Theories of Divine Ideas: From the Church Fathers to the Early Franciscan Masters
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At the Origins of the Franciscan Exemplarism. Introductory Remarks

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Four years after the publication of the volume *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought (XIIIth-XIVth century)*, edited by Jacopo F. Falà and me[1], the *Flumen Sapientiae* series releases another book devoted to the doctrine of divine ideas in the Middle Ages.

In the previous work, the thought of the early Parisian Franciscan masters and Bonaventure was the starting point of a survey primarily devoted to Franciscan reflection in the Late Middle Ages. In this volume, conversely, we go back to the origins of Franciscan exemplarism, focusing on the main theories of divine ideas formulated in Christian circles from the Church Fathers to the Franciscans active in Paris in the first half of the Thirteenth century and Bonaventure (who followed their teachings).

This volume aims at contributing to the reconstruction of the history of the theory of divine ideas in the Middle Ages, following the specific track of Christian reflection[2].

The Church Fathers were the main upholders of the long-standing process of "Christianizing" the Platonic theme of ideas. The

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1. J.F. Falà, I. Zavattero (eds.), *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought (XIIIth-XIVth century)*, Aracne, Roma 2018 (*Flumen Sapientiae.* Studi sul pensiero medievale, 8).

2. Some of the authors of the essays collected in this volume also contributed to the conference "Le idee divine nella prima scuola francescana di Parigi. Un esame delle fonti greche e latine", held on 28-29 September 2021 at the "Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia" of the University of Trento. Thanks to the efforts of Tommaso Manzon and his invaluable collaboration, other specialists were subsequently invited, in order to explore the history of the doctrine of divine ideas from Augustine to Bonaventure as broadly as possible.

doctrines of Augustine of Hippo and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite constituted the two pillars on which later elaborations were based: while Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene heavily drew on Dionysian theory, Anselm of Aosta was predominantly inspired by Augustine. In the Ninth Century, the prominence of Augustine and Dionysius in the patristic tradition prompted John Scotus Eriugena to attempt a reconciliation of their teachings, although his synthesis regarding divine ideas did not enjoy great popularity. Three centuries later, the school of canons regular of St. Victor (whose main exponents were Hugh and Richard, together with Achard and Thomas Gallus) had a better fate and represented an important center for reworking the patristic tradition and the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, including the exemplarist doctrine. The turning point, however, only occurred with the widespread success of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*: from the first half of the thirteenth century, distinctions 35 and 36 of the first book became the privileged place where commentators used to discuss the issue of divine ideas. Within the chronological boundaries of this volume, this can be observed both in the *Glossa in librum Sententiarum* of Alexander of Hales (a master of theology who first institutionalized the teaching of Lombard's work) and in Bonaventure's well-known *Commentarius in Libros Sententiarum*. At the beginning of the Thirteenth century, theological thought also engaged in debating divine ideas on the basis of William of Auxerre's *Summa Aurea* and Philip the Chancellor's *Summa de bono*, forging the doctrinal background for the elaborations of the Franciscans active in Paris in the first half of the century (John of La Rochelle, Alexander of Hales, the compilers of the *Summa Halensis* and Odo Rigaldi). The most complete synthesis of this doctrinal season is undoubtedly achieved by Bonaventure, who not only establishes a comparison between Augustine's and Dionysius' theories of ideas, but also shows strong ties to the legacy of Damascene and the Victorines, as well as developing the teachings of the Franciscan masters of the previous generation.

As in the 2018 volume, considerable space has been devoted to Franciscan thought, which acted as a collector of the main sources – both patristic and medieval – on the subject of divine ideas. It is not by accident that almost all the doctrinal premises adopted

by Bonaventure, the fiercest defender of exemplarism, are already found, variously articulated, in the works of the early Franciscan masters.

In Late Antiquity, Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius are the two Christian thinkers most committed to the effort of overcoming Greek, Neoplatonic and Aristotelian thought, which denied divine science[3]. They must account for scriptural evidence that explicitly attributes wisdom and intelligence to God (Ps 7,10; 139,1-5; Dan 13,42) and that describes creation as presided over by divine Wisdom (Prv 8,22-32). Moreover, Christian theological thought must, on the one hand, defend divine omniscience (God not only knows Himself, but also what is other than Himself) and, on the other, maintain absolute divine simplicity (in God there is no differentiation between knowing-subject and known-object).

