

***The Renaissance.* By George Clarke Sellery. Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1950. Pp. 296, with index. \$3.75.**

Ninety years ago Jacob Burckhardt published his famous *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* in which he stated his thesis that the revival of antiquity, combined with the unique genius of the Italian people, produced a fundamental revolution in European history. Burckhardt's thesis survived, with modifications, for about seventy-five years. Within the last two decades, however, it has succumbed to the general trend of doing away with "periods" in history and showing how revolutionary upheavals are less sudden than they formerly seemed.

Sellery's essay on the Renaissance is in the general trend of pushing its origins far back into medieval history, of showing certain "modern" elements in medieval times and many medieval survivals into early modern history. This book does not offer a new view of the Renaissance nor of history in general. Its chief value lies in the strong support it gives to the now generally accepted view that "the Renaissance was not a revolution, set off by the Revival of Learning and its concomitants, but an evolution, based on the same forces, generally speaking, that are at work in the world of today." In a chapter-by-chapter treatment of economics, government and politics, philosophy, language, and so forth, Sellery drives home the point that the "revolution" in each field was a gradual development beginning about the thirteenth century and continuing down to recent times.

THOMAS P. NEILL.

St. Louis University,
St. Louis, Missouri.

***St. Thomas Aquinas on Aristotle's "Love and Friendship."* Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, Books VIII-IX. Translated by Pierre Conway, O.P. Providence: The Providence College Press, 1951. Pp. xvi + 132. Paper, \$1.50; cloth, \$2.50.**

One can hardly be much engaged in teaching the philosophy of St. Thomas to the average college student without soon realizing the serious inadequacy of the general run of textbooks available in the English language. (Whether or not foreign language texts do a better job is not now the point.) Because of the language barrier, it is in most

instances impossible to employ for class work the Latin texts of St. Thomas. Yet, apart from the *Summa* and the *Contra Gentes*, comparatively little of the Thomistic corpus has been published in English, and virtually nothing of the expressly philosophical works.

Within very recent years, it is true, and one is glad to note the fact, there have been published English translations of such works as the *De Regimine Principum*, the *De Ente et Essentia*, and the *Quaestio disputata de Anima*. But, unhappily, the great commentaries on Aristotle lie untouched. We have only Dr. Kocourek's translation of Books I-II of the *Physics* (cf. *THE NEW SCHOLASTICISM*, July 1950, XXIV, 3, 337-338). And, though at the risk of being unmannerly, the reviewer might add that he is preparing for intended publication a translation of Books I and X of the Commentary on the *Ethics*.

The point is that the works available in English translation go mostly over the head of the beginner—who is the undergraduate. The “beginners” for whom St. Thomas said he was writing the *Summa* are not the beginners of our colleges, or seminaries—far from it. What is needed, it would seem, is somehow to introduce the undergraduate to the great philosophical commentaries themselves. Any effort, therefore, to make available in English, either in part or in whole, the vast philosophical wisdom contained in them ought to be encouraged. For this reason, if for no other, the present work of a former Associate Editor of *THE NEW SCHOLASTICISM* deserves a hearty welcome. Here we have in translation St. Thomas's Commentary on Books VIII-IX of the *Ethics*. These Books discuss one of the most fundamental of all human relations, namely, friendship. Father Conway has entitled them *Love and Friendship*. This adoption seems justified, not only, perhaps, to attract reader attention, but also in truth; for, as he observes, “the Aristotelian concept of friendship also embraces our concept of love” (p. vii).

In translating a commentary of St. Thomas one has, of course, decisions to make over and above the usual ones. There is, among others, the problem of dividing the text: whether to follow what must seem to the uninitiated the almost painfully precise and detailed (but admirably discerning) division of St. Thomas himself (and thus, it may be, risk frightening the reader away), or whether to adopt something of a compromise division. And there is, too, the usual problem of choosing between a literal rendition and one that is more free, thus having to sacrifice the genius, but not necessarily the accuracy, of the

original Latin to the genius of the translating English. Compared, however, with the question of having a translation or not, these are minor matters, indeed.

Father Conway's translation is well done. It is somewhat free, without loss of accuracy. The choice of Books VIII-IX for translation was "dictated by a desire to appeal to a broad section of readers" (p. vii). Beyond that, however, the relevancy of an English version of these Books that deal with the basic principles of friendship need not be pointed out at a time when friendship among peoples was, perhaps, never more lacking and, certainly, never more needed. Some of the divisions of the text have been reduced "to afford smoother reading" (*ibid.*). A translation of the Aristotelian text used by St. Thomas precedes each "chapter," which is the word used for "lesson." An Appendix (pp. 121-132), explaining various points of doctrine occurring in the text, supplies helpful elucidations.

In a translation of this sort we do not expect, and in this instance we do not find, any attempt at textual criticism. What Father Conway has done is to open to the English-reading public a few more pages of those Thomistic books that have already been too long closed to them. His venture merits to be well received by all who are in any way interested in learning or teaching philosophy.

JOHN A. OTTO.

*St. Ambrose College,
Davenport, Iowa.*

***Existence and Being.* By Martin Heidegger. With an introduction by Werner Brock. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949. Pp. 399. \$5.00.**

The philosophy of Martin Heidegger is usually associated with the movement known as "existentialism," notwithstanding the fact that the German philosopher himself has repeatedly disavowed this association. Heidegger, who at present lives in retirement in the Black Forest, has been accused of atheism, amoralism, and nihilism, especially by critics who have made no serious effort to gain a first-hand knowledge of his thought. The recluse of the Black Forest has at various times refuted these charges, most recently in his *Letter on Humanism* (Bern, 1947), addressed to Jean Beaufret of Paris, and in several passages of his latest book, entitled *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a. M., 1950).