

Recensiones

James F. ANDERSON, *St. Augustine and Being. A Metaphysical Essay*. The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1965. ix-76 pp. Fl. 9,90.

In this study the author confronts, on the basis of good text-material, the metaphysical doctrine of Augustine with Neoplatonic metaphysics, especially with that of Plotinus. The main thesis of this book is that there is no question that Augustine owed much to Plotinus in almost every area of his thought. Precisely from his familiarity with Neoplatonist texts, Augustine had been able to develop his own philosophy. But Augustine wholly re-interpreted Neoplatonism into a philosophy of being. For that purpose his most important teacher was not Plotinus, but the Bible, where it is said — at least in the reading of the Septuagint — that God's own name is *being itself*. Here we find the reason of the great opposition between both thinkers. Plotinus' metaphysics involves ultimately a reality which lies beyond being ; for Augustine, on the contrary, the highest reality is being itself : God is *ipsum esse*. Because this is not the case for Plotinus, his thought leads to an essentialistic character, while Augustine's philosophy has rather an existentialistic character. From this point of view the author strongly mitigates the alleged contrast in basic metaphysical meaning between Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, as if the former were a Neoplatonist and the second a philosopher of being as existence.

The importance of the study of Anderson lies in the abundance of Augustinian texts about God as being itself and about the relation between God and created beings, a relation which is basically a communication of being (*creatio ex nihilo*) and participation. But it is a pity that the terms « existentialistic » and « essentialistic » here used are not sufficiently explained. In our opinion the author should have taken into account the possibility that the so-called « existentialism » of Augustine lies on another level than that supposed in this work. Very little attention is paid to concrete human experience, wherein perhaps is found the most important source of Augustine's philosophy.

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