

to do with them; a remark which applies not to mental disorders as such, e.g., insanities, but to those cases which lie between the borders of health and illness.

On every page of this masterly treatise may be found material for profound reflections to which it is scarcely possible to give adequate expression here; but to recall the author's explicitly avowed purpose of providing for the use primarily of those whose task is that of direction of souls, an account of the complexities of human nature and its ills, we are confronted with the question of its practical value. To profit by this work in the way intended, appears to the present writer to demand a psychological insight and a background of psychological training not given to all. Moreover, where the author approaches the practical problem of the spiritual treatment or measures to be taken in detail with particular cases, the counsels set forth seem to be, however ideal, difficult to carry out effectively in practice. This however is but a minor and perhaps not fully justified criticism. The author has not aimed at providing a precise guide to the spiritual and psychological treatment of problem cases. He is content with general indications to be developed according to circumstances.

There can be no question that a careful and attentive study of this book will throw a flood of light on many problems with which moral theology alone is not by its very nature able to deal with. It would require great skill and much patience to turn to practical account the vast amount of erudition and practical experience contained in this treatise. It would however form a valuable addition to the library of the moral theologian as also to that of the medical psychologist.

The original work in the German language first appeared in 1926 and in two years had reached its eighth edition. The present translation, coming ten years later, is, as far as we can judge, executed with extreme care and free from Germanisms. An English version should be valuable, and in congratulating the French translator, we hope that it will meet with the success of the original.

AIDAN ELRINGTON, O.P.

#### HISTORY

ST. AUGUSTINE AND FRENCH CLASSICAL THOUGHT. By Nigel Abercrombie. (Oxford University Press; 5s.)

This learned little book consists of an Introduction and four brief essays dealing with the principles of Augustinian ethics and with the influence of St. Augustine on Montaigne, Des-

cartes and Pascal. The Introduction tells us that these essays are exploratory and tentative. They are intended to suggest 'principles of interpretation to be applied to the work of particular authors.' They are 'fragmentary chapters in the history of French thought,' an attempt to determine more clearly, but not finally, the influence of St. Augustine on the thought of the three Frenchmen. Very little has indeed been done, at least in English, to determine the range and importance of this influence; and much of Mr. Abercrombie's book is pioneer work. Speaking of Descartes he tells us that a great part of his purpose 'is to make trial in English of Gilson's method and researches'; but the work on Pascal seems to have no such important precursor: 'hitherto little attempt has been made even to discover the extent of Pascal's knowledge of Augustine—much less the nature of his indebtedness to Augustine or the quality of his understanding of Augustine.' And the essay on Montaigne is a sort of preliminary to that on Pascal.

In the seventeenth century the name and authority of St. Augustine has to do with more than the controversies aroused by the Jansenist heresy. His mystical writings helped to inspire those schools of spirituality which are such wonderful evidence of the vitality of French Catholicism in this century. His eager if unsystematic philosophical thinking has striking affinities with that of Descartes and the followers of Descartes. So much is well known. But why was St. Augustine so influential? A superfluous question, if we are only considering Jansenism. But Mr. Abercrombie does not touch Jansenism until he comes, at the end of the book, to Pascal. It is not so generally realised that St. Augustine was no stranger, as the author puts it, to the fashionable movement of Neo-Stoicism which during the reign of Louis XIII gave to the intelligentsia of France 'the ideal ethical system of the honnête homme.' Hence in the first essay Mr. Abercrombie is very concerned to show that the saint only attained 'his definitive position . . . with the help of two successive pagan systems,' the Stoic and the Neo-Platonic. Certainly he went far beyond these systems; this is clearly shown in an analysis of that 'epoch-making development of his thought which can be observed in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*,' composed early in 388. But this essay chiefly emphasises the part played in the full Augustinian synthesis by that verissima philosophiae disciplina which the saint inherited from antiquity. And this explains his power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He seemed so much more classical than the medievals, so much closer to Cicero. It seems to us, however, that Mr. Abercrombie makes too much

of such rather scanty verbal agreement as he can find between Augustine and Montaigne. That St. Augustine, like Montaigne, was 'excited to impatience and anger by . . . intellectual arrogance or complacency in others'; that the saint, like the essayist, did not think 'the flesh' simply evil—these parallel positions do not mean that Augustine was a sceptic or a 'naturalist' in any sense at all comparable to that in which Montaigne was a sceptic and a 'naturalist.' It is true that 'the Augustinianism of the first modern philosophical moralist' is described as 'tenuous.' But why call it Augustinianism at all?

The next essay, that on Descartes, is in part a very telling criticism of Gilson and in part a brief sketch of the theories of knowledge of Augustine himself, of St. Thomas and of Suarez, in order to show how Descartes 'could easily find in Scholasticism (*i.e.*, in those schools which were more or less Augustinian) the most encouraging analogies for his own criticism of Scholasticism (*i.e.*, of Thomism).' Gilson is criticized for having exaggerated the affinities between the doctrine of the Cogito and the thought of St. Augustine. Mr. Abercrombie (in Gilson's own words) pushes 'la comparaison des textes jusque dans le détail,' and the inquiry is certainly damaging to Gilson's thesis. Yet the impression left on the reader by this comparison of texts may well be that St. Augustine was only saved from the Cogito by a lack of system and thoroughness in working out the consequences of his premisses.

