

tradition in a way which M. Guénon has not, and who has brought to light the kinship and affinities between the fundamental conceptions of Sanskrit and Græco-Roman terminology and belief.

There is one important facet of Eastern wisdom which M. Guénon seems to have passed by. The *Tao Te Ching* thus expresses it:

The Sage is square, but does not cut others;

He is angled, but does not chip others;

He is straight, but does not stretch others;

He is bright, but does not dazzle others.

M. Guénon is square, angled, straight and—brilliant. But there is still more for him to learn from the East if the West is to profit from him as we could wish.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

THE FAR EAST MUST BE UNDERSTOOD. By H. Van Straelen. (Luzac; 10s. 6d.)

Here is a most charitable book: charitable in its purpose, which is to plead for the very high charity of understanding, charitable above all in the framing of a plea too often couched in terms of bitterness. The author even seems unaware of the host of bitter or even brilliant wisecracks which are the stock-in-trade of criticism of the behaviour of Westerners in the East. His indictment of the type of diplomat who never journeys outside the European club; of the foreign correspondents who have never troubled to learn the language of the peoples whose affairs they represent to the world; of the condescension, based upon ignorance, of those who choose to regard the Easterner as a sort of inscrutable savage—of all these painful and shameful things—is immensely weighty because his seriousness does not side-step the pain or the shame of them.

The chapter on the education necessary for the prospective Far Eastern diplomat should be read by all who are responsible for the appointment of young men to diplomatic posts in the East. It has been published separately by Luzac's under the title 'New Diplomacy in the Far East'.

The book contains a most valuable critical bibliography for the assistance of those who wish to build up, as far as this can be done from books, the understanding called for on its title page. B.K.

STUDIES IN THE MIDDLE WAY. By Christmas Humphreys. (Luzac; 6s.)

A second edition of a popular modern exposition of Buddhism for English readers, including three new essays on the Buddhist trilogy of *Dana*, *Sila* and *Bhavana*. The approach is what we should call an explanatory apologetic.

A certain amount of capital is made from the revulsion of the modern mind against 'authority'; the Buddhist too, 'whatever the forms in which authority has sought to fetter the mind of man . . . bows to none of them'; and from the doctrine of rebirth in the meaning we may suppose to be assigned to it by the 'masses' (but cf. Coomaraswamy: *On the One and Only Transmigrant* in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Suppl. Vol. 64, No. 2, where this

popular misunderstanding is exposed from a point of view 'not theologically illiterate'); thus on p. 16, 'The unwritten tradition of the East records an average of twelve to fifteen hundred years as the period spent by a cultured thinking person between two lives. Two such periods would bridge the gap between . . . the Buddha's teaching . . . and modern times'.

It would have been more helpful if the author had distinguished between source-books to which the student will need to refer and such writers as Blavatsky, whom perhaps he will not want to be bothered with.

B.K.

LA PHILOSOPHIE CHRETIENNE EN RUSSIE: *Nicolas Berdiaeff*. By Eugène Porret (Editions de la Baconnière—Neuchâtel, 1944.)

This brief review of Berdiaeff's thought is No. 8 of the series of *Cahiers de Philosophie* entitled *Etre et Penser* and published in Switzerland. It has its modest but necessary place in the contemporary prologue to the principal drama of our century: the confrontation of the secular social systems of East and West—Russia and Europe—which, however they may describe themselves, are nevertheless linked together both in their Christian origins and in their distinct but common responses to the judgment of eternal Christian truth.

M. Porret's monograph is essentially expository rather than critical; and the greater part is devoted to an historical review of the thought of the principal Russian religious thinkers of the nineteenth century: Tchaadaeff, Kirêevski, Khomiakoff, Leontieff, and Solovieff. The writer's avowed intention has been 'de laisser parler ces penseurs . . . et d'intervenir le moins possible . . .' In achieving this end he has been most successful; and his succinct presentation has the excellent educative merit of encouraging the reader to acquaint himself at first-hand with the works of these philosophers.

The same approach adopted in the shorter second part to the philosophy of Berdiaeff himself is, however, less satisfactory. Berdiaeff's thought lends itself very ill to mere presentation; the complexity both of its content and its expression is in itself a difficulty for Western readers which is made no easier by translation into a Western tongue. In this case, the very precision, clarity and finesse of French, that most characteristic flower of Western civilisation, renders the Russian thought even shadowier and more elusive. For there are certain themes in Berdiaeff's philosophy alien from the Western Christian tradition and at first hearing strange to our ears and understanding: his ontological treatment of the problem of freedom and his concept of meonic or uncreated freedom; the reciprocal need of God and man for one another as partners in the divine Love, a profound modification of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity; his use of the idea of beauty, distinguished from, and even opposed to, goodness, as the ultimate value. 'La fin suprême est la beauté de la créature et non le bien, qui conserve malgré tout l'empreinte de la loi.