

## REVIEWS

DISTINGUER POUR UNIR; OU LES DEGRES DU SAVOIR. By Jacques Maritain. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932; pp. xvii, 920; 40 fr.)

Scholastic philosophy, having become the adopted child of the clergy, shares in the disrepute of ecclesiasticism generally. If it is to become a force in the modern anti-clerical age, it must be rescued, once and for all, from the sacristy. This work of redemption has been in progress for some years and among those engaged in it, few have taken so distinguished and none so effectual a part as M. Maritain. His Thomism is authentic enough to win the enthusiastic approval of a Thomist as hard and fast as Père Garrigou-Lagrange. At the same time, it is able to exercise a profound influence on a mind so modern and un-scientific as that of Jean Cocteau.

The problem with which M. Maritain concerns himself in the present book is one that is eminently modern: the relation of the scientific to the religious mind. His intention is rather to indicate the differences which separate metaphysical and mystical knowledge, than to dissipate that Kantian exclusivism which regards religion and philosophy as two distinct realities, irreducibly heterogeneous and absolutely without relation one to the other. The book, then, falls into two distinct and complete divisions: *Les degrés du savoir rationnel*, which treats of rational knowledge; and *Les degrés du savoir supra-rationnel*, which is concerned, in a general way, with mysticism.

*Les degrés du savoir rationnel*. Every metaphysician is bound to endure an initial misery as the condition of his existence: he must, radically, start his activity from assumptions and intuitions. The intellect is a faculty of being, he affirms; or: *Scio aliquid esse*. Yet both these statements are assumptions, certain to the man of common sense, yet, philosophically, indemonstrable. True, Aristotle 'proves' the first principles of reason by indicating the calamities which would occur in thought and conduct if they were denied; but this *demonstratio elenchica* amounts, philosophically, to pragmatism. Having sustained this *misère de la métaphysique* it then remains for the scientific mind to discover its own capabilities with re-

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gard to knowledge; of the manner in which it knows, and of the extent to which it is able to approach reality.

It is just such an essay in Epistemology which occupies the first half of M. Maritain's book. Needless to say his position is that of St. Thomas and therefore that of a realist. Indeed, it seems to Père Roland-Gosselin and others, that he claims too much for conceptual knowledge. M. Maritain is at great pains to defend his position, to which he devotes a long appendix. One of the refreshing things about his treatment of modern philosophies is, that he concerns himself to show the essential antagonism of Thomism to them, not the accidental points of agreement. He is singularly free from that vice which attempts to disguise eclecticism by calling it Neo-Thomism. In general, the conclusions he reaches will be familiar to students of St. Thomas or, indeed, of M. Maritain's earlier work.

*Les degrés du savoir supra-rationnel.* Having reached that perfection of which he is capable, the metaphysician receives a second shock. He discovers that, as such, he is incomplete. This second misery is caused by his knowledge, which brings forth a desire that he is unable to satisfy, *une aspiration inefficace*. He becomes like a man lost in a desert. His whole desire is upon something which he cannot obtain. True, a mirage may occur and he fancy that his efforts have led him to an oasis. Just as M. Jean Baruzi imagined himself capable of understanding St. John of the Cross. 'Hélas! Comme si un philosophe aidé d'une information historique supposée même exhaustive, et de la plus intuitive sympathie bergsonnienne, pouvait pénétrer l'intérieur d'un saint!' There are three courses open: he may deny his incompleteness; he may delude himself rather like 'mon cher Baruzi; or he may receive the supernatural grace which mystical knowledge presupposes. This knowledge forms the subject of the second part of the book. While rational knowledge is reached by a discursive process, in mystical knowledge the soul rests simply on its object; it is had by the 'summit of the mind' says St. Augustine: *In ipso mentis apice, quondam sensum arcanum tactumque quo res sentimus magisquam cognoscimus, tangimus magis quam intelligimus.*

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This knowledge M. Maritain treats of, as a theologian, taking as his guide St. Thomas, St. Augustine and St. John of the Cross.

The concluding chapter is well entitled *Todo y Nada*. M. Maritain's treatment is from the point of view of the theologian and not of the mystic. This has the inevitable disadvantage of having to define the indefinable. From the human point of view Theology is everything, from the divine point of view it is nothing: *Un Dieu défini est un Dieu fini*: to adore the object of theology is a subtle form of idolatry.

The real difference between philosophical and mystical thought is clearly established in this book. But it demands a sequel which will unify them, by relating them to the single consciousness of man-as-he-is. The success attained here makes us eagerly hope that M. Maritain will attempt it.

I.C.

THE NATURE OF SANCTITY. Essays in Order, No. 10. By Ida Coudenhove. (Sheed & Ward; pp. 121; 2/6.)

This is a magnificent book. It is of extreme importance if only because it among modern books on this subject almost stands alone. To any Catholic who is troubled by an apparent antinomy between the love of God and the love of creatures, the natural and the supernatural; who finds in the asceticism of the saints a self-mutilation, or who has boggled at the pernicious type of spiritual manual which treats the destruction of human love and human values as the foundation of any ascent to the divine, this book will be invaluable. And to any non-Catholic, too, whose interest in Catholicism is baulked by any such apprehensions.

There is an occasional emphasis, of a minor importance, which one would like to alter: the author's distinction between friendship with God, which is the characteristic of the saints, and the attempts 'painfully and stumblingly to do His Will' of ordinary mortals is rather too absolute if the term 'saint' is used in a technical sense, for the difference is one rather of degree than of kind.

But one is loath to find fault with so extraordinarily valuable a book, in which all the pertinent questions are put