

Capreolus, John (C. 1380-1444)

Encyclopedia Article

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John Capreolus, a French Dominican theologian, was born in Rodez. He studied at the University of Paris, receiving the magistrature in theology in 1411. Later he taught in Dominican houses of study at Toulouse and Rodez and came to be recognized as the "Leader of the Thomists" (*Princeps Thomistarum*). His chief work is *Defensiones Theologiae D. Thomae* (Defenses of the theology of St. Thomas). This is the first commentary that considers the *Summa Theologiae* more important than Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, a view which has persisted in later Thomism. The *Defensiones* is historically useful for its information on scholastic philosophical controversies of the fourteenth century and the views of John Duns Scotus, John of Ripa, Peter Aureolus, and Durandus of Saint-Pourcain. Capreolus' contributions to philosophy are in the field of metaphysics. On the then central question of the relation between essence and existence, he taught that they are distinguished as two different beings (an extreme real distinction) and used the terminology of Giles of Rome (*esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*) to express his position. Capreolus regarded essences as eternal and uncreated entities, not efficiently produced by God but subject only to divine formal causality. On the other hand, he stressed the importance of existence in treating personality (divine and human), teaching that personality is the very subsistence of the act of existing (*esse actualis existentiae*, see *Defensiones*, Vol. V, pp. 105–107). Where other thinkers required some sort of formal or modal constituent of the person, Capreolus demanded nothing more than the act of existing as an intelligent individual nature. He taught that the intrinsic principle that individuates bodies is matter marked by quantity (*materia signata*), as did Thomas, but Capreolus insisted that the quantification must be actual (under definite dimensions) and not indeterminate (*Defensiones*, Vol. III, pp. 200–241).

See Also

Aristotelianism; Duns Scotus, John; Durandus of Saint-Pourçain; Peter Aureol; Thomas Aquinas, St.

Bibliography

Works by Capreolus

Defensiones Theologiae D. Thomae. Edited by Paban-Pègues, 7 vols. Turin, 1900–1908. There are no known English translations of Capreolus's work.

Works on Capreolus

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