

## REVIEWS

concern. He maintains that it is largely due to the influence of writers like D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley with the subjectivism implied in their worship of Life and the pleasures of living; and he sets himself to defend Reason and Absolute Values, meeting them on their own ground with arguments such as the lay mind might appreciate. Which calls to mind his piquant use of Chesterton as an enemy of Reason.

The last quarter of the book is concerned with Philosophy, an attempt to describe its value and a very thin outline of his own philosophical views. He refers readers to his more technical works for a more substantial statement, but it is difficult to imagine a reader whom this book would entice to consult them.

QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

## MEDIÆVAL STUDIES

Much has still to be learned in the field of mediæval studies. Old theories have constantly to be approached from new angles, and many a current view has to be modified, if not completely reversed. A striking instance is given us in this provocative book.<sup>1</sup>

That Avicenna exercised a great influence upon the so-called Augustinians had been proved in a series of studies by Prof. Gilson, who appropriately designated this movement by the name of *Avicennian Augustinism*. These admirers of Avicenna, however, borrowed from him all that could be adopted without parting with Christian teaching. Père R. de Vaux attempts to widen this view and to enquire whether, side by side with this movement—which might be called orthodox—there had also existed another group of thinkers, who upheld the "Arabian's" teaching even when in conflict with Catholic doctrine.

His thesis is that, long before Latin Averrhoism, there had already been in existence a widely-spread *Latin Avicennism* at the end of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries which later became mixed up with and absorbed by the Averrhoist movement.

Considerable caution is demanded in putting forward so novel a theory; and the author is duly careful to uphold no conclusion before establishing all his premisses. He does not however pretend that this is a finished and definitive work; rather he would have us regard it as provisional "notes" destined to propose the problem and stimulate further research. Nevertheless, his remarkable familiarity with the sources and his acumen in

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<sup>1</sup> R. DE VAUX, O.P.: *Notes et Textes sur l'Avicennisme Latin aux confins des XIIe-XIIIe siècles*. (Bibliothèque Thomiste, XX, Paris, J. Vrin; 1934; pp. 184. Frs. 20.)

discovering the enemy, even when hiding under the designation of *quidam magistri*, enable him to enforce his argument convincingly.

He first examines the writings of William of Auvergne and shows that the vehement refutations by the Bishop of Paris were, in the main, directed against Avicenna and his followers. He shows also that by *Aristoteles et sequaces eius* and all those who *post eum et per eum forsitan a via veritatis in parte ista deviauerunt* it was again these Avicennians that were meant. The eternity of the world, the necessity of creation, the influence of the stars, the separated *intellectus agens* which was the efficient and final cause of human souls (with the consequent negation of personal immortality), all these theses and many others, which used to be attributed to the Averrhoists, Père de Vaux shows clearly to have been regarded by William of Auvergne as characteristic doctrines of the Avicennians. Another novel and most interesting conclusion is that, according to William of Auvergne's testimony, Avicenna was included in the Paris condemnation of 1210 and 1215, certainly under the general name of *summae* and *commenta*, or perhaps even under the enigmatical name of *Mauritius Hispanus*.

Other witnesses of this Avicennian movement are William of Auxerre, Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon. Bacon's case is particularly instructive. Prof. Gilson qualified Bacon as *le type accompli de l'Augustinisme Avicennisant*. For him, as it had already been for Alfred of Sareschel, Avicenna is the *praecipuus commentator et expositor* of Aristotle, the *dux et princeps philosophiae*; his admiration carried even him so far as to make him believe that he had discovered in his works the doctrines of the Holy Ghost and the beginning of the world in time. Again, Bacon refers to the Pope the identical words used by Avicenna of the Caliph, calling him *Vicarius Dei in terra, legislator et summus sacerdos qui in temporalibus et spiritualibus habet plenitudinem potestatis tanquam Deus humanus, quem licet adorare post Deum*. Moreover, quite inadvertently, Bacon upholds one of the main Avicennian doctrines: God necessarily created the world, *Ergo haec causa produxit mundum necessario*.

The last chapter is very significant. It deals with the *Liber de Causis primis et secundis*, published among the works of Avicenna and attributed to him. In fact, it is a compilation from different sources—chiefly Avicenna and Erigena, and also St. Augustine, the Pseudo-Dionysius, the *De Causis*, etc., which belongs to the end of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century. This opusculum is the best witness of the existence of the Latin Avicennian movement. All students must be grateful to Père de Vaux for the excellent critical edition of this opusculum, and

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also for that of the last chapter of the *De Anima*, attributed to Dominicus Gundissalinus, hitherto most unsatisfactorily edited. Complete indexes close the volume.

This book is intended to provoke new research, and will doubtless stimulate others to look for further material to add to this valuable contribution to mediæval studies.

DANIEL A. CALLUS, O.P.

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FISHER AND MORE. By H. E. G. Rope, M.A. (Ouseley; 3/6.)

In Vachell's masterpiece there is a classical description of an Eton-and-Harrow cricket match when a Bishop turning excitedly to an old colonel splutters out: "Thank you!" Fr. Rope's average and not unregenerate readers will return him the episcopal thanks. In *Fisher and More* they have found plain speaking which is still timely though four centuries delayed. Moreover this plain speaking of Father Rope is always plain English. Again and again the reader is arrested by the writer calling a spade a spade. No little part of the book's worth is that it not only translates sixteenth century English into twentieth century English but that it expresses sixteenth century England in terms of twentieth century England. Readers of *Fisher and More* will sometimes be startled to see in the authentic story of these suckling days of Tudor Totalitarianism almost a pen-portrait of the movements of to-day. For this reason we think that Messrs. Ouseley were well minded to give us in one book the life and life-work of the two men who bore the brunt of the fighting for England's liberty. And they were especially well minded in choosing the pen they chose.

V. McN.

THE FIELD IS WON. (St. Dominic's Press, Ditchling Common; 1/-.)

This is the story for "a wordless play arranged to celebrate the Canonization of John Cardinal Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More, Kt., sometime Lord Chancellor of England." More and Fisher were united in Faith and in death they were not divided; ever since the one has not been mentioned without the other, at least among Catholics, and the author is justified for attempting the dramatically impossible in having two heroes in one play. The "supporting" characters are Henry, Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Potens (material authority) and Divus (spiritual authority). Thomas Derrick supplies a dozen drawings as a guide to costume in which he attempts to avoid "Period" as much as possible. The story is told dramatically and should act well in the hands of those familiar with the technique of mime—an art less formidable than is often supposed.

H. B.