The most famous text in which Augustine deals with the topic of divine ideas is the *quaestio* 46 of *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*. To gain a comprehensive picture of the Augustinian position, however, it is also necessary to consider other works. In his essay *Augustine's Doctrine of Eternal Reasons: A Textual Dossier*, Giovanni Catapano cites and discusses all the passages in which Augustine uses the term *ratio* as an equivalent to the Platonic *idea*. Catapano compiles a textual dossier of 47 passages from 13 different works. From the analysis of these passages, a fundamentally consistent theory of divine ideas as "eternal reasons" emerges. According to this doctrine: (i) in the divine Word there are immutable reasons for all species of mutable things, both those created and those to be created; (ii) these reasons, eternal, uncreated, and divine, are the way God knows creatures before creation and through which He creates them; (iii) the human mind is inferior to the eternal reasons,

3. According to Plotinus, thinking is not an operation that belongs to the first principle, neither as self-understanding nor as knowledge of what is other than itself (*Enneads*, V,6,6). According to Aristotle, similarly, the first motor is too perfect to know a world that he does not create and which he moves only as a final cause, cf. J.-C. Bardout, O. Boulnois, *L'invention du monde*, in Iid. (éds.), *Sur la science divine*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2002, pp. 9-56: 10.

but connected to them by nature; (iv) the vision of the eternal reasons – in their being one and one thing with the Divine Word – represents the culmination of happiness attainable by man.

In the essay *La teoria delle idee nello pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita*, Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi highlights the efforts made by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to move from the pagan ontological paradigm toward an ontology adapted to Christian monotheism, focusing specifically on the theory of ideas. To maintain the uniqueness of the universal causal principle, Dionysius dismisses the conception of intelligible exemplars as intermediate causal models between God and creatures. Instead, he introduces the theory of *logoi* as divine wills under which all things will be brought into being. Thus according to Dionysius, the production of beings consists of the divine will producing its "pre-being" as uncreated *logos* in particular beings. The *logoi* of divine Wisdom are therefore transcendent models (or paradigms) that are anterior to being. This solution is consistent with the biblical principle of creation "from things that are not" (i.e., prior to being; cfr. 2Mach 7,27-29) and establishes an antinomian ontology in which being is grounded in divine non-being.

Dionysian exemplarism enjoyed great fortune in the Byzantine tradition thanks to the mediation of theological authorities such as Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene. The theory of the *logoi*, in particular, assumed special relevance in the theo-cosmological thought of Maximus the Confessor, in which we find both the conception of superessential *logoi* (through which everything was pre-created) and the theory of the continuous creation performed by God.

Torstein Theodor Tollefsen's essay *Divine Ideas according to St. Maximus the Confessor* explores the peculiar doctrine of this Church Father. The cosmological system elaborated by Maximus is grounded in the idea that Christ is the origin and destination of the whole universe. From this first and fundamental assumption stems a specific doctrine of divine ideas. Christ is the one *Logos* (Word of God) that contains all the *logoi*; and these are, in turn, the principles according to which Christ, the *Logos*, creates and orders the entire cosmos. Through the *logoi* all creatures are connected with Christ

and are destined to convert to their divine origin so as to achieve deification.

Later on, Maximus the Confessor's doctrine of *logoi* is not taken up by John Damascene, perhaps due to its too Platonic flavor (decidedly at odds with the Aristotelian architecture of Damascene's thought). On the contrary, Damascene's dependence on Dionysius on the subject of divine ideas is beyond question, as Carlo Dell'Osso convincingly demonstrates in his essay *Le idee platoniche o predeterminazioni divine in Giovanni Damasceno*. On the basis of some passages from *Pro sacris imaginibus orationes* I and III and *De fide orthodoxa*, Dell'Osso highlights the presence of the Platonic theme of divine ideas (i.e., predeterminations) in John Damascene's reflection. The clear dependence on Dionysius is demonstrated by meager but unequivocal traces, which also witness a progressive evolution in Damascene's theory; while in *Oratio* I, 10 the Areopagite is quoted explicitly and the models of created entities are placed in the "eternal counsel" of God, in the later *De fide orthodoxa* I, 9 (as well as in *Oratio* III) the reference remains implicit in the description of a "volitional thought" in terms of predetermination, image, and model.

