

philosophy of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, and his own work like that of Berdyaev may be said to be in this tradition. But he writes from a depth of spiritual experience and with a grace of literary style which is rare among philosophers.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

DESCARTES AND THE MODERN MIND. By A. G. A. Balz. (Yale University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege; 63s.)

The advent of exact science and the intellectual ferment connected with it is assuredly the most important factor in the transformation which has shaped the 'modern mind'. Professor Balz has set himself to write a book about the first great thinker of the 'century of genius', precisely in the light of his formative influence on the 'modern mind'. This entity is characterised—following a good Cartesian precedent—by the difference 'between the results of claim-making in the positive sciences and the results of doctrinal inquiry'—namely, that the latter has not yet managed to produce 'sets of claims that are universally accepted by experts' (p. 441). What we need, apparently, are 'warrantable welfare-doctrines' (these are 'funds of doctrines virtually universally accepted by families of experts—in theologies, in philosophical disciplines . . .' etc., p. 444) and it is to the neo-Cartesian we are told to apply. The naïve ease with which Professor Balz skips from the seventeenth century to the twentieth and back again is encumbered only by a more than generous use of the abstract technical terminology and hyphenated expressions which he creates *ad hoc* whenever it suits his purpose.

It is not a surprise to find his Descartes hardly more deeply rooted in the seventeenth century than his neo-Cartesian in the twentieth. With a wealth of learning and intimate knowledge of Descartes' work, what emerges from the pictures of Descartes given us by Professor Balz is a tailor's dummy designed to wear modern dress. In explicating the 'central concern of Cartesian effort' Professor Balz states this as being concerned with a two-sided problem: 'On the one hand (the issue) concerns the relation of religious conviction to inquiry, where by "inquiry" must be understood what today would be indicated by such a phrase as "philosophy and the sciences". On the other hand, it has to do with the relation between theological doctrine and speculation and the pursuit of inquiry with functional independence of theology.' (p. 16.) It is indeed true that Descartes spares no effort, particularly in controversy, to defend his work against objections from theological quarters, usually by a careful delimitation of the fields in which theology and philosophy are respectively competent. We cannot question, as Professor Balz notes, his integrity in professing his orthodoxy in faith while asserting the authority of 'the natural light of reason' in its own sphere, and the use he makes of it. In this respect, at least, in reading Descartes we may well come to

perceive—with Professor Balz—‘the stately figure of St Thomas Aquinas beyond Descartes’. (p. viii.) Descartes had, indeed, had a good grounding in the scholastic teaching as embodied in the manuals in use at La Flèche, and at least some first-hand acquaintance with the *Summa*. But for him, as for his contemporaries and most of his predecessors for two centuries, this was no longer the background to, and source of, the intellectual adventure on which they felt themselves engaged. The impact which made Descartes so anxious to defend his reflection against the encroachments of ecclesiastical tradition, while asserting its harmony with orthodox doctrine, came from different quarters.

Professor Balz’s presentation of Descartes and of Cartesian as relevant to the ‘modern mind’ is in terms of this relation of doctrine to inquiry, or, to use his favourite but highly misleading terminology (in the use of which, among other instances, he betrays a very inadequate understanding of the ‘stately figure’ behind Descartes), of *Theologia* to *Scientia*. This is not the sort of question that haunted Descartes, though it was no doubt forced upon him consequent on the gradual crystallisation in his mind of a radically new conception of the nature of rational explanation itself. It is there we must seek what is most distinctive of the Cartesian approach and of its far-reaching effects.

But here we receive little help from Professor Balz. There is no attempt to understand how Descartes came to adopt the models which he employed in his philosophical reflection. Nor are we given any insight into the question—surely no less vital for an understanding of Descartes than of the modern mind—of what place such models have in philosophic reflection and how they are related to the reality pictured in terms of them. In his concern to trace the systematic results of Descartes’ enquiry he goes to the lengths even of distinguishing the man (thinker, writer) René Descartes, from a personification of the exigencies of his ‘system’ which he calls ‘Cartesius’. (Cf. pp. 146 ff. for an instructive instance revealing the dangers of this device.) As Gilson once remarked—in his study, as it happens, of Descartes and the medieval mind—it is the very effort to connect ideas to their time which frees them from it. A closer scrutiny of Descartes’ thinking, set in the context of a study of the ‘inherited conglomerate’ (the phrase is Professor D. M. Mackinnon’s) behind it, would have done a great deal more to give us some insight into his mind, as well as into our own as formed, in part, by this heritage.

A.M.

THE WYNNE DIARIES. Passages selected and edited by Anne Fremantle. (Oxford World’s Classics; 7s. 6d.)

The habit of keeping diaries, peculiar to the English-speaking world, is a cultural asset of the greatest value to the social student, the historian