

Thomas, speech manifests that very silence. This dissertation for the doctorate sets itself to examine that active stillness when, as it remarks, the reader overhears the poet communicating in silence about an object. It brings to bear an extensive apparatus to register the accompanying noises and to key them with the traditional scholastic notes. The score is offered modestly, but is a firm and commensurate summary. May it be continued with a study of the relations between poetic and metaphysical analogy. T.G.

THE MINT. A Miscellany of Literature, Art and Criticism. Edited by Geoffrey Grigson. (Routledge; 8s. 6d.)

The fashion for miscellanies reflects accurately enough the uncertainties of contemporary taste. Mr Grigson intends to provide 'in the age of the journalist and the publicity agent and the thousand-word article' an occasional selection of writing which 'does not favour one set of collective impulses against another'.

Hence Martin Buber, Graham Greene, W. H. Auden, John Clare and Rhys Davies meet amicably enough, for the criterion of inclusion is simply a literary conscience. Especially notable is an article by Nikolaus Pevsner on 'The Architecture of Mannerism', made concrete by a series of excellent illustrations of Italian buildings hitherto too easily categorised as Renaissance or Baroque. In its different order, Professor Buber's article on 'The Education of Character' reflects a similar freedom from inherited prejudice and provides a basic text for a generation that prefers the prefabricated. 'The educator who helps to bring man back to his own unity will help to put him again face to face with God'.

Little of the currency in *The Mint* is without value, but perhaps Mr Grigson's miscellany deserves a welcome more for its contribution to an ordered opinion than for the inevitable poems and extracts from unpublished novels which make up most of our current 'New Writings'. Thus Christopher Salmon in 'Broadcasting, Speech and Writing' has a thesis that is new and well-argued; so, too, James Farrell provides a searching glossary to 'The Language of Hollywood'. I.E.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF GIAMBATTISTA VICO. Translated by Max Harold Sinch and T. G. Burgin. (Cornell University Press: Geoffrey Cumberlege; 15s. 6d.)

This version of the *Autobiography*, with a long introduction on Vico's life and ideas, is to be followed by the *Scienza Nuova*; and before long the Americans will have translated the entire *opus* of 'the greatest of Italian philosophers'. The project is one to interest those who care for 'Christian philosophy' in the sense established by M. Gilson in various works. For Vico, in his own eyes at least, was a Christian thinker intent upon working out a harmony of divine and human wisdom; and there is a respectable body of Catholic opinion which maintains, against his chief modern interpreter, Croce, and

others, that Vico's design was carried through with perfect orthodoxy and considerable success. The point is noted here, though I lack space to prove it, because it is not admitted by the present translators. Their own view, that Vico's philosophy was 'eminently secular if not heretical' (p. 45) they state without proof and without mentioning the commemorative volume published by the University of the Sacred Heart (Milan, 1925), in which it is faced and, very probably, refuted.

Of course Vico was not a scholastic; he was quite unaffected by St Thomas. Given the circumstances of his life he could not help being a free-lance; even if he had wished to follow a 'school' there was no vital scholasticism for him to follow. His lovely and original mind was stimulated, in metaphysics, chiefly by Plato; but confused by a restless mental fertility he found it desperately hard to bring his thought into order. The writing of his masterpiece was the term of a life-long intellectual travail endured in poverty and largely in solitude. Yet if Vico was a great *autodidactus*, he was unlike many self-taught men in being at once self-critical and profoundly social (at least in his thinking). In deliberate opposition to Descartes he took as his starting-point, not the mind's self-perception but universal human nature, or the human race 'making itself' through history and thus representing on earth an idea of God. He begins with society, not with the self; with Law, not with the *cogito*. And Law for him was the reflection of Providence. It is characteristic that he dismisses a certain ethical system as 'suitable only for those who live in solitude'.

No doubt Flint is right: 'Vico was not a great metaphysician'. He tried to set up his own theory of knowledge against Descartes', but his true genius lay in the field of human institutions and fabrications, in a sympathetic understanding of the genesis of art and poetry. His famous metaphysical intuition, *verum esse ipsum factum* ('the known is what the knower makes') probably calls for keener minds than his to rescue it from the idealists who claim him as Kant's precursor.

It is good to see this *animo ingenuo* becoming better known; he is personally so admirable. Less a man of the world, less quick-witted, less *musical* than Dante, he reminds one a little of the poet; and the resemblance extends even to their ideas. It is a pity that his present translators are not more sympathetic to Vico's religion. They have spared no pains, however, over the translation; it can be trusted.

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RE-READING THE DIVINE COMEDY. By E. R. Vincent. Annual Italian Lecture of the British Academy, 1945. (Cumberlege; 2s. 6d)

One sentence of this lecture is memorable; the rest never quite comes to life. The sentence I mean contains this: 'Wherever Dante treats directly of love in any of its manifestations . . . we have the impression of a bright light beside which the colourless respectability of many worthy commentators seems as inappropriate as the sensual mysticism of D. G. Rosetti'. A 'bright light'; yes, that is good.