Along the same "Dionysian" line, John Scotus Eriugena not only composes a commentary on *De coelesti hierarchia*, but also incorporates within the *Periphyseon* several of the Areopagite's themes and ideas. Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, in his second essay *La teoria delle idee in Giovanni Scoto Eriugena: da Dionigi e Agostino oltre Dionigi e Agostino*, analyzes the way Eriugena reconciles his sources in his masterpiece, elaborating a theory of divine ideas of considerable complexity. The theoretical sophistication of this doctrine is ultimately rooted in two fundamental tenets: 1) a combinatorial methodology based on *divisiones dialecticae* applied to the concepts of "created" and "uncreated"; 2) the use of patristic sources that differ from each other in their ontological assumptions: not only Dionysius and Augustine, but also Maximus the Confessor. Eriugena employs these sources as equally reliable *auctoritates*, but having to harmonize their different outcomes, he reaches completely original conclusions, such as the self-creation of God in creatures and the createdness in God of the primordial causes (theologically conceived as superessential). Ultimately, Eriugena succeeds in main-

taining a paradigmatic consistency with the dogmatic foundations of Christianity through the meontology of the Eastern Fathers and by observing the Augustinian principle of divine simplicity.

An original reworking of Augustine's doctrine is found, on the other hand, in the works of Anselm of Aosta, discussed in Bernd Goebel's essay *Anselm über göttliche Ideen und das göttliche Wort*. Unlike Augustine, Anselm never refers to the conceptions in the Creator's mind of the things to be made as "ideas". Nevertheless, Anselm relies on the theory of divine ideas when he theorizes about the supreme nature as a rational cause. Thus, he recognizes divine ideas of created universal substances and properties (to be distinguished from "perfections", which are uncreated). In the *Monologion*, he combines the doctrine of divine ideas with a speculation on the Trinity. The divine Word – the second person of the Trinity – is the speech act of the supreme nature. It is consubstantial with the supreme nature and encompasses all divine ideas. According to Anselm, this creative Word is nothing other than the reflexive Word through which the supreme nature eternally speaks itself. However, the identity of essence between the natures of the created things and their respective divine ideas (and ultimately with the mind of the Creator Himself) does not extend to their mode, or intensity, of being. The natures of created things exist to a lesser degree (and are less "true") than their ideas in the divine mind. To these two ontological levels or states of created essences is added a third and even weaker one, i.e., their existence in the mind of a rational creature. Our concepts are only images of the things in themselves, which in turn are only images of their divine ideas. This is not to be understood as a mere relativization of human knowledge, but also as a metaphysical and epistemological theory that explains the knowability of created entities for a rational creature.

A few decades later, at St. Victor's Abbey, Augustine's prominent exegetical influence was combined with a marked interest in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Dominique Poirel, in *La théorie des «causes primordiales» chez Hugues de Saint-Victor*, shows that Hugh dealt several times with divine ideas, which he alternately called "forms", "reasons", "ideas", "notions", "causes", and especially "primordial causes", following Augustine and Eriugena. The theme first ap-

pears around 1125 in the *Sententiae de divinitate* and *De sacramentis* in the form of a doctrinal digression. Between the sections on the creation of the world and the creation of man, Hugh inserts a reflection on causality in order to understand why God created man and the world for man. At the apex of the hierarchy of causes, the "primordial causes" (i.e., reasons or forms of all creatures) are themselves subject to divine power, wisdom, and goodness, which no longer belong by nature to causality. God did not create man for his own sake, but to donate himself to humankind as an end. Thus, the reflection on causality discloses a return to the origin, at the culmination of which an ultimate overcoming takes place: at the origin of everything is the gratuitous and uncaused initiative of God. Poirel points out how Hugh's conception changed over time. At first, Hugh did not explicitly employ the notion of "divine ideas", which probably seemed to him too dependent on pagan philosophy, particularly that of Plato. However, his renewed interest in Dionysius and his desire to give greater importance to the creation of man (as well as to the reasons of this creation), led him to enrich his Christian synthesis with novel philosophical material. In his mature thought, thus, anthropocentrism and Christocentrism go hand in hand and his doctrine of "primordial causes" provides a philosophical foundation for a decidedly humanistic Christian theology.

