

REVIEWS

it is hardly worth while attempting to disprove its negative philosophic temper and, in this meaning, its "total Scepticism."
JOHN P. RABY.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND ACTION

GEMEINSCHAFT UND EINZELMENSCH. By Eberhard Welty, O.P.
(Anton Pustet, Salzburg—Leipzig; RM. 6.60, S. 11.55.)

It is often supposed that the principles of Thomistic philosophy are inadequate to cope with modern problems. As a consequence various attempts have been made to make Thomism more attractive to the modern mind; some Thomists went so far as to adopt the name of "Neo-Thomists" as if to indicate that they are especially anxious to avoid being out-of-date; others have endeavoured to clothe Scholastic thought with the technical language of modern philosophers and the results have not always been satisfactory. There remains a third remedy which, curiously enough, has been rather neglected, but has been applied by those who realized that a thorough understanding of fundamental thomistic principles is a necessary preliminary if they are to be applied to modern problems. Whenever this course has been followed Thomists have succeeded remarkably well both in translating philosophic thought into intelligible language and in providing satisfactory solutions. In his *Gemeinschaft und Einzelmensch* Fr. Welty gives us a proof of the success with which rigidly thomistic metaphysics can be applied to living problems, without having recourse to substitutes for a real understanding of fundamental principles.

Though well acquainted with modern social theories he makes no attempt to appear "modern"; he aims at giving us a profound analysis of the familiar metaphysical notions of "one, many, person, society, relation," and on them he constructs a social metaphysic which from its very nature has everlasting value since it is applicable to every society, small or large, ancient or modern.

The objection that these abstract principles do not bring us in contact with reality rests on a false notion of the process of abstraction. The fact that these principles are abstract does not deprive them of their reality; they are not an invention of the human mind or, as Eucken suggested, "ein Reich blutleeren Schatten und Schemen"; their source is reality itself. Thus instead of alienating thought from reality, the Thomist metaphysics is in touch with reality precisely because nothing can be understood unless and to the extent that it possesses reality: "Das Wahre ist das Sein: das Sein ist das Wahre."

Fr. Welty has adopted the division of social science suggested by Fr. Delos¹ and has restricted the domain of social philosophy

¹ Cf. article on *Social Science*, BLACKFRIARS, June, 1935, p. 285 sq.

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to the study of social being "das soziale Sein als solches." Thus he has produced a classic of modern thomistic thought and has given to the thomistic social philosophy all the prerogatives of the *Philosophia perennis*: its value is everlasting, it holds good for all societies and gives the norms that must always govern the relationship between the person (*Einzelmensch*) and society (*Gemeinschaft*) if peace and order are to be restored. The excellent bibliography and index will prove an invaluable guide for an exhaustive study of the fundamental principles of social philosophy. We are deeply grateful to the author for this brilliant example of genuine thomistic thought, and to the publishers who have given to this work that care and craftsmanship with which they have established their world-wide reputation.

BONAVENTURE PERQUIN, O.P.

LES DOMINICAINES DES PRISONS. By M.-H. Lelong, O.P. (Editions du Cerf, Juvisy; 15 frs.)

True religious vocations from among former inmates of women's prisons, even and especially from among those who have served long sentences—this is not a dream but an accomplished fact. The charity of Christ knows no bounds. It has borne fruit in a religious congregation (the Congregation of St. Mary Magdalen, termed "Bethany," of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic) wherein prostitutes and those convicted of the most sensational or merely sordid crimes are completely rehabilitated, and so fused with the community as to live and work absolutely at one and indistinguishable from others who have kept themselves "unspotted from this world" and sacrificed all for the redemption and rehabilitation of their sisters.

This work is quite unlike that of ordinary reformatories, "houses of correction," or refuges for penitents (excellent as these are, each in their own way); and there must be complete eradication of that almost unconscious condescension towards those who have once sinned, be it ever so notoriously; they shall not be treated *as if* they were our sisters, they *are* our sisters, wearing the same habit, living the same rule, genuine vocations. . . . And there is more point to this concept if we bear in mind first, the severity of the French penal code; and then, how it is practically impossible for released prisoners to be reinstated in society: too often all the circumstances seem to conspire towards a relapse into the wonted life of crime.

Père Lelong's admirable little book tells how this work was made possible, of its foundation by the saintly Père Lataste, O.P.; something too of the inner workings of this Congregation in its gigantic work of restoration, healing, expiation; of its necessarily complex organization; of the protracted quasi-postulancy and