

## OTHER MEN'S THOUGHT

HISTORIANS of philosophy have been notoriously unsuccessful in the past, either through hanging their own thoughts on other men's pegs or through simply giving a list of the pegs; of the former error the supreme example may for long be Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, whilst the second failing is one which Laird found difficult to avoid within the limited space of his Home University volume on *Recent Philosophy*. It is all the more pleasing, then, to find that Fr Bochenski has written a history of European philosophy during the present century which presents the main lines of modern philosophers neatly and lucidly, yet makes it quite clear that the question of truth is one which the philosopher, whatever his capacity, may not neglect, and he himself unobtrusively indicates the direction in which solutions of the difficulties are to be sought.<sup>1</sup> He proves himself such a stimulating guide to the thought of our own day that we can whole-heartedly express the hope of seeing the work translated into English in the near future.

The characteristic notes of the book are neatness and precision. In his short preface Fr Bochenski points out with great modesty the shortcomings which are scarcely to be avoided in giving an account of other men's thought, though his modesty does not prevent him from insisting that it is only a mark of respect towards another philosopher to offer criticisms of his work. To have expressed an essential truth so briefly is typical of the book. The short note on the principles of selection goes on to explain that only the fundamental basis of each system of thought can come within his limited scope but gives us the promise of a second volume which will deal with specialized problems of sociology, aesthetics, religion, etc.; there is some doubt left in the reader's mind as to whether a volume on mathematical logic is also promised. Thus after clearing a way through we come to the heart of the matter with chapters devoted to each school, subdivisions of every chapter being given to the different members of the school, whilst the space granted to individual philosophers has the great merit of describing the problems which seem most important to them, not those which Fr Bochenski thinks would have been most profitable. At the end of the book, besides the very full bibliography and index, there is an interesting chronological table with the dates of the main Philosophical Congresses and of the main publications. How many of us, one wonders, had previously noted that Bergson's *Deux Sources*, Gilson's *Esprit de*

1. I. M. Bochenski, *Europäische Philosophie der Gegenwart*. (Sammlung Daep. Band 50; Francke, Berne.)

*la philosophie medievale*, Jasper's *Philosophie* and Maritain's *Dégres du Savoir*, all appeared in the same year?

Possibly the best way to suggest the richness of observation to be found in the text is by simply quoting odd passages from it. Of the Neo-Positivists he says, 'Reichenbach, formerly one of its leaders, has rightly pointed out that the attitude of the school is a specifically religious one, even sectarian'; of Husserl, 'His works contain such a wealth of subtle and penetrating analysis that one may well question whether this range of knowledge has been adequately appreciated and made use of as yet. It appears as though his works will come to be regarded as classical sources for future philosophy.' He indicates a common mistake about the Thomist teaching on substance by writing, 'that this teaching in no way treats substance as an inert subject of change, but rather as an in-itself-being being (*in-sich-seiendes sein*), a being in the fullest sense, in opposition to which accidents are simply determinations whose being is being-in-another (*In-andern-sein*)'. The measure of his fairness will be gathered when we say that there is an outline of that most exasperating and turgid system, Dialectical Materialism; in it he points out that, whatever anyone else may say, the Marxists claim not to be 'determinists', and quotes the grounds of their claim.

There are very many questions which the book will raise in the minds of Catholic readers and of these we select three at random. In the first place, it is merely the order of the book, concluding as it does with a sketch of Thomism, that leads us to see Thomism as the system within which most of the difficulties experienced by other philosophers can be solved? Fr Bochenski is clearly of the opinion that there is both a logical as well as a historical necessity in the movement of contemporary philosophers towards a fully Thomist concentration upon being; it is many years now since Maritain pointed out that Bergson was calling to St Thomas as from deep to deep, and now, similarly, we find Fr Bochenski's deft pen carefully searching out the deficiencies of Hartmann's Ontology or suggesting the need in Scheler for a more firmly-grounded metaphysic; one would like to know whether the pointers were so obvious to non-Catholics. Secondly, there is surely a lesson in this work for those of us who are inclined to become impatient with Thomism of the strict observance (*Thomismus im strengen Sinne des Wortes*), when we are able to draw the contrast between the unhurried but sure grappling with fundamentals so characteristic of this school and the profitless, almost desperate desire for new approaches which we find outside it. Some years ago Warner Brock wrote, 'It is the peculiarity and the danger of the phenomenological method that the choice of the problems rests entirely with the individual investigator', and the fact that Husserl's final position was so

close to neo-Kantianism might serve to illustrate how the 'New Look' is as likely to last in philosophy as in skirts. There are some unchanging questions. Let us recognise them. Finally, there is just one reference to Edith Stein which makes us anxious to know more about this distinguished pupil of Husserl's. Jewish by race, in religion Sister Teresa Benedicta a Sancta Cruce, she was an expert on St Thomas and St John of the Cross, and she was caught up in the great holocaust of Nazi persecution. The concentration in her person of so much that is noblest in our age demands a wider public than can be reached by odd articles in *Thought* or *The Thomist*—may she rest in peace.

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## NIETZSCHE, JASPERS AND CHRISTIANITY

ONE of the first books published by authority of the British Military Government in Germany was *Nietzsche and Christianity* by Karl Jaspers.<sup>1</sup> This was the first of a number of post-war publications through which Professor Jaspers became practically the spokesman of academic Germany. He had been one of the few outstanding university professors who, though not directly discriminated for racial, religious or political reasons, had never for a moment associated themselves with National Socialism. Apart from church dignitaries and scientific technicians, he was the first German intellectual to be invited after the war for lectures abroad. When the first German university was re-opened by the Allied Military Authorities at Heidelberg, he was not only restored to his professorship but appointed Rector. Fifteen years after the publication of his chief work, Jaspers has become perhaps the most influential figure in the intellectual life of Central and Western Europe. In Switzerland, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, England and France, his Existentialism is discussed even by those who used to take but little interest in philosophical pursuits.

In these countries, it is difficult to obtain genuine information on Jaspers's philosophy. Only one small book of his has been translated into English.

1. *Nietzsche und das Christentum*. Verlag der Buecherstube Fritz Seifert, Hameln 1946. See my articles 'Das neue Denken und das neue Glauben' in *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche*, xvii (1936), p. 30-50, 'The measure of Man', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, viii (1946), p. 332 and 'Simplicius Simplicissimus's British associations' in *Modern Language Review*, xl (1945), p. 37.