

## BLACKFRIARS

as it is from the view which can lead a modern apologist of a more recent tradition to declare that "God has allowed Himself to be dictated to by His creatures, to treat with them solely on the terms of their free choices." (Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J.: *Mirage and Truth*, p. 160.)

The general scope of the exposition is well suggested by the following extract: "We cannot stress too much in these days of Agnosticism that, in one way, we have a more certain knowledge of God than of the intrinsic properties of plants or animals. These essentially material natures cannot be fully intelligible to us. They are within close range of our senses, but they are far removed from the source of all intelligibility, as Aristotle said. And we have a far more certain knowledge of God than we have of men with whom we are living in close intimacy. Reason alone actually assures us that we are more certain of the goodness of God in our regard than of the rectitude of our own intentions. We know the goodness of God better than we do the uprightness of our own heart." To say that this truth is brought home with the clarity and force we are led to expect from so distinguished a theologian is to say all that need be said. AELRED GRAHAM, O.S.B.

GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHY. By C. E. M. Joad. (Gollancz; 6/-.)

"Variations on the theme of cosmic lying." This phrase, quoted by Mr. Joad, gives delightful expression to a common attitude of impatience with views in which the traditional definition of metaphysics, the science of the nature of reality as such, becomes re-written as "the study of reality in contradistinction to the commonsense world of appearance." It is a fact that the latter definition, Mr. Joad's, is almost universally applicable to what are now called metaphysics; it is also a fact that, only last year, there were Thomist reviewers (not in BLACKFRIARS) for whom the omission of *ens ut ens* from an "Introduction to Metaphysic" was sufficient reason for slating a fellow-Catholic, Prof. Siegfried Behn of Bonn University.

Now to the uninitiated to question the obvious is at least foolish, perhaps dishonest; the distinction between appearance and reality is not younger than Parmenides, yet it is hardly recognized outside philosophical circles. Mr. Joad has tried to make clear to the "intelligent layman" why the obvious is called in question, how the metaphysical craving is engendered. He has aimed, with amazing success, at expressing himself in language intelligible to those who have read no philosophy; and this has necessarily meant a considerable limitation of scope. Yet he has managed in under six hundred pages to give a lucid sketch of nearly all the problems now considered of first importance in metaphysics.

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This has been done by abandoning the usual historical method of introduction. The reader is asked at once to consider problems of knowledge, and thus led on to a second part, *Critical Metaphysics*, in which are examined the commonsense notions of substance, change, causation, self. In these two parts the work of individual philosophers is only mentioned in so far as it contributes to urging and developing the problems. In the third part, *Constructive Metaphysics*, outlines are given of the principal attempts to reach a valid conception of reality. The main concern throughout seems to be to raise problems in order to give the reader, not so much the impression of understanding what philosophers now think, but what they are thinking *about*, and thus to lead him on to further reading. Indeed, books for further reading are suggested at the end of each section. It would therefore be bad criticism to point to distortions and inaccuracies such as may be sufficiently explained as resulting inevitably from the attempt to make short and comparatively simple what is long and complicated. There is a close analogy with map-projections which necessarily distort since they represent on a flat surface what is not flat. Their value consists in being so devised as to keep some particular feature undistorted, whatever happens to the rest; Mr. Joad's projection has kept problems undistorted, so far as that is compatible with writing for the public he has in mind. He has also succeeded in conveying an atmosphere; which would have been quite impossible had his sketching been always meticulously accurate, for that can only show skeleton figures, leaving it to the reader's imagination to find even plausibility.

We cannot, however, pass over the fact that he misstates without any justification St. Thomas' views on separated souls; there was no need to mention his views on separated souls. That a reader may be disappointed to find little that will help him live his life is a necessary consequence of the limitations Mr. Joad had to impose upon himself. He does not discuss ethical questions. He has tried very successfully to keep his book free from personal bias, even explaining carefully what his bias is; and it should be clear that his preference is for a metaphysic that issues naturally in an ethic. Those who read his *Return to Philosophy* will realize this fully; it was a defence of Reason and Absolute Values against the relativism and subjectivism of highbrow novelists.

There Mr. Joad appealed to readers to embark on the adventure of philosophy and urged its value. It is an adventure; once see problems and there is no stopping till a solution is found. The problems are non-existent for those who have never seen them, and those who have never felt the attraction of views opposed to commonsense may be sure they have never seen the problems. And all who wish to understand their fellow-men must see the importance of understanding their problems.

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The present writer reviewed *Return to Philosophy*. He did not find it whet his appetite. Perhaps these remarks may be taken as an *amende honorable*.

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

THE NECESSITY OF BELIEF. By Eric Gill. (Faber & Faber; 7/6.)

In this book Eric Gill has massed together the substance of most of his previous writings round a central problem posed, at once historically and "out of space and time," in the words, borrowed from Wells, of the common man, "What's it all blooming well for?" It is not, as the rather unfortunately pompous title suggests, a detailed theological enquiry, but something for the ordinary reader a great deal more attractive. It is the effort of Eric Gill, himself a man and a responsible workman, to voice the enquiry of all men whose humanity is trapped in the iron cage of our industrialism, and of all workmen whose responsibility is becoming more and more a legal fiction and almost even a theological fiction, into the ultimate meanings beneath our industrial chaos and the elements of order this chaos involves even if only by frustrating them.

It is from this point of view, as voicing and assisting the enquiry of the ordinary man, that the book must be judged, and as such it is amazingly good. Belief, and with it the whole basis of philosophy in "common sense," is set free from the crippling hesitancy called "humility" by men of science. Belief "is dependent upon rationality rather than reasoning. For reason and rationality, though related, are not the same thing. Rationality is a quality; reasoning is a process. . . . So belief, though it goes beyond the process of reasoning, is not therefore irrational" (p. 17). Clarity is admirable in these early pages. As the argument advances from the realm of pure essences to take up a matter in itself less luminous, the concrete historical situation in which we find ourselves, the author's method changes with startling effect. The mind of the enquirer is couched beneath grasses on the summit of this hummock of a world; sees the stars through minutes visibly move, breaking adrift from the tufted grass-tops; experiences reflexively and almost sensibly in a moment of intuition the wheeling of the crooked earth under the stars. "A voice says to me: 'Heal's have come, to deliver a great log of wood.' These things . . . remind me that I, the being I imagined alone, still, timeless and spaceless, is a human being. . . . It is I who sees those stars." And the reality of substance beneath act is "brought alive" in the reader's mind with poetic vividness. Man is saved from his subhuman abasement before merely material immensity. "It is I who am important, because there is no such thing as importance except in relation to persons—to beings who know and will and love." And so, again, from a