

REVIEWS

SELBSTKRITIK DER PHILOSOPHIE und Vergleichende Philosophiegeschichte im Umriss. (Thomas Morus Presse, Herder, Vienna; n.p.)

DREI LASTER. Dostojewskis Tiefenpsychologie. (Verlag Karl Alber, Munich; n.p.)

Both by Alois Dempf.

To attempt a review of Professor Dempf's *Selbstkritik der Philosophie* is a particularly difficult task. This book has been the present reviewer's first encounter with the work of its author, who is clearly shown in it to be one of the major Catholic thinkers of our time. Professor Dempf (appointed to the chair of Philosophy in Vienna in 1937, removed by the Nazis in 1938 and restored to his Chair after the war) has already an impressive series of works on political philosophy and the philosophy of religion to his credit and, as the Foreword of the present volume tells us, an even more impressive series of books in process of publication, including a full-scale comparative history of philosophy and works on speculative anthropology and the history of the doctrine of man. To this latter group *Selbstkritik der Philosophie* is in some sense a preface, and to comment too extensively on it without reference to the rest would be premature and impertinent. Further, Dempf is using in the service of the *philosophia perennis* a tradition of thought as yet too little known or appreciated by modern Catholic philosophers. This is the great German attempt, extending from Kant and Schlegel to Dilthey and Nicolai Hartmann, at a comprehensive *Kritik der Geisteswissenschaften*, a critical evaluation of all forms of human thinking. A full account of Dempf's thought would have to do justice both to this tradition and to his own criticism of it and his use of its positive achievements.

So all that can be done here is to stress the importance of the book and to give enough indication of its content to encourage those seriously concerned with philosophy and the history of philosophy to give it the thorough, appreciative, and at times critical reading which it deserves. We have in it a heroic attempt, based on a study of both Eastern and Western philosophers of a range and depth of which very few would be capable, to make sense of the whole course of human thinking and to show how by the study of its history by the right method we can pass beyond sceptical historicism, relativism or positivism and arrive at the great philosophical truths. Dempf's method is an extremely flexible and subtle one; it is based on a firm grasp of the order of the levels of reality and human experience which are not reducible to or explicable in terms of each other (this doctrine of the *Schichte* appears to play an important part in much modern German thought); and it takes account of the types of thinking constantly associated with particular professions, states of life and types of character and with

different stages in the development of culture. There is certainly a danger of over-systematisation and consequent distortion, as there is in so much German thought about the history of philosophy: and specialist historians of philosophy will feel doubtful about a good many of Dempf's particular pronouncements. But Dempf himself repeatedly reminds us that we are dealing with groups of men endowed with free will, not with 'culture-souls' or 'spirits of the age' and must not expect too absolute a regularity: and if this is borne in mind it seems likely that the framework of his thought will stand up to specialist criticism.

In some ways the most impressive passages of Dempf's book are those in which he speaks of the failure of philosophy, showing how at its highest it fails to overcome its own divisions and cannot order the whole world or change the heart of man, and how in its failure it points the way inescapably to the supernatural, to the God-Man and the grace of his redemption.

The little book on Dostoevsky's psychology of character is an excellent example of the range and quality of the special studies on which Dempf has built his great synthesis.

A. H. ARMSTRONG.

DIE REFORMATION IN DEUTSCHLAND. By Josef Lortz. 3rd Edition. 1949. (Herder, Freiburg, 1949; 45DM.)

The time has not yet come when it is possible, even amongst professional historians, to mention Lortz's *Reformation* in the secure assumption that everyone present will be acquainted with it and will have come to regard it as the very best history of the Reformation in Germany. But one can hardly doubt that if the first edition had not appeared during the early stages of the war Lortz's two fascinating volumes would have already found a place as a standard work, even in the Channel-bound British universities. Perhaps this new edition will speed the process of assimilating 'our Lortz'.

This history of the Reformation has almost acquired a history of its own. Itself the fruit of Professor Lortz's deep concern for his separated Protestant brethren its complete charity has gained him their confidence and has done more than many conferences to provide a common basis for the work of reunion which is so dear to the author himself. This fact, it is hoped, will be an encouragement to those Catholic scholars in Britain who are working along similar lines; it confirms one's belief that the best results are achieved by historians not when they feel that they are ruling in their own little kingdoms of arid scholarship but when they are moved by a desire to share the truth with all men. *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, precise and measured in its judgments, is truly the work of a scholar and yet, as Lortz himself says, it is written for the general public; the learning in other words lies in the text instead of being paraded in the critical apparatus.