

BLACKFRIARS

in giving the impression that the theory is a tenable one which would make the inspiration of certain psalms to mean no more than the fact of their having been canonized by the Church—whereas this is in defiance of the teaching of the Vatican Council. And then secondly, in declaring the contents, the doctrine of certain psalms to be alone inspired, the human author being exclusively responsible for their outward expression (. . . die Form ist ausschliesslich das Werk des Dichters)—a disastrously retrogressive theory.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

CONTEMPORARY GERMAN PHILOSOPHY. By Werner Brock. (Cambridge University Press; 6/-.)

Dr. Brock is one of those Germans who have been driven from their country by the present *régime*; formerly he was a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. This book contains the substance of three lectures delivered at the invitation of London University. According to the author, German philosophy since Hegel has been chiefly concerned with the problem of defining the real task of philosophy. He is here aiming at no more than an Introduction to contemporary German thought, not a complete survey of it, and so he deliberately omits some few philosophical movements.

There are three chapters. The first shows the general background; the Humanism which had inspired the classical German philosophies and the emergence of new sciences, especially historical and "humanistic." Hegelianism and indeed all speculative idealism was rejected, and two tendencies showed themselves: to restrict philosophy to the search for a world-view synthesizing the results of science, or alternatively to concentrate on problems of the possibility of knowledge, and the principles and methods presupposed and not investigated by the sciences. In illustration of this he gives short accounts of Husserl's method of Phenomenological analysis, of Dilthey's historical attempts at a "philosophy of philosophy," and of Weber's reflexions upon the relations between the social sciences and the values of human life. Each of these three, in his own specialized way, went beyond the limits of mere epistemology or mere "science of the sciences."

The second chapter deals with the influence of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. To the former may be traced the modern tendency to take a fundamental phenomenon such as "Life" as a standpoint from which to tackle philosophical problems, to the latter the concentration on "Existenz," the effective attitude of a human individual towards himself as a whole.

Coming in the third chapter to philosophers of the present day, and giving little more than a mention to those he considers as continuing academic tradition—though even here the tendencies

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already sketched are easily discernible—Dr. Brock directs attention to the efforts of Jaspers and Heidegger to conceive existence as human existence, the existence in which *we find ourselves*. Perhaps it is in place here to recommend to readers Fr. Przywara's parallel attempt to conceive existence as Christian existence.

In such a short space it was inevitable that little more than an atmosphere could be conveyed, but Dr. Brock has succeeded in doing this. In a three-page Conclusion he leaves it to a problematic future to decide whether philosophy will once again succeed in fulfilling a universal function beyond the capacity of special sciences: "to interpret existence in a more universal sense and so once more give strength and significance to human life." Christianity does this for the masses, but Dr. Brock considers its hold insecure, as three of the forces philosophy is striving to control are continually shaping the mass mentality closer to mundane ideals; these three forces are technique, economic life and the State. Philosophy, he thinks, is essentially opposed to Christian authority "by its unlimited search for truth and its will to freedom."

Is it petty to notice the careless mis-spelling "Aquinus," found in the index and the two passages referred to? It seems to reflect the arrogance of the claim to autonomy. Methodological independence is freely admitted by the Church; to assert more is a dogmatism for which there can be no justification in view of the Church's claim to divine origin. QUENTIN JOHNSTON, O.P.

DAS EDLE UND DER CHRIST. By Richard Egenter. (Kösel und Pustet, Munich; RM. 2.80.)

VOM SINN DER EHRFURCHT. By Paul Wolff. (Kösel und Pustet; RM 2.50.)

The ideal of the superman and the relation of others to him has long been a matter of more than merely academic importance. But too many who have tried to realize their ideal of nobility, whether on paper or in flesh and blood, in their own person or that of another, have been blind or even expressly hostile to Christian values and virtues. Here are two books which deal with the subject from complementary points of view. Dr. Egenter examines the nature of nobility in general and of moral nobility in particular, and from the ideas thus gained leads on to a statement not only of the compatibility of the highest nobility with Christianity, but of the actual necessity of Christianity as the soil in which alone absolute nobility can reach its most perfect growth.

Paul Wolff, on the other hand, treats of the emotion of reverence which is evoked precisely by the presence of nobility and