For both chronological and doctrinal reasons, the essay on Peter Lombard is placed within the group of articles devoted to the Augustinian canons regular of St. Victor. Thanks to the soliciting of Bernard of Clairvaux, Lombard was effectively guested in the abbey of St. Victor. Moreover, Peter can be considered, to a certain extent, a "Victorine" himself, given the enormous influence exerted on him by Hugh and especially by the *De sacramentis* (clearly discernible in the *Sentences*).

As mentioned above, the *Sentences* offered, from the first half of the Thirteenth century onward, the doctrinal basis from which divine ideas could be discussed. Marta Borgo's essay, *Y a-t-il une doctrine des idées divines chez Pierre Lombard?* examines whether and to what extent Lombard himself was directly concerned with this issue. In distinctions 35 and 36 of the first book of the *Sentences*, he does not deal with divine ideas as such, nor with *rationes* in a tech-

nical sense. By analyzing a series of passages extracted from the *Sentences* and the *Collectanea* to the Pauline corpus, however, Borgo shows that many of the philosophical-theological implications later drawn by the commentators were already present – *in nuce* – in Lombard's didactic remarks.

Although a systematic and well-developed doctrine of divine ideas is lacking in the *Sentences*, there are several theses related to divine science that constitute a solid (albeit loosely knit) network, upon which, in a later period, more articulate discussions arise. In this respect, the linchpin of Lombardian reflection is divine creation, which is connected to the issues of the passage from the one to the many, of the relationship between eternity and time, and of the extension and simplicity of divine science. Reflection on these matters leads Peter Lombard to elaborate the notion of the presence of things in God, with tones – and often words – that are clearly Augustinian (and, by this way, biblical). His originality – in this case as in others – lies in the peculiar accents he is able to put on certain aspects of widely debated questions and in the selection of themes and authorities he chooses to emphasize.

In the context of the St. Victor school, a less studied but very interesting author is Achard, who is at the center of Irena Lystopad's essay *Les raisons éternelles, les formes et les idées: aux origines de la doctrine du* De unitate et pluralitate creaturarum *d'Achard de Saint-Victor*. In Achard's doctrine, the concept of "divine idea" or "idea in the intellect of God" is actively present, but not so central. Lystopad shows that in *De unitate et pluralitate creaturarum* two important theses of Middle and Neo-Platonic metaphysics are recovered: (i) the existence of a single source, the divine Word, at the origin of all that exists; and (ii) the existence of a metaphysical hierarchy of beings originating from this single source. In the divine Word, in particular, there are three types of eternal reasons: *formales, finales et explicatrices*; ideas are part of the "formal" reasons (*formales*), which, in turn, are also hierarchically structured: the primary form, the created forms (the ideas) and the forms in things (*idos*). The origin of this doctrine can be traced back to late-antique metaphysics (Seneca and Calcidius), but – as Lystopad explains – Achard's inspirers are most likely Augustine and Eriugena.

The section on the Victorines ends with Declan Lawell's essay on *Richard Of St. Victor and Thomas Gallus Of Vercelli: Victorine Thinking On The Divine Ideas*. The author examines the thinking of Richard of St. Victor and Thomas Gallus of Vercelli on divine ideas, and on the ways in which mind can attain their knowledge. At the center of the analysis are Richard's *De trinitate* and Thomas Gallus'*Explanationes* to the works of Pseudo-Dionysius. As they specifically deal with the issue of divine contemplation, new "divine ideas" emerge in their texts. The divine ideas that particularly fascinate Richard are "love/goodness", "wisdom/knowledge", and "power", often used as correlates of the divine persons of the Trinity (respectively, Holy Spirit, Son, and Father). Thomas Gallus, as an expositor of Dionysius, has an even richer vocabulary, deploying terms such as "reasons", "archetypes", and "exemplars", as well as *spectacula* (as evident in his short treatise on divine ideas, *Spectacula contemplationis*). Lawell compares the theories of the two masters about the way in which the mind can gain the knowledge of divine ideas. According to Richard, this always occurs through the intellect, which is the highest human faculty. According to Thomas, it occurs through affection and synderesis, which disclose a kind of knowledge superior to intelligence and that allows full access to the divine.

