which medieval writers associated words, numbers and symbols he says, 'it is vain to be astonished and disgusted that the great mind of Dante could stoop to such trivialities; we should instead measure and wonder at the strength of the impulse that persuaded the great mind of Dante to obey it.' Here is another sort of 'amplitude' that proceeds from wise scholarship. Once again we must be grateful to Dr Tillyard, as we were some years ago on the publication of *Elizabethan World Picture*, for methodically applying true learning to our half-formulated ideas.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

POLITICS AND OPINION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. An Historical Introduction. By John Bowle. (Cape; 25s.)

Fundamentally political theory—the subject of this book—is concerned with the exercise of power, with political obligation: Who shall rule whom? By what authority? For what end or purpose? In his previous work, *Western Political Thought*, Mr Bowle had shown how the statement of and answers to these questions had changed with succeeding ages, and had traced a continuous evolution which by the end of the eighteenth century had arrived at the idea of a constitutional commonwealth. The tradition was established, and in fact it was already functioning in America. But the beginning of the nineteenth century introduced new and disturbing factors to the political scene. Three new problems arose. The first, which intensified the other two, was the loss of Christian belief or at least the decline of dogma. The denial of original sin—and this may be discerned, sometimes explicitly but always implicitly, in the nineteenth-century political theorists, whether Romantic, Utilitarian, Utopian or Scientific—weakens human solidarity immeasurably and engenders a fatal indifference to the abuse of power. Consequently the transition from agricultural society to industrial society meant inevitable conflict between classes and all the perils of mass society, as foreseen so well by Tocqueville, Mill and Acton. The growth of the national sovereign state, with a great industrial potential, at a time when the natural law had been rejected as a common and universal basis of value and when the myth of nation had been substituted for the myth of religion meant inevitable conflict between nations. These problems are still with us, and as the consequences of conflict may involve destruction on a global scale the solutions discussed in this book are no longer remote debates between theoreticians but matters of life and death.

Threading his way through these nineteenth-century prophets and empiricists, Mr Bowle provides an admirable introduction to the theories of nearly forty representative political thinkers set in the con-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1754201400023419 Published online by Cambridge University Press

text of European civilization. While he does justice to all of them with academic objectivity, he is no detached and uncommitted observer but is at pains to separate the sheep from the goats. Those who have made constructive contributions to the radical humanist tradition are approved: Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill are 'sheet-anchors of sanity'; T. H. Green was 'the greatest liberal political philosopher of his age'; Comte, for all his extravagances and crudities, did produce the 'first sign of an alliance between political thought and sociology'; Acton was oracular and far-sighted; Jaurès' 'broad vitality was alien to national and class hate'; 'with Durkheim the mysterious tides of society . . . now began to be systematically and scientifically examined'; even the encyclicals of Leo XIII are counted unto righteousness. To the outer darkness are consigned such as Hegel, Carlyle, Marx-Engels, Treitschke, Sorel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Yet the fact remains that these latter, far more than the 'approved authors', have shaped the world events of the past hundred years. Their myths have been far more potent than the polite myth of 'a basic instinct for mutual aid' to which Mr Bowle makes appeal in his moderately optimistic conclusion. At the beginning of this book he scarifies the middle-class Romantics for their belief in the nobility and grandeur of the common people; it may be that he himself has succumbed a little to an uncritical belief in the redeeming skill of the sociologist and the power of mass communications and statistical techniques of the social psychologist.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

THE ITALIAN ELEMENT IN MILTON'S VERSE. By F. T. Prince. (Oxford University Press; 12s. 6d.)

The author's attention, in this short book, to questions of pure literary technique is expressed with a polished delicacy of word and phrasing which will give pleasure even to readers who are not specialists in the matter. But specialists in particular will be grateful for this excellent study of an important aspect of Milton's verse, its links with Italian poetic technique, which has never, I believe, been other than superficially treated before. A poet himself, Mr Prince brings a trained ear and taste, unusual in scholars, to the niceties of his subject.

Milton is the supreme stylist among English poets, in the sense that he is the great master of studied deliberate eloquence. This mastery of stately and brilliant form—which it is small-minded to disparage in a poet—was classical of course in origin, but more immediately it was Milton's elaboration of influences from the Italian Cinquecento. Literary Italian, in his day 'the most polished vernacular in Europe', Milton knew well; but as a writer he got more from Tasso and Della Casa than from Dante or even Petrarch. There are interesting reasons for this.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1754201400023419 Published online by Cambridge University Press