

But the rest is disappointing. Professor Vincent is concerned to state the 'actual interest' of the Divine Comedy, and he finds this in a rather vaguely conceived ethico-political doctrine which he is at pains to distinguish from the poetry 'as art for its own sake' and from the 'theology' of the poem. This doctrine, he thinks, is what Dante was chiefly concerned to convey to the ordinary unlearned *lettor* for whom he wrote and what a similar reader can get from him today. The emphasis on the ordinary reader is valid; the Dantean idea of art is well stated; the tough scientific realism of the poet's vision is pointed out, as well as his strong emphasis on human individuality, an emphasis rightly linked with the part played by free will in Dante's moral theory. Yet I cannot feel that Professor Vincent has entered far enough into Dante's mind, has learnt to give Dante's terms anything like the full meaning they bear in his work. Impossible to demonstrate this here; enough to say that Dante's notions of truth and virtue, drawn from the *philosophia perennis*, are, as he conceives them, in vital continuity with that philosophy, just as his glorious language is vitally continuous with his glorious intelligence. Once this is realised it seems almost meaningless to speak of 'truth' as 'still shining through the discarded scaffolding of his logic', of 'virtue' as 'still intact behind his scholasticism'. Perhaps the trouble with this, as with so many interpretations of Dante, is that it pays too little attention to what he thought about God. It is easy to say that 'The Divine Comedy . . . is the record of Dante's understanding of man'; the wiser reader will pay particular attention to his (less obvious) statements about God.

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POLITICAL ETHICS

STATES AND MORALS. By T. D. Weldon (John Murray; 9s.)

ELECTION AND REPRESENTATION. By James Hogan. (Cork University Press; 15s.)

Mr T. D. Weldon's book contains a useful review of the different types of states to be found among civilized human beings. He divides these states into the organic and the machine state, the former being, roughly speaking, totalitarian in principle, the latter democratic. This nomenclature is a little startling, but as Mr Weldon has fully explained his use of these terms, one cannot quarrel with him for that. His analysis of the relations between community and individual in the two types of state is excellent and he is mainly concerned with elucidating the moral basis of this problem. But when he begins to speak of morals he is in immediate trouble, for he is unable to find any valid definition of human nature or any metaphysical basis for morals. In order to simplify his thesis he denies the name of morals to ordinary human intercourse and confines it almost exclusively to the rights and wrongs of a man's relationship to his state. Having absolved himself from the necessity of finding a system of morals which will cover all the actions of a man's life, and after making a brief reference to the 'As If' theory of moral behaviour, he proceeds

to declare that political morality, that is, real morality, depends upon the character of the state in which a man finds himself. There can therefore be no universal norm of morality *unless there is a world-state.*

How has Mr Weldon come to evolve such an astonishing doctrine? It is explained in his last paragraph when, after treating of the relations between Soviet Russia and the western world, he says this doctrine 'prevents me from seeing any sense in embarking on ideological wars (or, presumably, missionary enterprise) in order to improve the morals of people in whose moral welfare I am not greatly interested'. The motive for evolving his wretched doctrines is therefore clear: he does not wish to interfere with Russian political morality because Russia frightens him, and he has evolved a theory for ignoring the problem, forgetting that, however uninterested he may say he is in Russian morality, the Russians are by no means uninterested in his.

Professor Hogan's book is horribly bound and printed and one is tempted to refer, perhaps unfairly, to his remarks on craftsmanship on page 234. Nor is its arrangement impeccable, for it is really a series of essays on allied political subjects, such as Proportional Representation and the political philosophy of Burke, and this material might have been worked into a more homogeneous form. On the other hand, while Professor Hogan reviews a number of practical points in the mechanics of representative government, a task which he performs with admirable commonsense and fine judgment, one is continuously aware that he accepts an objective morality and a clear view of the basic human definition, stemming from a reasonable natural order sanctioned, enlarged and enriched by a supernatural order. While he is mainly concerned with the respective merits of majority and proportional representation, (coming down fairly heavily in favour of the former), he is all the time aware, as Mr Weldon in his orderly treatise is not, that the Church in supporting strong government does not deny fundamental individual rights, whatever may be the complexion of the state, that human rights imply human duties, and that political problems are difficult to solve not because political morality is purely empirical but because politics, being a subdivision of morality, it is immersed in concrete problems where principles are indeed hard to apply. Professor Hogan is in no way tempted to deny the principles because the applications are difficult, or to make an unreal division between our acts as private individuals and as citizens, and in this way, throughout his informative and lucid treatise, he provides an antidote to the deleterious and defeatist doctrines of Mr Weldon.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

DEMOCRACY: SHOULD IT SURVIVE? A Series of Essays by sixteen contributors. (Dennis Dobson; 7s. 6d.)

This volume of essays is by sixteen distinguished writers, differing in nationality and profession, but all concerned with the supreme vital importance to our time of the subject they discuss—the nature