

REVIEWS

published at 3/6 by Sheed and Ward. BLACKFRIARS readers will now have an opportunity of possessing two extremely valuable books at small cost. But it would be unfair not to warn those who buy their literature light-heartedly, that they will be disappointed if they imagine that these works are easy to read and contain nothing more than a series of bright, snappy refutations of those modern heresies that concern both the married and unmarried Catholic; he will not. Instead, he will find that Professor von Hildebrand has written a brilliant analysis of purity from every aspect, so deep, so acute that (if I know my general reader) he will not want to tackle more than fifteen or twenty pages at a time, yet he will not be content until he has finished the book and mastered its arguments.

I feel that Dr. de Guchteneere's book falls between two stools. It is brilliant, but to the lay mind the chapters on medical evidence are too technical and to the medical, too scrappy. I know that I shall be charged with belittling the reader's intelligence, but let him raise the point with his G.P. (preferably a non-Catholic) and he will very quickly realise both his and, I may add, the doctor's limitations. For the rest I have nothing but praise and can only urge those who are frightened by its apparent 'highbrowness' not to be deterred. It is worth reading, supremely well worth reading. Time and again I have been told by medical men that it is the most intelligent work on the subject from the Catholic point of view, and not many have attempted to meet the arguments seriously.

Would it be possible to reproduce in more simple language the substance of these two books so that they may be bought, read and enjoyed by the great mass of people who dislike a paper-covered tract and are insufficiently equipped to appreciate the intricate, and to them bewildering, brilliance of these works. The need is a crying one. One last word, let them be bound in cloth, this is most important, and let them have strong, dignified jackets.

E.R.

GUIDE TO MODERN THOUGHT. By C. E. M. Joad. (Faber & Faber; pp. 268; 6/-.)

Mr. Joad's description of recent discoveries and current theories in psychology, physics and biology, should make clear to the 'ordinary intelligent reader' how these come to exert an influence upon 'contemporary thought.'

With a minimum of technical terminology and a minimum of criticism he indicates the materialistic and mechanistic implications of Behaviourism, its success in explaining the living organism as a machine without recourse to the conception of mind;

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the idealist tendency of modern physics, regarding matter as mysterious, to define it as what mind knows, and to consider it as a mere 'aspect or a projection of a mind's activity'; the growing demand of biology for a non-mechanistic explanation of the purposive drive of evolution towards higher forms of life; the disbelief in free-will and 'belittlement of reason' arising from psycho-analytic views of instinct.

It is quite clearly shown how these views and tendencies could determine contemporary answers to the traditional questions with which philosophers have wrestled. But the Thought to which this is a Guide is perhaps principally that of scientists doing their own philosophising and of novelists, rather than that of professional philosophers.

It seems scarcely fair to criticise Mr. Joad's own views as presented in a popular work, but his dualism of matter and a sort of Bergsonian life-force is too suggestive of Aristotle not to provoke unfavourable comparison with a theory which would make the potentiality of matter the only limit to the march of evolution, and life an entelechy in continuity with lower entelechies.

A poor index is perhaps the worst feature of this able and fascinating popular exposition.

Q.J.

DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS. By Harold Laski. (Allen & Unwin; 7/6).

Here is a stimulating book about the prospect of transition from Capitalism to Socialism under the political conditions peculiar to England. We refrain from the obvious animadversions to be made by an educated Catholic reader. The book is valuable on the positive side. Capitalist democracy rests on the ability to soothe proletarian criticism by more and more concessions. And its final bankruptcy as regards this will be simultaneous with its collapse. We deplore that misnomer 'the Dole.' We are equally conscious of the ease with which Justice is dubbed charity, of the reluctance of charity to submit to the useful expedient of compulsion—of the picturesque but profitable gesture which bids the chauffeur stop the car and give the tramp a lift. These are things whose adequacy capitalist democracy naturally premises. Prof. Laski discusses our pseudo-democracy temperately, but we are moved to the opinion that it is high time the thing were seen in its right proportions. He says some intelligent things about the unbalanced conception of property, and its rights, in our law courts; and he writes in his usual easy, pleasant, clear-headed fashion.

T.P.