

Religious Knowledge teachers' convention is scarcely less impressive with every detail of the swing and change of the discussions.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

**THE TRICKSTER.** A Study in American Indian Mythology. By Paul Radin. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 21s.)

Paul Radin, in his prefatory note to the study of the 'Trickster' in the mythology of the Winnebago Indians, points out how widespread is the distribution of a trickster figure in world mythology. All such figures have in common the possession of what appear to be mutually hostile qualities, those of creator and destroyer, wise man and fool. Trickster acts the part of the autonomous psyche, in that he displays no knowledge of good and evil, yet all values come into being through his actions. What is the meaning of such a figure? Anthropologists describe the myths in which he occurs, record the part that mythology appears to play in terms of the social structure of a people, and leave it at that. Radin himself points out that the problem is basically a psychological one.

In the next part of the book Karl Kerényi discusses the Trickster in relation to Hermes in Greek mythology, and he is followed by Dr C. G. Jung who adds the concluding section on the psychology of the Trickster figure. He points out that all mythological figures correspond to inner psychic experiences and originally sprang from them. If we look more closely at the stories about the Trickster he shows himself to be undifferentiated and unconscious; there is an account of one of his hands fighting the other. He appears as a male being but can turn himself into a woman, marry and bear children. He is stupid and gets into all kinds of silly situations from which he often comes out badly. He outwits animals and is himself outwitted by them. In the end he develops attributes of a creator in that he makes all kinds of useful plants out of his genitals, which till then have been concerned only with idealistic fantasies. He gropes his way between the opposites.

For the people who tell and listen to these stories they create a direct and beneficial impact with the unconscious, whether they are understood or not. Radin points out that there is a partial transformation of certain aspects of the Trickster in that he becomes progressively more sensible and useful (because more conscious), which probably indicates that these aspects are becoming integrated in the conscious life of the people.

But the Trickster is found in the psychic life of more civilized man and his rôle there is of the same nature. He represents the undifferentiated, contradictory, ambiguous other self, containing all potentiality. He is the 'shadow' in Jung's terminology, which can be the healer

because he himself is wounded, and it is the willing sufferer who in the end can integrate suffering.

Anyone who gives himself the pleasure of reading these stories must be struck by the complete absence of moral censure. This is the key-stone to an understanding, and therefore to the integration, of the unconscious contents of the psyche. They are neither good nor bad: like the Trickster, they exist. What is done with them when they become conscious is another matter. Jung illustrates something of this by relating what he calls some 'strange ecclesiastical customs' of the early Middle Ages. He mentions a report of 1198 which says that on the Feast of Circumcision in Notre-Dame, Paris, 'so many abominations and shameful deeds' were committed during the uproarious dancing and rejoicing that the Holy Place was desecrated 'not only with smutty jokes, but even by the shedding of blood'. Pope Innocent III inveighed against the 'jests and madness that make the clergy a mockery' and 'the shameless frenzy of their play-acting'. This is a notable picture of unconscious contents projected into a conscious life providing insufficient means of expression for the more emotional and instinctive needs and a more earthy spirituality.

We may, however, see more in this myth than is noted in the commentaries included in the book. Trickster at the beginning sets out as a *Peace chief* going on the *War path*. This indicates that he is undertaking a journey into the inner world of his own psychic contents. He experiments and explores, feels isolated and bewildered, but in the end, out of the chaos of his misconceptions, he emerges as a saviour figure familiar with all the confusions of life having both 'plunged into the ocean' and 'soared into the sky'.

DORIS LAYARD

ALFRED ADLER: *An Introduction to His Psychology*. By Lewis Way. (Penguin Books; 3s. 6d.)

The fundamental conceptions of Adler's psychological teaching have passed into our everyday mode of thinking to such an extent that our indebtedness to Adler has remained unacknowledged for many years now. For instance, it is common—even commonplace—knowledge that the position in the family of a child influences his psychological development; that neurotic symptoms of a bodily nature tend to cluster round an organic centre which represents a *locus minoris resistentiae*; that we automatically compensate for the subjective experience of inferiority (conscious or subconscious); that children thrive on love and encouragement rather than the crack of the whip. We owe all these important psychological facts to Adler, whose enunciation of them—often enough, in clumsy, tiresome, repetitive and pompous terms—has