

## REVIEWS

fined to abstractions but is illustrated by numerous special cases, some of them drawn from the author's special field.

It seems a legitimate criticism of a book with such a title that the physical sciences should be less satisfactorily dealt with. Dr. Thompson's common-sense approach seems to us to have led him to neglect somewhat the epistemological approach, which should be included in any survey of the status of physical science, although less helpful in dealing with the biological sciences. Our knowledge of the material world in physics is much more mysterious than our knowledge of vital organisms, which are at least closely analogous to ourselves; physical entities are not in themselves intuitable, nor can the meaning of interpretatory concepts such as mass and charge be intuited, still less that of the variable  $\psi$  in the wave-mechanics. Our knowledge in physical science must, it seems, be regarded as irreducibly a matter of a relation between intelligence and non-intelligent matter, which we cannot "bifurcate" (in Whitehead's phrase), that is, we cannot determine what elements in the complex are due to our minds and what to the external world. This at least can be solved from a study of Kant, even though his subjectivism must be rejected as based upon an illegitimate postulate. Successful though the Aristotelian framework is for the biological sciences, it seems to us that the fruits of modern epistemological enquiries, if stripped of their Cartesian misorientation, must be applied if a reasonable account of physical science is to be given. For this reason, Aristotelian comments on relativity, though true, rather miss the mark; it is not the relativity postulates which are opposed to common sense, but merely the treating of the fourth dimension in a pictorial fashion. But to have dealt adequately with physics would have needed another volume, and we must be grateful to Dr. Thompson for a work which in most respects is altogether admirable.

EDWARD CALDIN.

LA REPRESENTATION, Essai Philosophique, par André Cresson.  
(Boivin, Paris; 18 frs.)

Do representations represent? What is the mechanism that forms them? From what have they been developed? To discuss these questions, and as far as possible to answer them, is for M. Cresson to write a Philosophy of Representation. The three questions correspond to the three parts of the essay.

The relevant aspects of various theories of knowledge are outlined, weighed and found wanting, leaving the author to conclude that representations represent realities independent of the knower, realities whose existence is certain however imperfectly we may know their natures. These representations are explained

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as arising from the action of a series of *déclencheurs-exciteurs*, excitation as it were releasing a catch whereby free play is given to our "cerebro-mental organisation," which thus reacts to suitable stimuli in a way determined only by its own nature. Sensations and emotions in their turn set free the working of further machinery, and so on, the theory of *déclenchement* being the key to every aspect of our conscious and unconscious life. The fortunate possessor of such a cerebro-mental organisation, however rudimentary, would in the Struggle for Existence out-strip those of his rivals who lacked it; and its exercise (released by its environment) would bring about its development to its present stage of perfection.

It is hard to see how this can claim to be a "philosophical essay." The arguments which the author finds decisive are nearly always statements of matters of fact, and his nice analysis of such matters of fact could be valuable for many purposes. But not for his purpose. Take, for instance, his rejection of Hamelin's idealism on the ground that hearing (an "idea") is not to be explained in terms of a gramophone, disc, needle, etc., if these also are conceived as "ideas." There are, too, some very remarkable gaps in the first part—which is presumably the most "philosophical," since the standpoint of the second and third parts is frankly psychological and biological. Of idealists "properly so called" Hamelin alone is considered (on the ground that he alone has expressed himself clearly), while no mention is made of any theory that could fairly be called platonist, aristotelian or thomist. Can M. Cresson imagine they may all be lumped in with "*le réalisme vulgaire*," and therefore refuted by the very first stirrings of criticism, almost at the pre-philosophical level?

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

ACTA SECUNDI CONGRESSUS THOMISTICI INTERNATIONALIS invitante Academia R. S. Thomae Aquinatis, Romae, a die 23 ad 28 novembris 1936 celebrati. (Acta Pontificiae Academiae Romanae S. Thomas Aquinatis. Nova Series, vol. III.) (Marietti, Turin; Lib. It. 25.—.)

The Report of this second Congress begins with a letter from Cardinal Pacelli, a speech of welcome by Cardinal Laurenti, and the inaugural address of P. Charles Boyer, S.J., the secretary of the Congress. The body of the Report follows, divided into three parts, dealing respectively with problems of epistemology and criteriology, the relation between philosophy and the sciences, and the relation between philosophy and religion. Each section consists of the papers read on these subjects by the Rapporteurs,