Janez Perčič and Johannes Herzgsell, eds.

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This collection of eight articles under the title “Great Thinkers from the Jesuit Order” goes back to a series of lectures at the Jesuit School of Philosophy in Munich. The lectures were delivered in 2014 on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus. Janez Perčič and Johannes Herzgsell, the editors, and most of the contributors of the volume are Jesuits and professors at the above-mentioned faculty. During the almost five centuries of the order’s existence, outstanding Jesuits were active and influential in many disciplines: in the humanities, but also in the natural and social sciences. The preface of the book distinguishes between these kinds of science and argues that this differentiation reflects the different kinds of knowledge and methods in dealing with the questions of our life in the world. Consequently, the volume contains articles on a selection of scholars and authors predominantly from the areas of philosophy and theology, but also from social ethics, psychology, and the natural sciences.

Two out of the eight Jesuits discussed in this volume are from the time before the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773: Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and Baltasar Gracián (1601–58). Harald Schöndorf introduces the metaphysics of Suárez, situating him as a thinker between the medieval and the modern world. This could be seen in Suárez’s theological work as well, which, despite being more extensive, receives less notice in current scholarship. Schöndorf, however, exemplifies Suárez’s position through a critical assessment of selected topics from the *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597). Schöndorf argues that this first systematic and comprehensive handbook of metaphysics was Suárez’s most innovative work.

The following chapter focuses on Gracián, a preacher with close contact to the Spanish court and the learned elite of his time, and one of the most important writers and theoreticians of Spanish baroque literature. Sebastian Neumeister, a professor of Romance literature in Berlin and translator of Gracián’s works, introduces a Jesuit who did not refrain from giving very worldly advice in his famous aphorisms, some of which seem to be more Machiavellian than Christian. Through his elucidation of the historical and cultural background Neumeister helps the reader grasp Gracián’s intentions. Besides the popular *Oráculo manual* (1647), Neumeister also explores Gracián’s other works, which include a moralizing novel and spiritual writings, thus pointing out the religious underpinnings of a multifaceted personality.

Six other articles concern Jesuits from the twentieth century. Johannes Seidel focuses the spotlight on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), his scientific

discoveries and theories as well as on his spirituality and philosophy of nature. Because of his paleontological confirmation of the evolutionary theory and his attempts to integrate it into philosophical and spiritual concepts, he was repeatedly silenced by church authorities even within the Society of Jesus. Unfortunately, Seidel does not develop how other important Jesuits like Henri de Lubac or the rector of the Institut catholique in Toulouse, Bruno de Solages, endorsed Teilhard's thought and advocated for him.

The next contribution is a well-written introduction to Oswald von Nell-Breuning (1890–1991) by Johannes Wallacher. As an outstanding professor of social ethics engaged in the social, political, and economical debates during a long academic life, Nell-Breuning worked as critical observer, adviser, and mediator between church and politics in Germany. Wallacher concludes by pointing out how Nell-Breuning's proposals for ethics in the stock market, formulated in his dissertation in 1929, are still valid today.

Only at this point in the volume theologians take the field: Karl-Heinz Neufeld, Johannes Herzgssell, and Ulf Jonsson write on Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), Karl Rahner (1904–84), and Bernard Lonergan (1904–84) respectively, characterizing them as independent and engaging thinkers who have inspired generations of theologians. Although they shared similar convictions for a necessary renewal of theology that takes into account history and modern philosophies, the styles of these three theologians and the issues they discussed were very different. Neufeld's contribution stands out for the compelling image he paints of de Lubac's role as a sensitive and still debated interpreter of the relationship between God and humanity against the backdrop of the developments of religious life in Europe.

Dominik Finkelde concludes the book with an article on Michel de Certeau (1925–86), exploring de Certeau's discoveries in linguistics, psychoanalysis, and mysticism. Finkelde focuses on de Certeau's close reading of Daniel Paul Schreber's self-description as a schizophrenic person, unfortunately at the expense of a wider perspective on a thinker with wide-ranging influence in various disciplines like history, sociology, or spiritual theology.

The authors of the contributions approach their subjects differently. Some focus only on one aspect that is elaborated in detail; others provide introductory overviews. From the style of most articles, their origin as lectures for a broader audience is recognizable. However, the text did not receive proper attention during copy-editing: there are numerous typographical errors and grammatical mistakes; in some cases, even words are missing or misplaced.

That said, this collection of eight "great thinkers" is an easily accessible introduction to the variety of Jesuit scholarship. Although this small volume cannot claim to provide a comprehensive overview, it features carefully chosen

examples, predominantly from the twentieth century, in international perspective. Even the different approaches and styles reflect the characters of the thinkers. The book in itself is a statement for the need of academic reflection in the church, for innovative dynamism, and for dialogue between religion and the various sciences. It highlights that open minds among the Jesuits faced challenges from within the church, but the example of the Jesuits considered also gives confidence that the Catholic faith, in its profound humanism, is open towards creative developments in science and the humanities.

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