

AESTHETICS. By Edward Bullough. Edited with an Introduction by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson. (Bowes and Bowes; 30s.)

L'ESTHETIQUE DE JACQUES MARITAIN. By Vagn Lundgaard Simonsen. (Munksgaard, Copenhagen; dan. kr. 14.)

This review will be mostly concerned with Miss Wilkinson's edition of the late Edward Bullough's writings on aesthetics. The other work, an interesting essay by a Danish philosopher (but written in French) on the aesthetics of M. Maritain, has less importance for readers in this country. To compare Bullough's ideas on this subject with Maritain's—who has made, I suppose, the chief Thomist contribution to the philosophy of art—could be a very fruitful undertaking. But an extended study would be called for such as I cannot provide here.

When I (if the personal note be allowed) went to Cambridge in 1930, Edward Bullough (1880-1934) was easily the outstanding Catholic in the University. This position was due to his intellectual distinction in the first place, but it was almost forced on everyone's attention by the driving fervour and energy with which he served Catholic interests in everyday academic life. Indeed, when one considers—as now, thanks to Miss Wilkinson, one conveniently can—the speculative capacity of Bullough's mind, and the extremely rich culture that nourished it, one cannot help regretting that practical affairs absorbed him so much in the later years of his too short life. But he was the kind of man whom needs and obstacles only stimulate to fresh achievement. He had a greatness in him that would not be confined by conventional divisions of labour; intellectual labour above all. Cambridge is said to be a University of specialists, and so, I suppose, it is; but Bullough, partly by accidents of birth and education (which made him culturally cosmopolitan from the start) and partly by sheer intellectual vitality, achieved a specialist's competence in at least two broad fields, quite apart from important practical activities as educator and organizer both before and after his reception into the Church. And 'two fields' is an understatement, considering that in one of these, the study and teaching of modern languages, Bullough's range was such that he taught French, German and Russian in the University and ended as its Professor of Italian; that he knew Spanish and some Chinese. But it was in the field of aesthetics—'my intellectual hobby', he modestly called it—that his most enduring work was done.

By 'aesthetics' Bullough did not mean an attempt to define beauty as such. He left that to the metaphysicians, and a little dubiously, so far as the statements printed in this volume go; the chief item of which is a course of lectures given at Cambridge in 1907, an amazingly mature work for a man of twenty-seven, but one also that leaves—and is clearly meant to leave—the reader still, in a sense, unsatisfied. For

Bullough had not yet found a metaphysic that satisfied him; perhaps he had not yet seriously looked for one. His mind had moved from a wide experience of art in various media to experimental psychology, and thence to the frontiers of philosophy. Through experience and introspection he had become sure that there *was* a distinctively aesthetic attitude or 'mode of consciousness'; but, given what Miss Wilkinson calls his 'care for distinctions' and the 'organizing temper of his mind'—his philosophical bent, in short—he had perforce to find some general definition of this attitude, of its proper objects and scope, as distinct from the scope and objects of what he called the practical, the scientific and the ethical modes of consciousness. And this early course of lectures records his vigorous and still largely convincing analytical enquiry in view of that definition. The other two items in this book—itsself only a selection from Bullough's not very large printed output—are the brilliant essay, already well-known to aestheticians, 'Physical Distance as a Factor in Art and Aesthetics' (first printed in the *British Journal of Psychology*, V, 1912) and 'Mind and Medium in Art', a pithy 'Contribution' to a philosophical Congress held at Oxford in 1920. It may be noted that in this last paper Bullough remarks, *à propos* of Croce, 'I feel doubt about the four-fold division of the activities of the spirit'; for in the 1907 lectures his own effort to identify and define aesthetic activity as such had seemed to end in a four-fold classification of modes of consciousness very similar to Croce's. One would like to know more of the growth of his mind between 1907 and 1920, by which date he was already, presumably, not far from the Catholic Church. The tentative last pages of the 1907 lectures, where Bullough, his critical analysis now completed, looks towards 'the great Sphinx Metaphysics', suggest that at that time he was more or less a pantheist. But he had an intellectual probity, a caution, a 'care for distinctions' that kept him from striking premature metaphysical attitudes. I do not know how far Bullough ever counted himself a Thomist, even after becoming a Dominican Tertiary; but a most interesting study remains to be written on his approach to the 'principle . . . integrating the various modes (of consciousness) . . . outside and above them all', which he eventually found in God (or, as Miss Wilkinson prefers to say, 'religion').

A recent writer in *The Cambridge Review* finds fault with Bullough's thought on what appear to be two grounds: that it divides 'the realm of the aesthetic' too sharply from morality and then 'denigrates' the latter, and that it similarly separates aesthetics from criticism (of art and literature) so far as to make the aesthetic object, the 'beautiful', apprehensible 'absolutely', in and by itself, without any prior critical comparison and discrimination from other things. These apparent

depreciations of morality and of criticism draw a sharp protest from the reviewer, whose critical principles derive, it is clear, largely from Dr Leavis. And it is so far a thoroughly commendable protest as it draws attention to a certain overweening aestheticism in Bullough's lectures, which calls, at least, for a good deal of further clarification—such as Bullough himself in part provided in an essay which, it is to be hoped, may be reprinted in a second volume of his writings ('The Relation of Literature and the Arts', in *Modern Languages*, XIV, 1933). But it would be regrettable if the word went round that Bullough has nothing of value to teach the young today. In the first decade of this century, himself not yet thirty, he was fighting to get aesthetics recognized as a discipline in its own right, distinct from metaphysics (as he then understood this) and distinct from, though drawing upon, psychology. In the heat of battle he sometimes exaggerated. He should be valued for the truths he discerned and forcibly stated. As Miss Wilkinson observes, a reader who sets out to refute Bullough with anything like Bullough's own thoroughness will, at the end, 'have learned a great deal about aesthetic thinking, and indeed about thinking in general'. She herself contrasts, briefly but suggestively, Bullough's psychological approach, his placing the unifying principle of aesthetics in 'the receiving subject' and not in some objective Beauty, with the contemporary American philosopher, Susanne K. Langer's impressive attempt to turn the tables and find that principle in the 'art object as something in its own right, with properties independent of our . . . reactions, which command our reactions'. If this contrast is not to be left as a mere difference of 'points of view', there is needed, it seems to me, (a) a clarification of Bullough's somewhat confused statement (pp. 50–53) of the role of *criticism* in preparing the way for aesthetic contemplation, and (b) an explanation, such as he never really attempted to give, of what it is, ontologically—in terms of the place of the human soul in the structure of reality—that such contemplation bears upon. The latter question is perhaps posed by Miss Wilkinson when she says that Bullough's theory of art as 'formation (*Gestaltung*) of feeling before the eye of the mind, sufficiently removed to be contemplated . . . positively begs for a theory of mind which accepts art as a means to *knowledge* and tells us what it makes *known*' (my italics). And that, I suggest, leads us back to M. Maritain who has been repeatedly concerned with the formulation of precisely such a theory.

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THE PENGUIN BOOK OF ITALIAN VERSE. Introduced and edited by George R. Kay. (Penguin Books; 5s.)

There will be different opinions about this anthology, but no one will find it conventionally dull. It is a decidedly personal selection and