

“universally-known truths!”), shows that he finds a similar fascination in the study of what the book calls ‘antique mathematics’, and his consequent scepticism is one of the most refreshing features of this work which despite its title is devoted largely to the pure mathematics of the Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks. The author is a distinguished geometer, and those who are interested in the elementary but often intricate mathematics of pre-Christian times have at last a comprehensive, scholarly and truly mathematical work written with a disarming friendliness of style.

Unfortunately, an attempt has been made, by the addition of sketchy background introductions to various chapters together with a number of admittedly beautiful illustrations and some talk of the importance of pure mathematics, to turn this important mathematical study into something like a history of culture; hence the misleading title, and the sudden changes of style which occur. The work is also marred by the poor translation, which constantly reminds the reader of the book’s foreign origin and is responsible for such curiosities as the pages devoted to ‘The epigones of the great mathematicians’, and by the irritating way in which section headings occur in the middle of sentences and are displayed with equal prominence whatever their status. But these are minor defects, which those interested in the history of mathematics will be only too glad to overlook.

MICHAEL HOSKIN

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. By D. Dubarle, O.P.

Translated by Reginald Trevett. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s. 6d.)

This little book is a collection of five essays or lectures dealing in the most general terms with the influence of science on the future. The first three are mainly concerned with new ideas and techniques and their possibilities. In chapter four, Père Dubarle discusses matters in which science and philosophy make contact: ‘The ancient synthesis contains an ambiguity. . . . If philosophy in the past has been the matrix of the sciences, it is essential that the organism to which it has given birth should one day fulfil its own destiny independently and so, in return, liberate and purify a function to which it is itself in debt’ (pp. 80, 83). The last chapter deals with the attitude of Christianity to scientific progress.

In his preface, the author apologizes for the repetitions and lack of cohesion, and it seems ungracious to remark that these defects are only too apparent in the pages which follow. Cybernetics, for example, is one of the ‘present-day scientific ideas’ discussed in the excellent second chapter. But the same subject crops up in the first and third chapters, and, as if to emphasize the absence of an editor’s hand, we find Wiener’s

book on cybernetics quoted with its short title and French publisher on page nineteen, and then with its full title and American publisher (whose name is mis-spelt) on page twenty-eight. Defects such as these might be unimportant were it not for the generality with which the author treats his subject, a generality which, despite Mr Trevett's translation, appears to English eyes as vagueness and prolixity. As a result, the argument is not easy to follow. This is a pity, because Père Dubarle finds the origins of modern science in 'a great and almost painful insistence on the integrity of thought when face to face with things' (p. 71), and he writes with a keen appreciation of the dignity of the scientist's vocation and of the benefits which technical progress can bring.

MICHAEL HOSKIN

THE LIFE OF ARTHUR STANLEY EDDINGTON. By A. Vibert Douglas. (Nelson; 25s.)

This is a quietly efficient book such as Eddington would have liked. Men of his type are not easy to portray in biographies for the general public. His outward life was thoroughly uneventful: like so many other dons he found his relaxation in walking, cycling, and climbing, had one close friend, and was liked by all he met. He lived for ideas, and ideas in mathematical astronomy are not easy to express in non-technical language. Dr Vibert Douglas gives a good outline of the publications which made Eddington's name as a great scientist, but he does not possess Eddington's sometimes misleading power of popularization, and untrained readers will find his book fairly heavy going. But it is an important contribution to the task of assessing this controversial and rather enigmatic figure, and it is good to know the quiet background to the often heated discussion of his work that still continues twelve years after his death.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

AN APPROACH TO MODERN PHYSICS. By E. N. da C. Andrade. (Bell; 25s.)

This is a revised version of the author's *Mechanism and Nature* (1930) taking into account most of the fundamental advances in physics that have been made since then. Its scope includes practically the whole of physics from the classical divisions of heat, light, sound, electricity and magnetism through the quantum theory and the atom to the nucleus and cosmic rays. The fundamental ideas of each are described lucidly and non-mathematically, often with helpful analogies. Many of these ideas, however, are better explained by diagrams than by