

## REVIEWS

SOME THOUGHTS ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION. By Sir Richard Livingstone. (Nat. Book League: Cambridge U.P.; 2s. 6d.)

This urbane critique of the education at present available in English Universities starts with a judgment that the Universities are not in fact sufficiently influencing contemporary life, nor—what amounts to the same—sufficiently training the young to be ‘good members of society’. This phrase is Newman’s, though Newman would have approved only moderately of Sir Richard Livingstone’s conclusions, while agreeing with much of what he says *en route*. Sir Richard finds the education at present enjoyed (and derided) by undergraduates to be narrow, over-specialised and patchy. The scientists come out of it knowing nothing but ‘science’—and scientists form an increasing majority of those who get a ‘higher’ education at all. And those engaged in ‘humanities’ are generally no better off: the average emerge with minds both vague and one-sided, whilst the more brainy, or simply more diligent, emerge with much precise knowledge but still mentally lop-sided (and even more so). And all emerge with a culture that lacks depth. This at least is the tendency and the danger.

And what is depth of culture? The phrase, by the way, is this reviewer’s, expressing what Sir Richard means by the capacity to see ‘issues in a permanent setting as well as in their immediate context’, and by other phrases indicative of the aristotelian awareness of ‘things more divine than man’. Deep culture is philosophical and/or religious; and religion is the ‘study of what we should think of the meaning and ultimate nature of the universe’, and of ‘how . . . we should live’; philosophy treating of the same matters from ‘a more detached and general point of view’—a point of view, one may surmise, better suited to the modern university which professes to be extremely ‘detached’ in this respect. In any case our higher education fails, we read, because it leaves us ‘without a philosophy of life, however provisional’.

This is all most interesting, having regard to the lecturer’s position and experience. It is of course the view he has professed for some time. Were it adopted it would call for pretty considerable changes in the present system. Moreover, is there enough agreement among English academic philosophers upon which a school of philosophy for all might be founded? For in some sense that is what this lecture demands, even if it be allowed that Cambridge might appoint her own philosophers without interference from Oxford or Redbrick. Sir Richard Livingstone, no doubt, is especially concerned with the philosophy called ‘moral’, with ‘ends, with

human values'. More precisely, he seems to be chiefly concerned with the educative value of philosophical activity, its power to orientate desires, rather than with any absolute reality it may demonstrate. Yet surely he is convinced of some such reality; only *not* in the manner of one who has made the demonstration; for he professes implicitly a readiness to change all his philosophical 'opinions'. His conviction is instinctive—if that is the word—not rational. He has tasted high thoughts and found them sweet—and also good: good for the soul and good for society. Hence his keen desire to bring them to every undergraduate's palate.

As for the doubtful agreement of philosophers, Sir Richard would perhaps reply that a certain confidence in reason is fundamental to the university outlook everywhere and always; and that the sceptics, those valuable irritants, would be sufficiently balanced by those who are convinced of one or other philosophical truth in their various spheres—logic, metaphysics, ethics, etc. Besides, it seems to be assumed that the exposition in these schools of philosophy and religion would be predominantly historical in method, though ethical in purpose.

The appearance, at any rate, of a lecture such as this (and of kindred discussions here and in America, which may amount almost to a 'movement') must be of great interest to all who are interested (let us hope for the best motives) in the 'perennial philosophy'. And certainly from the Catholic side something like a 'movement', largely in academic circles, is discernible, which may be going quite a long way towards meeting the trend of thought and desire represented by Sir Richard Livingstone. For one thing, the historical research of the past thirty years offers us considerably more factual knowledge than the early neo-scholastics possessed of our own tradition, together with a better understanding of its range and variety. Again, it is encouraging to note signs of a fairly mature handling of philosophical problems by the laity (at least here and there)—by that public for whom, primarily, Fr Hawkins, for example, seems to have written his excellent little books. Altogether the outlook is not discouraging.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

ART AND CHILD PERSONALITY. By Ruth Dunnet. (Methuen; 10s. 6d.)

This book describes the experiences of an art teacher working at a camp school for evacuated boys. In spite of the difficulties caused by a constantly changing population, new batches of boys between the ages of 10 and 15 being admitted frequently and their stay varying from two days to four years, a great deal of permanent interest and value was achieved.

The most attractive feature of the account is the candour and sincerity of the teacher; she never hesitates to say what mistakes she made nor does she disguise her method of trial and error which