

## REVIEWS

cepts seem incapable of explaining, and that as an *ultimate explanation* it suffers from the same disabilities as any other attempt to make an evolutionary theory ultimate.

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**ASPECTS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM.** By H. Levy, John Macmurray, Ralph Fox, R. Page Arnot, J. D. Bernal, E. F. Carritt. (Watts; 5/-)

**MARXISM.** By J. Middleton Murry, John Macmurray, N. A. Holdaway, G. D. H. Cole. (Chapman & Hall; 5/-)

Dialectical Materialism is probably the most discussed philosophy of the day, though much of its popularity and vitality is due to the fact that its fundamental conception of the unity of thought and action forbids its adherents to regard it as a topic of mere academic discussion. For that reason alone it has its lessons for us. A Thomist may criticize this confusion of the *intellectus speculativus* and *practicus* (without, however, denying the practical social repercussions of *Θεωρία*), but he may devoutly wish that Christians likewise would awaken to the fact that a non-practical, academic Christianity is not Christianity at all.

The 'philosophy of Communism' has not yet received the attention from Catholic thinkers which its popularity demands. These two symposia will be found helpful to the student in search for material for some constructive criticism. Not that either could claim to be representative of the 'orthodox' Marxism of the Moscow Holy Office—the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute. Most of the contributors would seem to be of Mr. Cole's opinion that 'an "orthodox" Marxist may be learned in the Marxian scriptures: the one thing he cannot be is a follower of Karl Marx.' Indeed, the first volume, consisting of lectures delivered to the Society for Cultural Relations, contains contributions which are often highly critical and sometimes antagonistic to Marxism, while the second, a series of lectures given under the auspices of *The Adelphi*, is mostly the work of men who glory in being Marxist 'heretics.'

But both volumes contain, besides criticism, illuminating positive expositions of the implications and applications of Marxist Dialectic. Special mention may be made of Mr. Bernal's general outline and Mr. Holdaway's tightly packed essay on Marxist economics. Professor Macmurray, who contributes to both collections, is, of course, brilliant. His shattering criticism of some features of official Marxism in the first volume aroused more anger than understanding criticism in the subsequent comments of Messrs. Fox and Arnot, though Mr. Carritt, in his interesting lecture, shows up some of its weaknesses. Professor

Macmurray's reasons for his qualified acceptance of certain Marxist fundamentals are less convincing. We sympathize with his plea for 'a revolution in the conception of philosophy itself,' but see no future for a philosophy based on the assumption of the impossibility of 'achieving in philosophy an activity of pure thought—pure in the sense in which we talk of pure mathematics.' Whatever the origin of 'ideologies' (to use the Marxist terminology), and whatever their effect on the historical process, the first principles of thought remain no less independent of social conditions than the multiplication table. Here, we suspect, we touch on the original sin of Marxist theory.

But the chief interest in both volumes lies in their revelation of the reactions to Marxism of British thinkers in very different walks of life, the reason for the appeal it makes to them and the difficulties they encounter in accepting it whole-heartedly. Thus Mr. Levy, a scientist, is deeply impressed by its interpretation of history and the social implications which it stresses in individual scientific work. But he is impatient with its obsolete jargon and its lack of exact observation, and pleads for the introduction of 'isolates' into the Marxist Dialectic to make it applicable in scientific study, thereby revealing the inadequacy of any philosophy of mere Becoming: 'To say that everything is a thoroughly well-mixed gritty muddle is not very helpful, unless some systematic methodology of separating out the elements of the muddle is expounded.'

The human—not to say the religious—interest is provided by Mr. Middleton Murry, and very great that interest is. Readers of the early numbers of *The Adelphi* knew Mr. Murry as an intense individualist (they might use a harsher word), proclaiming to the world that 'I am I.' They will meet here a new, a transformed, a redeemed Mr. Murry, who has found salvation in the Marxist Dialectic from the self-centredness of the 'bourgeois mentality.' 'I am not I any more,' he now writes, 'but an integral and well-nigh indistinguishable part of the economic and social organism. My "human essence" at the very moment when it is the supreme conception of my bourgeois ideology has passed away from me into the social organism. My concrete individuality—in Marx's astounding phrase—is the "totality of social relations" . . . I am dissolved into the social whole.' He speaks of this putting off of the old bourgeois man and this self-surrender to the historical revolutionary process as of a mystical initiation, a losing of one's life to find it: 'Marxism is the faith of the man incapable of faith; the sceptic's religion: the mysticism of pure action.'

But the *anima naturaliter christiana* in Mr. Murry is not wholly at rest in Marxism. He is painfully aware of the fact, disguise it how he may, that there is more in man than can be

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absorbed into its economic and social organism, and he is driven to tortuous expedients in his endeavour to have his God and eat Him. He affirms even that Marxism is only, after all, 'the next best thing' to Christianity—(which is, of course, the very devil of it). And his opinion that 'Of all the modern intellectual plagues, cheap Marxism . . . is equalled only by cheap Catholicism, to which it is closely allied,' is, on the principle *corruptio optimi pessima*, highly significant.

But Mr. Murry cannot accept Christianity, nor undergo its self-surrender in the *Christus mysticus* wherein alone he would find all he seeks, for the Christianity he knows is lifeless, obsolete and inert, 'the sanctimonious defence of a class society.' He writes: 'The Marxist reduction of the individual is precisely the modern and *real* form of that profound and significant objectification of the individual as a "creature" which was an essential part of the technique of Christian mysticism when it was genuine self-purgation, an authentic "voiding" of oneself, and not, as it is to-day, a sentimental escape-mechanism for those who desire at the same moment the privileges of bourgeois society and the prestige of despising it.' It is a terrible reproach to us Christians that this could even be *thought* to be true; deeds rather than words must be its answer: they are the only effective answer to all who are seeking in Marxism what integral Christianity alone can give them in its fullness. Christian *theory* alone is powerless against Dialectical Materialism: the philosophy of action must be met by action—social and Catholic action. The Christian thinker has his place; but, in the last analysis, the constructive criticism of Marxism is the task less of the philosopher than of the saint.

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### SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

ETHICS OF PEACE AND WAR. By H. Gigon, Ph.D. Foreword by Lord Howard of Penrith. (Burns Oates; 2/-.)

This little grammar of the Ethics of Peace and War, as Lord Howard of Penrith aptly styles it in his helpful Foreword, is one of the most valuable contributions yet offered in the discussion of a vital problem. BLACKFRIARS has already protested against an attempt to stampede the public into an acceptance of a solution which refuses to consider the real principles at stake, and Father Gigon now opportunely gives us a clear and convincing statement and analysis of those principles. Rightly deciding that no contemporary study is so stamped with common sense as the work of the best thinkers of the Middle Ages, he examines the problem in the light of the teaching of the Scholastics, and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas. Following