

REVIEWS

MODERN THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY, Vol. I. The Philosophy of Nature. By R. P. Phillips, D.D., M.A. (Burns Oates ; 9/-)

A large and growing public—a public innocent of philosophical training, but prepared to undertake a certain amount of solid reading in order to understand some of Thomist philosophy—will give this book a grateful welcome. Dr. Phillips proves himself well qualified for the difficult task he has undertaken. His exposition is lucid, faithful and sound. If he errs, it is on the side of following a little too closely the stereotyped pattern of manuals of Thomist philosophy and in paying rather too much attention to obsolete theories of bygone schoolmen. Indeed, in spite of frequent references to and comparisons with the theories of more modern writers, the word *Modern* in the title is hardly justified. The approach, the ethos, the problems treated of, the whole line of development, are medieval and traditional rather than distinctively modern. This is said, not by way of adverse criticism, but to forestall disappointment of expectations which the title may arouse.

Setting aside criticism on points of detail (and such as we could offer would be trifling in number and of little account), we would only remark that the book somehow fails to bring into full relief the organic unity and consistency of the Thomistic philosophy of nature. This is due, we think, to a fault in method. After a brief historical introduction, Dr. Phillips plunges us straight into the midst of Thomist cosmology, absolving himself from an exposition of logic on the grounds that logic 'is not a science on its own account, but a necessary preliminary to all knowledge.' The omission of a treatise on *formal* logic is, in such a work as this, readily excusable, less so the omission of some statement of Thomist *predicamental* logic. An introduction on the lines, for instance, of St. Thomas's *De Ente et Essentia*, an explanation of the inter-relation of Thought and Thing, of the mind's knowledge of Being, of the process of abstraction, would have given coherence to the subsequent exposition of the main points of Thomist cosmology and psychology which would be shown to be necessary inferences from the application of the inexorable first principles of the human mind to the data of our experience. Thomist natural philosophy would then appear as what it is, a highly critical and coherent system following inevitably from undeniable axioms and data, rather than a series of theories which, though plausibly and convincingly presented, are seldom shown to be irresistibly compelling.

But Dr. Phillips's book is by far the best introduction to Thomist philosophy in the English language that has as yet, to our knowledge, appeared; and we look forward with eagerness to the second volume in which he will treat of Thomist metaphysics.

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