

'belief' until it is void of objective meaning. This the techniques of contemporary philosophy can show; hence the effect of philosophy, far from leaving everything as it is, is destructive of religion. I believe most of the arguments of the book either to be invalid, or to be based on false premisses; but their presentation is both entertaining and skilled. Thus the book may be heartily recommended to philosophical believers as an object on which to sharpen their knives.

Penelhum's book has much to say on a point which is, I should say, not sufficiently adverted to by Nielsen; that it is very difficult to

philosophize about religion without begging the question of belief one way or the other. The unbeliever is apt to set up his theory of knowledge in such a way that God is bound to be excluded from the possible objects of intelligible discourse, while the believer will do just the opposite. The traditional forms of argument for God's existence would appear, according to this author, to be invalid; nevertheless, there seems no rationally compelling way of making nonsense of the theist's claim that God reveals his nature and purposes to believers through certain significant events in nature and history.

HUGO MEYNELL

**THE SOPHISTS; SOCRATES**, by W. K. C. Guthrie. *Cambridge University Press*, 1971. 345 pp. and 200 pp. £1.40 and £1 respectively.

These two volumes together are a reprint of the third volume of Professor Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy*, published in 1969 and already widely regarded as a standard work on the subject of the 'Greek enlightenment'. The aim of issuing them in paperback is to make them more cheaply available to students, and as such they are very welcome. Throughout both volumes, the author's concern is to establish what the various men whom we call Sophists had to say, rather than to discuss whether what they said was true or not, and thus the books are to be regarded as works of classical scholarship rather than of philosophy. Professor Guthrie's stance is that of an Olympian god, peering down through the dim ages on to the activities of 'The Greeks' (who were they, the Greeks? These books are much too inclined to generalize about them: 'In Greek eyes practical instruction and moral advice constituted the main function of the poet!') and never does he dirty his hands by descending to the struggle. There is little sense in these books that the controversies which concerned Thrasymachus, Protagoras and the rest have any very vital concern for those who are fortunate enough to have been born in the enlightened twentieth century; an impression that can be rectified by a glance into Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies*, so frequently cited in these pages, or into E. R. Dodd's edition of Plato's *Gorgias*.

Since they are works of reference more than anything, the volume on the Sophists is the more valuable, as it gathers together much material which would otherwise be difficult to track down. But one gets the impression that the person of Socrates is almost entirely obscured by the sheer weight of modern scholarship, which Guthrie too conscientiously takes into account. Even so, two recent books are ignored, even in the extensive bibliographies, namely Ryle's *Plato's Progress*, and *Merit and Responsibility* by W. H. Adkins, the former of which would undermine Guthrie's approach entirely (since it sees the historical value of Plato's dialogues as minimal); whereas the latter is essential in understanding the genesis of Greek ideologies. The books abound in apparently arbitrary and not always happy references to modern times, in the shape of quotations from Russell's autobiography, *The Listener* and Disraeli, with many others; and he falls into the trap, set by Prichard and sprung by Austin, of talking in terms of modern philosophy about the Athenians ('Socrates was famous for his utilitarian approach to goodness and virtue')—but otherwise these books are eminently sound, with everything good and bad that that implies. The general reader will find Plato more stimulating, and Aristophanes infinitely funnier.

PAUL POTTS, O.P.

**THE PHILOSOPHICAL NOTEBOOK OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN**, edited by Edward Silleam. Vol. I. General Introduction to the Study of Newman's Philosophy. *Éditions Nauwelaerts*, Louvain, 1969. 258 pp. 390 Belgian francs.

'... the experience of the past seventy years has shown, in one instance after another, that those who forage for their own ideas or points of view in Newman's writings... generally give an

account of his thought that he would scarcely have recognized' (p. 16). Newman, like Aquinas, has suffered (at the hands of friend and foe alike) from people who have failed to

realize how exceedingly difficult it is accurately to grasp the direction in which, on any given occasion, his subtle and complex mind is moving. And yet it would be ridiculous either to make him the prophet of the contemporary Church, or to dismiss him as thinker of the second rank, until this prior task of comprehension has been achieved. An obvious weakness of Father Sillem's study of Newman's philosophy (which will, I suspect, turn out to be more important than the volume of unpublished philosophical writings which it was written to introduce) is his failure critically to evaluate Newman's philosophical positions. This criticism, though justified, is perhaps ungrateful because the prior task of exposition, to which Sillem restricted himself, is excellently done.

The detailed account of the sources of Newman's philosophy (Ch. IV, pp. 149-240) is especially valuable, but it is also misleading in so far as Newman's relationship to the English empiricist tradition is concerned. The judgement that 'Newman . . . stood opposed to

the whole tradition of British Empiricism' (p. 193) was only possible because Sillem concentrated on questions of metaphysics and natural theology, rather than of epistemology or philosophical method, and because he himself lacked a sympathetic grasp of the strengths of the empiricist tradition (in this he follows Boekraad and Walgrave: it is significant that James Cameron earns only one passing footnote reference). The original and persuasive argument that the 'Associationists', and especially Abraham Tucker, were a significant source casts a great deal of light on some of the more puzzling features of Newman's philosophy.

Apart from the fact, already mentioned, that Sillem's concern for expositional accuracy resulted in an absence of critical evaluation, one other overall weakness is a tendency to overstress the consistency of Newman's thought, ironing out tensions and ambiguities. This is a pity, because it encourages just that 'bad', superficial Newman reading which Sillem warns against in the opening pages of this scholarly labour of love. NICHOLAS LASH

**THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**, by M. B. Ahern. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, London, 1971. 85 pp. £1.25.

Evil brings with it many problems. Some are connected with belief in God, and these are selected by the author for discussion.

The main point of this book is that the question of the logical compatibility of evil and the existence of God is a complex one, involving several kinds of problem.

The basic problem is both general and abstract: would evil, if it exists, make the existence of an all-good and omnipotent God logically impossible? If an affirmative answer is wanted, one has to show that there is an analytical connexion between evil and the non-existence of God. And this cannot be done, for one needs only one instance of evil being justified by good, or one example of a person being justified in not preventing certain evils, to show that such an analytical connexion cannot be construed.

Still at the level of abstraction, one could perhaps argue that a specific kind of evil—something very terrible—is incompatible with God's existence. But we could be certain of that only if we had an exhaustive knowledge of good and its logical connexions with evil, and we lack such knowledge.

Then, finally, there are the concrete problems of demonstrating how particular cases of evil are compatible with God's existence. Ahern feels that most scholars have dealt with

these concrete questions, believing that they were tackling the whole problem of evil. He discusses four of them: Leibniz, Hick, Campbell and Joyce. But his handling of them does not strike me as very satisfactory; in particular his treatment of Leibniz leaves much to be desired.

Philosophers, he concludes, must realize that they cannot offer adequate solutions to all concrete problems, although they could usefully study the several questions involved.

So there are two conclusions. First that it cannot be shown that evil and God's existence are irreconcilable. Second, that it cannot be proved that they are compatible; for the believer the compatibility of evil and God's existence is a synthetic *a priori*.

The author says that it falls outside the scope of his book to tell us what exactly he means by these technical terms; which is rather odd. He should have added a few pages to tell us more precisely what all this means for the religious experience of evil. Perhaps I may make the following suggestion.

If it is true—as the book argues—that the question of the logical compatibility of evil and God's existence cannot be solved either way, then it seems that the importance of the question is grossly overestimated. The logical issues involved in the problem of evil are only secondary. Encountering evil makes people