be the first of many conferences on Aquinas and his legacy. Appropriately, this was held in Paris at the Centre Culturel Irlandais, a stone's throw from the Panthéon and other notable attractions. Organised by Fran O'Rourke, the theme of the conference was specifically 'Aquinas and Modern Philosophies,' a topic which invited a well-rounded and dynamic spectrum of participants, especially from Europe and North America. Notable speakers included Alice Ramos, John Haldane, Candice Vogler, Carlos Steel, Markus Wörner, and Rudi te Velde.

Comprised of roughly 60-70 participants, this conference facilitated conversation due to its relatively small size and minimal number of parallel sessions. A sense of collegiality prevailed as figures from various levels of academic seniority mingled and mused on Aquinas and his enduring influence. The prior circulation of the communications also fostered conversation, as speakers would summarise their respective papers in about fifteen minutes, and would follow that with another fifteen minutes of discussion and questions.

The topics of the papers admitted of a rich spectrum in terms of content and method, with some speakers focusing on influences on Aquinas (not least of all Plato and Aristotle); questions *ad intra*, that is, interrogating and evaluating Aquinas' own sources; and applications of Thomistic thought in the present day or the reception thereof (e.g., in Gadamer).

One of the implicit tasks of the conference was to situate Aquinas and his reception in its proper context. A notable example of this was found in the contribution by Rémi Brague. In his thought-provoking keynote address, Brague argued that the current dispensation is profoundly if subtly indebted to its mediaeval past; rather than leaving the middle ages behind, Brague suggests that we are still operating within the same conceptual system, with the key shift being that the prior synthesis in which the concepts were meaningful has disintegrated if not disappeared.

The conference programme was ambitious, but proceeded at a reasonable pace so as to allow for colleagues to meet with one another and discuss their work further, whether during a coffee break or luncheon. The conference included an entire programme of activities, such as a closing dinner for all involved, as well as a recital of traditional Irish music.

The initial success of this endeavour by the Institute has not decreased its ambition. Based on the communications given in Paris, there are already plans to

publish a volume of proceedings with Cambridge University Press. In addition, during the conference, further details were discussed concerning the increasingly bright future of the Institutum Thomisticum. In June 2017, the Institute will host its second conference in Porto on 'Aquinas and Modern Thinkers,' followed by its third symposium in 2018 in Athens on Aquinas and the Greeks. The call for papers is already available for the former, which hopes to reproduce and enhance the quality scholarship undertaken by this nascent Institute.

Matthew W. Knotts
Leuven and FWO Flanders
matthew.knotts@kuleuven.be