Magdalena Bieniak's essay, *Only One Exemplary Form. The* Summa de bono *and Its Sources*, opens the section of the volume devoted to the masters of theology at the University of Paris. Philip the Chancellor and his *Summa de bono* strongly influenced later theological thought. Bieniak not only shows the consonances between this work and the *Summa Halensis*, but also highlights, through an analysis of Philip's sources, the way he distances himself from Augustine and other Christian thinkers. Both Philip the Chancellor and the Franciscan authors of the *Summa Halensis* discuss whether there are many eternal exemplary forms or just one. The debate was due to the tension between the *auctoritas* of Augustine, who spoke of the plurality of the primordial causes, and the conviction that the exemplary cause is identical to the divine essence, which is perfectly simple and one. Philip and the Franciscans argued in favor of the unicity of the eternal exemplary form by distinguishing the principal meaning of the term "idea" from the secondary one.

According to the primary sense of the term, "the exemplary form" was only one but pointed to many through its collateral meaning. The chapter highlights some noteworthy aspects of this discussion and traces them back to their Twelfth-century sources.

Stepping into the heart of Franciscan thought, Lydia Schumacher's essay *The Divine Ideas in the Early Franciscan School at Paris (c. 1220-50)* ranges from Alexander of Hales to Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, via the *Summa Halensis* (which reflects the doctrinal positions of the earliest Franciscan school), and Odo Rigaldi (whose work serves as a bridge between the first and second generation of Franciscan masters). Schumacher illustrates how Alexander of Hales, in the *Quaestiones disputatae antequam esse frater*, modifies his doctrine of ideas by denying what he had previously asserted in the *Glossa in I Sententiarum*, and namely that there are as many divine ideas as creatures. In the *Quaestiones* he argues that there is only one divine idea, indirectly signified or co-signified by the different beings – a position which is also found in the *Summa Halensis*. Odo Rigaldi, on the other hand, in his commentary on the *Sentences* and in the *Quaestiones disputatae*, endorses a position more similar to that defended by Alexander in the *Glossa*. Bonaventure, on his part, employs slightly different language in expressing a similar opinion. While the divine ideas are one in God's opinion, the likenesses to him are many, such that in the mode of understanding, the divine ideas are multiplied down to the level of singulars and indeed the infinite. There is not such a drastic difference between the views presented by these different authors: whether the ideas are multiplied in relation to creatures or nominally in God, a delicate balance is struck between the one and the many. The one point the various scholars do have in common is that they use Augustine to defend their differing positions. In light of the content of the debates and the variety of positions presented, Schumacher reflects on the common historiographical notion that the early Franciscan doctrine of divine ideas is fundamentally "Augustinian", calling attention to more likely sources of inspiration behind early Franciscan thought, such as Avicenna.

After this overview of the early Franciscan school, two articles devoted to the theory of ideas in John de La Rochelle and Odo Rigaldi follow. The works of these two theologians, along with those

of Alexander of Hales, were crucial to the rise of a specifically Franciscan thought and exerted a profound influence on Bonaventure.

John de La Rochelle collaborated with Alexander of Hales on the compilation of the *Summa Halensis*, and was probably responsible for the first book, in which the material on divine ideas appears. Riccardo Saccenti's essay, *The Divine Ideas in John of La Rochelle's Theology*, focuses on John's unpublished commentary on the *Sentences* (*Glossa super Sententias*). This master did not devote a specific and organic treatment to the question of divine ideas. However, within his theological production he had the occasion to discuss this issue dealing with some key-passage from Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and from the Scripture. Through the analysis of these texts it is possible to understand the approach of this theologian to the topic and his peculiar arguing on the exemplarism, according to which the divine ideas are the model and cause of the existing things. Saccenti offers a careful analysis of the crucial passages of John's glosses to the *Sentences* and of his exegetical writings where he developed the crucial distinctions between "existence" / "possible existence" and between "infinite knowledge" / "knowledge of the existing beings *qua* existing". These arguments represent the very pillars of John of La Rochelle's reasoning on the nature of divine ideas, and deeply impacted on the doctrinal debate in the central decades of the Thirteenth century.

