

ascetic theory and this-worldly practice, but between 'opposing but complementary symbolic categories' which the theoretically-minded anthropologist has teased out of his inchoately 'practical' field material.

Dr Rigby seems to go very far indeed in this direction. In a previous article published elsewhere, he has arranged Gogo cosmological, religious and social categories in terms of a series of complementary oppositions; since he does not recapitulate his previous argument, his presentation here of 'a limited series of oppositions' in terms of which Gogo rituals of reversion are to be understood has, inevitably, a somewhat bald, take-it-or-leave-it air. If, however, the reader is disposed to take it, on Dr Rigby's authority, that the Gogo really do classify their universe in this neatly dualistic manner, then the ensuing analysis does indeed provide a fascinating example of the ritual manipulation of opposed categories, reversing them in order to obtain an analogous reversal in the quality of time-experience.

The Stratherns' approach to the symbolic vocabulary of Mbowamb spells is rather more modest and tentative; and they accordingly make the Mbowamb universe sound rather richer and more complex than that of the Gogo. The question they ask themselves concerns the magical potency of marsupials, whose names form an important feature of the spells. A detailed and careful examination of the New Guinea highland environment, and the ideas associated by the people with different species of trees, birds and animals, different types of crops, different places and different categories of spirits, elicits both a dichotomy between 'the wild' and 'the domesticated', and the central paradox whereby 'the same [wild] places and

objects which are the home or manifestations of destructive forces are also pre-eminently the symbols of a kind of life-giving power in other contexts'. The ancestors may help men in their efforts to harness the wild; 'but it is the wild itself which is called in to work in the spells'. But 'the wild that is called in', even with the help of the mediating ancestors, must to obviate its perils be itself already a mediated wild: marsupials and certain birds are particularly appropriate here because, unlike other wild creatures, they are eaten by men and sometimes even kept in captivity. It is the use of the names of these creatures in spells which here resolves the 'dialectical' opposition between the wild and the domesticated worlds.

In what sense can this 'synthesis' be regarded as being the same sort of thing as that posited between 'theoretical' and 'practical' Buddhism in the first three essays? Dr Leach is certainly right in supposing that this rich and many-sided book can be read with advantage by 'many students of comparative religion and philosophy who are in no sense anthropologists'; and certainly no one in their senses would expect 'massive generalizations to flow from such work'. (If they did, the first section of Dr Obeyesekere's essay might suffice as a deterrent.) Nonetheless, it does not seem to me that the collection as it stands establishes any kind of 'cross-linkage' (as Dr Leach also claims) between so-called 'higher' and 'primitive' religions. An index might, perhaps, have given the book some slightly more convincing semblance of unity; as things are, all its claims to such unity seem to derive from the latitudes of interpretation offered by its ambiguously trendy title.

EVA KRAPP-ASKARI

THE INTROSPECTIVE SOCIETY, by John Barron Mays. *Sheed and Ward*, London and Sydney, 1968. 223 pp. 35s.

Can the sociologist translate complex social investigations simply and clearly for the average reader? The importance of establishing such communication is obvious, but few prominent sociologists have been able to accomplish this difficult task. In *The Introspective Society*, John Barron Mays attempts to bridge the gap with a non-technical discussion of some major social issues. He has tried not to oversimplify the complex but to trace important themes with sociological insight and reasoned argument. In so doing, however, he illustrates one of the hazards of trying to bridge the worlds of the

sociologist and the layman. For the result is a book too simple for the professional dealing with these social problems, and too broad and generalized to satisfy the really unsophisticated reader. Professor Mays admits that he ranges 'so widely and often so speculatively over a great variety of topics', but the danger in this is that the serious reader will forgo his balanced perception of many serious problems, whereas the unsophisticated will not appreciate the important qualifying comments which he includes in many of the discussions.

The fifteen chapters consist of brief com-

mentaries on social issues in five parts: race relations; urbanization, the family, and social change; crime and punishment; adolescence; and the social role of the family. Many of these articles have been published previously in periodicals.

On the whole, *The Introspective Society* is easy to read. Occasionally, the reader is rewarded with an originally phrased explanation that succinctly states the issue: 'Crime seems to be to modern society what poverty was to older days.' 'What I call social adolescence is an indefinite period of time which continues quite a long way after physical growth has made boys and girls into men and women.'

In one of his best discussions, that on race relations, Professor Mays demonstrates the intertwining of three features of the problem: colour prejudice, problems of immigration, and the difficulties of lower-class status. He explains why the 'business of helping both local-born and immigrant coloured people is a tricky psychological matter' by reference to the situation in Liverpool. His experiences in a Liverpool youth club serve as the focus of his comments on the problems of delinquency (defining those who are merely 'naughty' and the confirmed anti-social); the talent of lower-class youth surfacing in Beatlemania; and the ambivalent feelings of most of us toward

punishment in modern society.

Professor Mays leaves little doubt that he believes sociologists must adopt moral positions which apply the knowledge gained from research to our current social problems. Each chapter contains imperatives which we must, should, need to, or will do. By injecting many positive statements and personal suggestions into the discussions, Professor Mays makes the book more practical and realistic for some readers, but diminishes its influence and importance for professionals and those sociologically alert.

If sociology is regarded as a perspective—an approach to understanding social problems, *The Introspective Society* is a valid translation. However, if sociology is a discipline which requires careful empirical data collection for use in limited generalizations, this book is a very sweeping exercise in personal judgment. Experience suggests that broad generalizations often lead to vague debating and popular rambling rather than to serious questioning and purposeful inquiry. Still, the importance of these social issues and the concern for human misery which Professor Mays addresses are so deeply affected by 'the inertia of public opinion' that the generation of interest in these topics among casual readers may hopefully lead to their concern. JACQUELINE SCHERER

ON SCIENCE, NECESSITY, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, by Simone Weil. *Oxford University Press*, London, 1968. 198 pp. 42s.

Anyone who has read *Waiting on God* will be familiar with Simone Weil's singularly sympathetic appreciation of Christianity, but it may come as a surprise to discover that her grasp of science and the scientific method is no less deep. Indeed, she shows in this book the understanding of science we expect from Nobel physics laureates—and we don't always find it there. We certainly hardly ever find there the degree of compassion Simone Weil has, and her ability to realize just what it is science is trying to do, and just what is its subject matter.

This book is a collection of essays, divided into two sections, the first, roughly speaking, on science, and the second on the love of God. The majority of them were published during 1940-1943, and appeared in various journals in France; some were written under the pseudonym of Emile Novis. Although some essays are no more than fragments, there appears in most of the more substantial ones the theme of necessity. The sense in which science is the

study of the nature of necessary entities is well illustrated in the long essay 'Classical Science and After': consider that a book is on the floor, and it must be laid on a table, stretching infinitely far in all directions. Then in order to transfer the book from the floor to the table, it is absolutely necessary that the whole book pass through the plane. There is *no* way of getting round this; if I tear the book apart, I still have to take each page separately through the plane, and to repeat the process as many times as there are pages in the book. 'And if, in place of me, there is an idiot, a criminal, a hero, a sage or a saint, it will make no difference.' Because of the irreducibility of the nature of this problem, it is a scientific one. But Simone Weil goes further: 'The totality of geometrical and mechanical necessities to which the action is always subject constitutes the primal curse which fell upon Adam, which makes the difference between the world and an earthly paradise, the curse of labour.' It is this connexion