

BLACKFRIARS

matter and form; psychic material and creative moulding; appearance and reality (or reality and surreality); the pairs are parallel; and the re-affirmation with all great art of the second term in the last pair is invalidated, as a gospel, by the contradictorily exclusive affirmation of the first in the others.

In practice, the surrealist product is often interesting, sometimes beautiful. There is much in *Thorns of Thunder* to make the unattuned reader despair; there is much to divert in the Lautréamont manner; there are flashes that repay long search. Beckett, Devlin, Gascoyne, Jolas, Man Ray, Reavey, Ruthven Todd translate.
GERALD VANN, O.P.

LE PHENOMENE DE L'ART. By Georges Mottier. (Boivin et Cie, Paris; 20 frs.)

"Is it not possible that the God who has disappeared out of the Heavens will one day return to us out of the earth?" Perhaps it is too dramatic to see that return heralded in this treatise of M. Mottier. At any rate, throughout his book he reveals a sense of reality that takes him beyond the limitations of his background and shows him to have affinity with ways of thought that have long since ceased to be understood in the circles in which he moves.

He sets out to write a philosophy of art. In setting his stage he goes no farther back than Kant, which is in itself discouraging. "After Kant aestheticians swarmed." He himself says: ". . . car aucune autre doctrine n'a contribué plus que la sienne de nos idées modernes sur l'art et sur la beauté." All the first half of the book is devoted to an exposition of the aesthetic doctrines of the German idealists and of certain French philosophers in the same tradition.

With this background M. Mottier, in the more interesting second half, gives his own opinion. He defines art as: "Le produit d'une faculté qui oeuvre la réalité et l'enferme dans des symboles où elle devient pour l'esprit un objet de vision." And, as one would expect, although not identifying himself with any of the opinions which he quotes, he gives to the definition a thorough idealistic interpretation. The things known by the mind are not objectively real (at times objective reality seems to mean no more for him than the world of sensible phenomena) but are constructed by the mind on a foundation of sense data, the only extra-mental element: "Le monde vu par Dieu n'est pas plus réel que le monde vu par moi; s'il est différent, c'est que les consciences sont différentes: la réalité est irréductiblement relative à une conscience." "Le monde réel. . . . Qu'est-il, en effet? Il consiste en un mer d'impressions de toute nature (olfactives, tactiles, auditives, visuelles, affectives, etc.)."

REVIEWS

He insists that art is a creative activity, and in so doing contrasts his opinion with that of Schopenhauer and Bergson. The point he makes is important, but the contrast is unnecessary and possibly unjust, since they are not talking of the same thing, at least not in the same language. The "donnés immediates" and the "direct vision" of Bergson do not necessarily exclude from artistic production the idea of creation. It is, however, his anxiety to speak of art in terms of creation that reveals his dissatisfaction with the escapism of purely idealistic conceptions and manifests the desire for his thought to be real and to be governed by experience. This realism shows itself frequently throughout the book. On page 178 he adequately distinguishes between rational and intuitive knowledge: page 186, the True suddenly becomes for him objective and a transcendental, and he distinguishes between logical and ontological truth, etc., all of which notions are beyond his original terms of reference.

It is, however, difficult to see what permanent purpose the book will serve. It will be clear from what has been said that under the surface at least, it is confused and inconsistent. The uninformed enquirer will find it difficult to keep track of his thought, and to those not in danger of falling foul of what must be considered false, his solutions will appear flimsy and insufficient, and they do not advance what has been stated more clearly and competently elsewhere. Its value lies in the apparently spontaneous break from his traditions, a break that says much for his sincerity and insight. MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

MISCELLANEOUS

CATHOLICISM IN ENGLAND 1535-1935. Portrait of a Minority: its Culture and Tradition. By David Mathew, Litt.D., M.A., F.S.A. With Appendices on the English Dominicans, by Gervase Mathew, O.P.; the English Benedictines, by Adrian Morey, O.S.B.; the Religious Orders of Women, by M. Mary Paul, S.H.C.J. (Longmans; 9/-.)

This book will have a lasting place beside the volumes of the Catholic Record Society and of Bishop Ward, all those blue-bound books that form the English Catholic historical section of a library. Half the excuse for a review six months late; the other half is the reviewer's paralysis: how indicate the richness of fact, allusion, hint, the nice range of generalization, without quotation after quotation? Surely the author will miss this or that, the Abbé Strickland, the Highland regiments, the elder Brunel; but no, the list is astonishingly complete; though Mr. Bryant has shown us a more interesting Cabal Clifford than these pages would suggest and for flecks there are a misprinted date (page 81), *Ne Temere*