

AN ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING. By John Locke.
Abridged and edited by R. Wilburn. (Everyman's Library 984.
Dent; 4s.)

This latest addition to Everyman's very handy and useful collection of philosophical texts will be welcome to the general student of philosophy. Of course, there are bound to be those who regret on principle any abridgment. They are probably right. One hopes therefore that this volume does not mark some new departure of policy in a collection one of whose main merits has hitherto been the presentation of entire texts (even so massive a work as Kant's *Critique* appeared in full). However, if ever a philosopher could profitably be cut, it is Locke in his *Essay*; he admits as much himself ('I will not deny . . . some parts of it might be contracted') and readers may well be glad to have the general run of the book disencumbered of some of its digressions. The present abridgment has two advantages over others. It cuts out individual sentences rather than whole sections (often sentences in which Locke simply explains his intentions or recalls earlier sections). And an ingenious device of setting section-numbers in italics shows at a glance when any section has suffered excisions, without introducing breaks into the text itself. The abridger is to be congratulated on the smoothness with which it reads.

C.R.

IQBAL: *His Art and Thought*. By Syed 'Abdul Wahid. (Shaik Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore; London: Luzac & Co.; 14s.)

The work and fame of Sir Muhammad Iqbal have not ceased to attract attention since his death in 1938. Not only was he an eminent statesman and leader of the Moslem League in India, a jurist of high order and a teacher of Arabic literature in European, and of Western philosophy in Indian universities, but he was also a poet of prodigious productivity in two Eastern languages and author of considerable prose works in English and Urdu. 'For similar examples of omnicompetence', says the author of the present study, 'one has to turn to Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Alberti and Tagore'. To those of the West, Iqbal is known as the most prominent Moslem intellectual of our time.

Omnivorous in his assimilation of contemporary Western thought, he seems to the present reviewer, both from the book under review and from his original and translated works available in English, to represent the crisis of a gifted Eastern mind in full contact with the Western intellectualism of the present time.

There can be no question of the extraordinary wealth of his gifts, for he appears to have been able to turn his hand to anything with distinction: nor that these gifts received stimulation from contact with the scientific and academic world in Europe. His *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* shows trains of thought suggested

by Bergson, Einstein, Russell, Whitehead and others, and it is in this work he throws out the suggestion that the spiritual synthesis of Islam is specially capable of giving coherence to the modern process of science towards the purification of its concepts and mastery over nature—indeed, to follow his argument further, towards a veritable apotheosis of activism.

That 'the birth of Islam is the birth of inductive intellect' (*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 131) is the kind of statement to win superficial assent but to bring afterthought. One wonders in fact how far Sir Muhammad Iqbal represents the integrity of his own Islamic tradition, and how far, as partisan of one school of thought in Islam, he is not flogging Western horses to win his own race. He says himself, speaking of Moslem people as a whole, that 'we are today passing through a period similar to that of the Protestant revolution in Europe'. In such a crisis one would have thought that a profoundly deepened grasp of traditional truth should take precedence over the grandiose scientific excursions suggested to a very fertile imagination by Western philosophers.

Throughout the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought* reference to the Quran is continuous, but what can be thought of a passage like the following? 'Personally I think the description of God as Light, in the revealed literature of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, must now be interpreted differently. The teaching of modern physics is that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and is the same for all observers whatever their own system of movement. Thus in the world of change light is the nearest approach to the Absolute. The metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must in view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God and not his Omnipresence, which easily lends itself to a pantheistic interpretation' (pp. 64-65.)

We see the same symptoms in 'Christian' Modernism, the theologian to all appearances completely at sea with his own scriptures and seeming to interpret them at will. Only it is not his own will. It is the 'will' of that profane secularism which drives the modern machine, and to which the Eastern mind unfortified by a deep interior appropriation of its own tradition comes as a lamb to the slaughter.

Syed 'Abdul Wahid in his enthusiastic appreciation draws attention to Professor Nicholson's remark that 'his [Iqbal's] poetry often reminds us of Shelley'. It does; but not only because 'in lyric poetry he is amongst the greatest in the world'. There are other points of similarity, and not least a diffuse romanticism and an anti-traditional reaction against that foundation-stone of the whole edifice of spiritual life, the renunciation of the ego: though it is true the precise sense of this reaction in Iqbal is hardly so sloppy as the English nineteenth century. It is paradoxical and hard as in Nietzsche.

¶Quotations are from *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, by Sir Muhammad Iqbal: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1944 (Reprint).

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