A further development is represented by the work of Odo Rigaldi, who may have collaborated on the last volume of the *Summa Halensis* and who was the successor of John and Alexander as master regent of the Parisian Franciscan school. His theory of ideas is investigated in Carlos M. Martínez Ruiz's essay *Ejemplaridad y modalidad en la* Quaestio de modo exsistendi rerum in Deo *de Odón Rigaud. Antecedentes y proyección*. Rigaldi, in a rather original way, narrows the scope of *scientia Dei* to what God can create or accomplish, establishing a fairly sound basis for an understanding of the "possibility *a parte rei*". Ruiz's main goal is to unveil the modal theory embedded in the Rigaldian doctrine *de scientia dei* and, more specifically, *de ideis*. For this reason, he focuses on *quaestio* 6 of Part II of the *Quaestio de existentia rerum in Deo*, where Odo asks "whether God possesses in general the ideas of all possible things". The notion of *possibilitas*

emerges as one of the pillars on which Odo bases his critique to the model of God-world relationship most prevalent among his contemporaries. The notion of *possibilitas per se* and, more importantly, its explanatory power, sharply differentiates Rigaldi's position from that of his fellow contemporaries (Alexander of Hales and Albertus Magnus) and his sources. According to him, the key-point is that the possibility of realization cannot be restricted either logically or ontologically. Thus, theologically, it is necessary to affirm that the extension of God's science is broader than that of his will. Ruiz analyzes Rigaldi's theory within the theoretical framework of distinctions 35, 36, 38 and 39 of the *Lectura in I Sententiarum*, as well as of the works of his main interlocutors: William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales and Albertus Magnus.

This itinerary within the Christian tradition closes with Bonaventure. The Seraphic Doctor engages with almost all these sources, *in primis* attempting to reconcile the two main authoritative pillars (Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius); and secondly, profiting from the doctrinal developments of his own masters, namely the *magistri* active in Paris in the second quarter of the Thirteenth century.

Most significant for his theory of ideas are the *Quaestiones de scientia Christi*, dating from the early years of his Parisian teaching. In this work Bonaventure deals systematically with divine ideas, relying on Pseudo-Dionysius to a much greater extent than in the earlier *Commentarius in Libros Sententiarum*. Tommaso Manzon's essay *According to the Blessed Dionysius: the Areopagitic Character of Bonaventure's Exemplarism, with Particular Reference to the* Quaestiones de scientia Christi, offers a re-examination of the Aereopagite's influence on Bonaventure's exemplarism. In particular, the author illustrates that Dionysian expressions and concepts reach Bonaventure predominantly through the mediation of the *Explanationes* of the Victorine monk Thomas Gallus, providing the basis for the elaboration of his doctrine of divine ideas. Manzon dwells particularly on the circular argumentation that characterizes the *Quaestiones*: beginning with the statement of the infinity of God's nature, power and knowledge, the argumentation concludes with an analysis of this same infinite mystery, which is also the destination of

man's spiritual journey. Creatures are created through eternal reasons in and through the Word, and – as Thomas Gallus already stated – through contemplation they return to the Word. Within this doctrinal framework (drawn from the *Corpus Dionysiacum*), Bonaventure creatively reinterprets terms and ideas derived from other sources, particularly Augustine. In light of Dionysius' decisive influence and of the synthesis operated with Augustinian theory, Manzon discusses recent studies devoted to Bonaventure and early Franciscan authors, in which an increasing number of arguments are brought against the traditional understanding of these thinkers as indefectible Augustinians.

The essays collected in this volume and those published in *Divine Ideas in Franciscan Thought (XIIIth-XIVth centuries)* trace the stages of the medieval history of the theory of divine ideas within Christian thought, with a particular emphasis on the Franciscan tradition. It is only a single chapter of this long and tangled history, approached from the specific point of view of Christian and Franciscan reflection; many other texts and authors still remain to be investigated to achieve an overall picture. These two volumes, however, seem to confirm that historical-critical and lexicographical investigation, applied to the history of concepts, can offer a fruitful and interesting key to the fascinating intricacies of medieval thought.