

REVIEWS.

LE THOMISME ET LA CRITIQUE DE LA CONNAISSANCE. By Régis Jolivet. (Desclée De Brouwer; 10 fr.)

This book contains two *Etudes*. The first, on the Nature and Form of the Critical Problem was to some extent occasioned by a contribution to Geysers's Birthday Book in which M. Gikon insisted on the danger of the *Cogito* as a starting point for a critique of knowledge, and maintained that such a critique in the modern sense was unjustifiable within the confines of Thomism.

The second study, on the Problem of Critical Doubt, is complementary in character and treated separately for reasons of literary convenience.

M. Jolivet holds that the unshakeable evidence of an independent reality immediately present to the mind alone makes a critique of knowledge conceivable, and contends that only the fact that not all our knowledge is immediate makes criticism necessary. Criticism must begin from a *Cogito*; but if I understand him his *Cogito* is the *reflexio intellectus supra actum suum* described by St. Thomas, *de Verit* q. I. The Critical Problem for him is not the *existence as such of reality independent of our thought* but the *existence of independent reality such as we judge it to be*. In other words Critical Doubt must be directed upon the alleged adequation of our thought to reality in order to examine and report upon the value of our knowledge, but never upon the existence of the real. This last and the knowledge that it is the nature of Intelligence to be conformed to objective Being are so immediately evident to M. Jolivet that he sees no question of proof; reflexion, psychological analysis, can but exhibit them. Doubt regarding them is presupposed to the Cartesian attempt to deduce the real from Thought, and this road can only lead to Idealism unless their evidence is surreptitiously re-introduced; recourse to Causality leads no more illicitly to Berkeleianism than to Realism. To attempt such a deduction is to consent to a sham problem.

M. Jolivet protests in advance against the accusation of naïveté. Can he imagine that Idealists have no spontaneous certainty of an 'external world?' Does he mean that they deny the existence of the world of experience, and not merely of a second noumenal world behind it? This is the impression given by his reiteration of the enormity of doubting about existence. Can we not conceive realities possessing no actuality, *possibles*, or those mathematical reals, independent of our thought, which never can possess an actuality beyond the tenuous one we confer on them in thinking them? If we can, suspension of judgment regarding *existence* will leave us not with a nothing (as

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M. Jolivet thinks, p. 137) but with a *real given*, irrational at first perhaps, but which we need not despair of rationalising. And however we may subsequently solve the problem of the senses' (not the intellect's) perception of the existent, the objective validity and value of our intellectual knowledge of realities whose content is unchanged by existence or non-existence will in no way be endangered or altered.

Q.J.

INDIVIDUUM UND GEMEINSCHAFT BEIM HL. THOMAS VON AQUIN.
By Edelbert Kurz, O.F.M. (Munich : Kbsel & Pustet, RM.
3.80.)

One of the reasons for the disunity among Catholic sociologists and social workers, especially in English-speaking countries which have become sadly isolated from the general trend of Catholic thought, is the widespread misunderstanding of the social philosophy of St. Thomas. All are naturally anxious to claim him as their patron. Distributism, in particular, has brought about the association of his name among the Catholic rank and file with an extreme and naïve individualism which in fact is very far removed from the subtlety and profundity of authentic Thomism.

But reputable scholars have also been among the propagators of the myth of 'Thomist individualism,' especially in the days before liberalism fell into disrepute. Among them was the Louvain historian, Professor Maurice de Wulf, who propounded as 'Thomist' the thesis that 'Society exists for the individual and not the individual for Society.' Whereupon the eminent authority on mediaeval philosophy, Geheimrat Clemens Baeumker, remarked: 'I don't believe it, and I should never have thought *that* of De Wulf.'

Baeumker set his pupil, Fr. Kurz, the task of looking into the matter. Here we have the results of his ten-year research. He has ransacked St. Thomas for anything which could throw any light on the subject and arranged the material in orderly fashion with comments which, if not always displaying very great insight, are generally to the point. Regarded purely as a catena of quotations his work is invaluable, indeed indispensable to anyone who would get to grips with St. Thomas's own thought on social philosophy.

And in spite of a crudeness of expression, a childish lavishness with exclamation marks, and an undisguised partisanship, all of which render him suspect of charlatanism, Fr. Kurz has some very wise things to say and throws light on many dark corners of St. Thomas's thought. But he has not that profound and synthetic view of its implications which we meet with, for example, in Mlle. Suzanne Michel's *La notion thomiste du bien*