A valuable description of Suarez' theory of knowledge leads to the conclusion that 'continuity between the . . . object of thought and thought itself is here as completely dissolved as in any Platonist theory: Suarez is already committed to some form of innatism.' For Suarez the intellect knows the singular thing more easily than the universal; abstract knowledge of the universal is secondary, it is derived from the intellectual knowledge of singulars; and '*. . . abstrahere speciem nihil aliud est quam . . . efficere speciem.*' Cartesianism is not far off. Let us hope that before long Professor Abercrombie will give us at greater length the results of his researches in this matter. It would be most interesting to see the whole question of the relation of Descartes to Suarez thoroughly explored.

Incidentally it seems rather meaningless to say that the 'Aristotelian metaphysics . . . has the defects of its merits.' And when Mr. Abercrombie describes what he calls 'the highest common factor of Thomism' as 'this crabbed system' he seems to be yielding to prejudice.

After Descartes, Pascal. Mr. Abercrombie is inclined to de-

preciate the extent and importance of Pascal's Augustinianism. Fine and careful distinctions are so needed in this matter because the name of Augustine has been so glibly attached to the Jansenist movement, this movement has been so glibly identified with pure and primitive Christianity in a corrupt age, and Pascal himself has been so clumsily treated by critics who are incapable of distinguishing, in so complex a character, the Jansenist from the Catholic and the sceptic from the believer. For Aldous Huxley, Pascal is simply The Christian. For Cousin he was not a believer at all. For some Catholic 'pascalisants' he is Jansenist in theology, Catholic in his prayer. For many Protestants he is Protestant in both. Indeed, he is too complex for his critics unless they can bring to him a mind at once subtle, learned and Catholic. Who doubts this should read Bremond's marvellous analysis (in the fourth volume of his great 'Histoire') and see therein exercised some of the subtlety and attention that Pascal both claims and rewards. Here, of course, we are only concerned to estimate his debt to St. Augustine. The most interesting comparison made in this essay is that between the pascalian 'Grandeur et Misère' and a text from the *De Peccato Originali*. Pascal almost but not quite quotes the text, and the difference he makes to it just suffices to make it a good example of Jansenism in act of generation. The rest of the analysis is very ably done, though a suspicion is left in this reviewer's mind that not enough emphasis is put on the real originality of Pascal. We are told, at the end, that we have seen how far and in what manner he follows St. Augustine; we are not told how far and in what manner Pascal was original. Perhaps this is too much to expect. But surely the Professor's assurance that he knows just how far Pascal 'followed' is rather disconcerting. No doubt a man may 'follow Augustine' without doing so simply out of respect for his authority; and that this was Pascal's way is not denied. But surely a fuller, more real and alive inquiry into the Augustinianism of Pascal would not have omitted to stress the very personal and original manner of his thinking. For us this omission spoils the essay. What is given is a clear and able comparison of the letter of the texts. What is not given is a light on the spirit of which these texts are the expression, on that spirit which was certainly preoccupied with the same few, dominant, characteristic ideas as was that of St. Augustine, but which seems to have drawn them, to an extraordinary degree, from its own experience. Mr. Abercrombie's treatment, very searching as far as it goes, does not go far into the *mind* of its subjects.

After all, perhaps this is just as well. If the scope of these essays is limited their conclusions stand out so much the more firmly and clearly. Mr. Abercrombie has confined himself to little more than the letter of the texts; but he has compared them very thoroughly (considering the book's brevity); he has come rapidly to precise conclusions. All who distrust text-book groupings and vague generalization should be grateful.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

## NOTICES

THE LESSONS AND GOSPELS FOR THE SEASON OF LENT TAKEN FROM THE ROMAN MISSAL. With an Introduction by Conrad Pepler, O.P. (Dent, for Hague & Gill; 5s.)

'In a Lenten sermon, attributed to St. Augustine, the preacher admonished his flock to "listen carefully as is your wont to the Scripture lessons read to you in church and re-read them in your homes."' The idea has prompted Messrs. Hague and Gill to offer us this most excellent of all books for daily Lenten reading and meditation—the Church's own selection of readings from the Word of God. Father Pepler contributes an admirable and stimulating introduction, packed with theological, historical, liturgical and exegetical learning, as well as much practical good sense. 'An intelligent use of these lessons and gospels will help us to partake ever more fully of the spirit of Lent, and of the ever living tradition which links us to those zealous exercises of the early Christians, in ever closer union with the Church who stretches timeless across the centuries.' It goes without saying that the printing and binding are beautiful.

V.W.

APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY. By D. J. B. Hawkins. (Sands; 5s.)

The particular sciences turn in their tracks when they come up against the final meaning of the concepts they use. They are still active, still successful, but in one way they have worked themselves to a standstill. Hence the increasingly felt need for philosophy, not only to co-ordinate a mass of detail, but also to give a view of reality as a whole.

Yet philosophy cannot be taken from a teacher like a suit of ready-mades off a peg, though some of the manuals claim to do for you like a mental Montague Burton. To express the matter more technically, philosophy must be approached epistemologically before it is treated systematically. We must stub-