

REVIEWS

MODERN THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY. Vol. II, *Metaphysics*. By R. P. Phillips, D.D. (Burns Oates; 9/-.)

The first volume of Dr. Phillips's summary of Thomistic Philosophy was received with the enthusiasm it deserved and was recognized as a valuable addition to the works already published in English on the same subject. We offer no little praise to the second volume, therefore, when we hail it as a worthy successor to and completion of the first. It is possible that some might have cavilled at the introduction into the title of the qualification "modern," on the grounds that Thomistic philosophy is *philosophia perennis*. But if the reason for this was not abundantly clear in the first volume, it is at any rate unmistakable in the present one, and it is marked especially by the comprehensive enquiry (covering well over a third of the four hundred pages) into the capability of the mind to know being and the ontological value of human knowledge. Though St. Thomas did investigate the bases of knowledge, and even critically, he did not institute a separate, systematic epistemological enquiry. There was, indeed, no need for him to do so, for it was not until Descartes that *Thought* and *Being* were set apart from, and in opposition to, one another; before his time their ontological association was "naïvely" taken for granted. But once they were divided by universal doubt, the Problem of Knowledge became a vital necessity; and therefore all later Thomist philosophers must investigate it professedly. Many of them, however, treat of it largely as a part of Logic, but Dr. Phillips disagrees with this emphatically—and we agree with him just as emphatically. He maintains that Epistemology and (or) Criteriology must now constitute the first introductory part of *Metaphysics*, and he shows himself both modern and Thomistic in his own convincing treatment of the question; he has effectively applied the "common-sense" philosophical principles of St. Thomas to the modern and often erratic resolutions of the Problem of Knowledge.

"Having established the possibility of obtaining true knowledge of real extra-mental being," the author proceeds to examine the object-matter of this knowledge in its most general form, being in general. Under the heading of *General Metaphysics* he treats succinctly, but always with reference to modern theories and criticisms, the classical theses of Thomist Ontology. This section calls for hard thinking, but Dr. Phillips has made a notable attempt to aid the student in his ascent "into the stratosphere of knowledge" by the comparative simplicity of language

REVIEWS

and the copious use of practical examples. There are, however, certain subsidiary points in this section upon which not all Thomists will agree with him. For example, his resolution of the differences between St. Thomas and Scotus, on the analogy or univocacy of being, is open to question. He suggests that "the 'being' of which Scotus is speaking of is not that being in general arrived at by abstracting the essence of sensible things, which, according to St. Thomas, is the proper object of the human intellect, but merely the very act of *existing* apart from any further determination. Existence thus considered entirely in itself is, no doubt, all one and indifferentiated." I doubt whether many Thomists would agree that "being" even in this latter sense of *esse* is univocal with respect to God and creatures.

The third section is devoted to *Natural Theology* and it is here that one is most conscious of the summary character of the work; and though this was to be expected, yet, in such a professedly metaphysical context, one might have the right to expect a fuller development of points immediately pertinent to the main issue. We have in mind such points as the following: (1) the divine immobility, proved in the *First Way*, which is the basis of all our knowledge of God, both negative and analogical; (2) the convertibility of the terms *esse* and *perfectio*, a fundamental notion in Thomism, which is essential to the understanding of the *Fourth Way* and clarifies the enquiry into the divine attributes; (3) the metaphysical doctrine of the likeness between cause and effect, so primary in the Theodicy of St. Thomas, which provides the basic principle of the investigation into the existence and nature of God. Further, we note with regret the author's pragmatic conclusion to his discussion of the problem of God's knowledge of free future contingents. Having outlined the difference between the Thomists and Molinists on this point, he concludes: "Thus both solutions are professedly incomplete, and it seems that they appeal to different types of mind, the Thomist opinion seeming better to those who are strongly convinced of the power of the reason to lead us on the way to truth, while the contrary view seems preferable to those who consider that we should take our stand on the fact of human freedom, and so are more influenced by practical than theoretical considerations. Thus the choice of one or other solution is a free choice: *qualis unusquisque est talis finis videtur ei.*" This recognition of the right of a "practical" norm to replace "the power of reason" in the search for metaphysical truth may be modern but it is not Thomistic. But this is not, happily, symptomatic of the book as a whole, and we are able to recommend the latter as a valuable introduction to Thomistic Philosophy in its modern setting.

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