

PHILOSOPHIE DE LA RELIGION. Paul Ortegat, S.J.. (Museum Lessianum—Section Philosophique No. 20.) (L'Édition Universelle, Brussels; B.frs. 45.)

P. Ortegat, S.J., has traced the fluctuations of the philosophy of religion through many channels with intent to show the necessity of a realist view of God and man as Persons, if they are to communicate. Both the many refutations and the positive doctrine as put forward depend largely on two positions. Firstly, the author maintains that all exercise of thought and will, being affected with the modality of absoluteness, necessarily involves a relation to the Absolute, so that religion, in the provisionally accepted sense of "a sense of the absolute" is a necessary ingredient of human life, of which no disclaimers can get rid. But in an argument of which the terms are certainly not lacking in mystery, it never becomes clear what this quality of absoluteness is, nor, as a consequence, how one can infer from it to the Absolute. Sometimes it seems no more than self-identity; sometimes it appears that this might be a presentation of the Augustinian proof of the existence of God from eternal truths. If the latter is the case, the method is both bewildering and misleading.

The second position to be noticed concerns the relation of the intellect and will, part of the central theme. To say that without the will there is no objective knowledge (p. 246), and that knowledge is only impregnated with finality and a sense of value because the mind holds communion with the will through the personal subject (p. 181), is to make assent not primarily rational but volitional and to deny the intellect's own intrinsic orientation to being. Taken in conjunction with this, the repeated insistence on essence and existence as the objects respectively of the intellect and the will, seems to presuppose that thought is not a faculty of the real. This appears clearly where the judgment is described as a "supreme synthesis of existence and the possible, of value and logic, a co-ordination of the adequate object of thought and the adequate object of the will" (p. 180). This hardly seems the way to vindicate to oneself the title of realist, as P. Ortegat is desirous of doing.

The impression that the determinations of thought are somehow constituted rather by their goodness than their truth is contradicted indeed in the refutation of Pragmatism where an intellectual instead of a practical criterion of truth is required. But in spite of the many points of interest in the exposition of various philosophical systems and their refutation, too much of the book is vitiated by this second point we have discussed and the inconsistencies consequent on it, as well as by an obscurity which is not to be excused by the vigorous style.

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