

BLACKFRIARS

THE INTELLECTUALISM OF ST. THOMAS. Translated with a Foreword by Fr. James E. O'Mahony, O.M.Cap., M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6.)

Even those by whom Père Rousselot's *L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas* must be regarded rather as "la réinterprétation des données" than "leur exacts et sobre exposition" will welcome its appearance in English at the hands of so sympathetic a translator as Fr. James O'Mahony. The publishers rightly claim for this essay historic interest; original in itself to a degree, it has been the occasion of much counter-criticism and concentration upon the doctrine with which it deals. For this reason it is the more to be regretted that the present translation is not accompanied by the late Père Léonce de Grandmaison's introductory note on Pierre Rousselot which prefixed the second French edition; it forms at once a judicious appreciation of its gifted author, who met with such premature death in the great war, and an indication of the value to be set upon his work.

It would have been more gratifying to dwell here upon "la façon vraiment grande et humaine dont le P. Rousselot comprit saint Thomas." But, in view of the extremely categorical form of entitling the book, a word of qualification will perhaps be more in place. The English reader who has approached St. Thomas under the guidance, let us say, of M. Maritain, being confronted with Père Rousselot's apparently exhaustive knowledge of the texts, is likely to be not a little embarrassed by a number of his conclusions. He will learn, for example, that "ultimate intelligibility and formal intellectual knowledge do not seem to have been formally subordinated one to the other by St. Thomas"; that "the Beatific Vision . . . is . . . , according to St. Thomas, the only example of created knowledge other than that contained in intuitions of self which directly . . . grasps and possesses being as such"; that "St. Thomas may be said to have introduced into the depths of things a certain nominalism"; and many further passages might be quoted which would appear to the veriest novice in Thomism as almost equally paradoxical.

In explanation it must be pointed out that Père Rousselot's recognized failure to grasp completely the notion of analogy—and consequently his inadequate apprehension of the closely-allied Thomist, as opposed to Suarezian, concept of the obediential potency—together with his personal confession (in correspondence) of "exaggerated irrealism" and general dissatisfaction with his own account of conceptual knowledge in the very work under review, go a long way towards modifying the force of his particular thesis. With such limitations as these, notwithstanding passages of penetrating insight, it was hardly to be expected that there could emerge an exposition of Thomist intellectualism which

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would be generally acceptable among those best qualified to judge. His notion of the concept, of the process of abstraction, of the nature of the universal appear to be peculiarly his own; and his depreciation of the natural power of human intelligence, while at the same time maintaining it to be "the faculty of the divine," has against it the whole weight of Thomist tradition, based, it would not be difficult to show, on the text of St. Thomas himself.

Fr. James's translation reads like an original piece of English. If he at times allows himself considerable liberty he is perhaps nowhere unjust to his author; for Père Rousselot, it is evident, did not feel himself bound to any great strictness of terminology, and his translator may surely claim a similar exemption. "A quelle distance sommes-nous du littéralisme, du formalisme, du verbalisme des glossateurs?" For Rousselot the doctrine of St. Thomas was "a kind of 'panaestheticism.'" It was then a not unhappy slip of the pen which caused the words "Toute la noétique de S. Thomas" to be rendered as "The whole poetic system of Aquinas." The Angel of the Schools makes his appeal to the sensibility of the poet and man of letters as well as to the intelligence of the theologian and philosopher.

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RENE DESCARTES, LETTRES SUR LA MORALE. Texte présenté, revu et annoté par Jacques Chevalier. (Boivin, Paris; 30 frs.)
RECHERCHES PHILOSOPHIQUES, IV, 1934-1935. (Boivin, Paris; 65 frs.)

Thanks are due from students of philosophy to Boivin et Cie for the sources they are making easily accessible. Perhaps few of us have had the opportunity before to see these letters of Descartes, or to judge of the wisdom that ripened upon the tree of his philosophy; as M. Chevalier suggests in an admirably sympathetic introduction, it might never have been plucked had not the philosopher come into contact with Elizabeth of Bohemia and Christina of Sweden.

Besides the introduction, M. Chevalier gives a short account of the text, that of Adam and Tannery's *Œuvres* being usually followed after comparing the other texts with the extant manuscript copies of the letters. The correspondence with Princess Elizabeth is given first, followed by what may be considered as the correspondence with the Queen of Sweden, though it consists largely of letters to and from the French diplomat Chanut. This second group of letters is incomplete, but is supplemented by accounts of the subject-matter of the missing letters, based on manuscript notes. There are also valuable explanatory and biographical notes by M. Chevalier at the end, and the spelling of the letters has been brought up to date.

Recherches Philosophiques might seem at first sight expensive,