

paint every detail in his picture, all of them at once. It is all-important that in explaining the 'mystical' language of St John and St Paul we should not explain it away as vague rhetoric. On the whole of created history *Christus cogitabatur*: as we have already said, he is the Alpha no less than the Omega.

May I add a line in view of the allegedly increased interest in oriental religions noticeable, we hear, especially in America? If we understand aright, this will mean either 'Hindu-Buddhism' or 'Zen' (a Japanese word for a system really imported from China). The latter teaches that man has everything in himself which enables him to attain to 'happiness' without assistance (a sort of 'Pelagian-Taoism', if not what the original Gautama really taught); and the former always implies the gradual de-personalization of one's self and the absorption into Nirvana—a 'puffing out', a de- or ex-spuration. Each is clearly quite opposed to Christianity: for, as Fr Teilhard insists, each is tending to become his full true self, though only through and in Christ.

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THE LOTUS AND THE ROBOT. By Arthur Koestler. (Hutchinson; 25s.)

It would not be difficult—it has often enough been done, in varying degrees of frivolity, sadness, indignation, malice or spleen—to paint a picture of Catholic life in this or that place, drawing on the writings of dubious mystics and sentimental pietists as well as on the superstitions and other disedifying *mores* of the inhabitants, and ignoring what lies behind these things, so as to conclude plausibly but invalidly that 'the world has nothing to learn from Christianity'. Mr Koestler, in this study of India and Japan, gives the impression of having done something of the sort with regard to the East, not through any frivolity or malice but because despite his observant eye he is perhaps rather out of his depth and certainly out of his element.

Out of his depth: he admits that his 'knowledge of the Hindu scriptures is sketchy', and certainly his quotations give no hint of the depth and grandeur of the greatest writings; moreover one cannot but suspect a writer who describes the aristotelean schoolmen *en bloc* as 'sterile and pedantic' of being equally superficial and unreliable in his judgments of Eastern thought.

Out of his element: he scolds the Japanese for being unwilling to 'adopt the matter-of-fact type of thinking and the logical categories' of western thought, and (most revealingly) speaks of the *comforts* of ambiguity; in India he surely misses the point of the contrast between 'heart' and head, and it does not seem to occur to him that his failure to make sense of what he is told by the 'wise men from the East' may be due to his failure to find a clue to *their* way of thinking. Ambiguity (ambivalence, paradox) may be, not a comfortable evasion, but the stuff of all symbol-thinking (the simplest study of western mysticism for example would have shown him how unconscious and hyperconsciousness co-exist); the language of symbol and paradox is in fact characteristic not merely of the Hindu scriptures but in great measure of the Bible as well; again, Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal and a

host of other western thinkers could have explained to him the nature and importance of 'heart-knowledge'. And as, from his description of Yoga techniques, it is difficult to imagine how a Christian monk can write, in *La Voie du Silence*, of the applicability of these techniques to contemplative prayer, so from his dippings into the thought of the East it is hard to imagine it as an important element in any 'perennial philosophy' of mankind.

One is far from suggesting that all Mr Koestler's criticisms are unjustified (though one does sometimes suspect him of missing the point); the fact remains that he is attempting to subject to 'scientific and logical analysis' a way of life which is based on non-conceptual thinking. This is reminiscent of the demand of Eng. Lit. examiners to 'paraphrase the following poem'—as though to paraphrase a poem were not to kill it; or of the criticisms of abstract art as 'not making sense'; or again of the mentality which, faced with the gospel-paradoxes, feels that one side of the paradox obviously must be spurious.

It was suggested by one reviewer that this book will provoke 'howls of spiritual rage' from the 'mystical experts': possibly; but the important question is what reaction it will provoke from the ordinary reader. It is all too possible that if the West does not destroy itself (and everyone else) with nuclear weapons it will die of its own psychological impoverishment, of its repudiation (in defiance of its own heritage) of all that is not 'safely scientific' and rewardingly utilitarian. Already this repudiation has plunged us into the neurotically frenzied sound and fury of activism, of a rat-race by no means confined to the world of commerce. More, it has made us blandly and smugly blind to our own disintegration. And one cannot but wonder therefore whether this book, despite Mr Koestler's seriousness of purpose, is not bound to increase that blindness and blandness—to make us feel euphorically that all must be well after all, and that the writing on the wall is merely a frivolous *graffito*—scribbled, perhaps, by some misguided and illiterate swami?

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CHRISTOPHER DAVENPORT: Friar and Diplomat. By John Berchmans Dockery, O.F.M. (Burns and Oates; 21s.)

Father Dockery deserves the thanks of all who are concerned with the history of Caroline England. He has provided us with what has long been needed: a clear-cut and scholarly biography of that enigmatic figure, Father Sancta Clara, Provincial of the English Recollects and Chaplain to Queen Henrietta Maria. This learned Franciscan, 'a divine of reconciling temper and more disposed to make up breaches than to widen them' is of course the origin of Father Hall in Shorthouse's *John Inglesant*; and it is there, in all probability, that many of Father Dockery's readers will have met Christopher Davenport—Sancta Clara's baptismal name—for the first time. He appears in *John Inglesant* as a Jesuit, a mistake which Shorthouse may have made by relying on Murray's *Berkshire*. Needless to say, Acton noted the error.