

tant ideas which she presents are frequently mutilated by a complicated and at times incomprehensible style of writing.

Her position is reached after an examination of ritual, magic and miracle, and a variety of social aspects of primitive communities. The anthropological data requires expert assessment beyond my capacity although her destructive criticism of previous workers particularly Frazer reads in places as the promised fulfillment of a personal vendetta. Her treatment of psychological theory is no less hostile, but since it is limited almost entirely to Freudian libido theory, little discussion is possible (when will social scientists note that besides Freud, there

were such people as Jung, Adler, the Neo-Freudians and the Behaviourists?)

Despite its limitations in style and approach this book is significant. By considering purity behaviour as an attempt to impose order on disorder, it shifts the significance of taboo, and prohibitions from the realm of immutable natural laws to a possibility of change and modification as comprehension of the disorder deepens and integration is possible. The importance of this for christianity and particularly roman catholicism with its hitherto rigid and inflexible approach, particularly in sexual matters is beyond doubt.

J. DOMINIAN

THE NATURE OF PSYCHOLOGY: A selection of Papers, Essays, and other Writings by Kenneth J. W. Craik. *C.U.P.*; 30/-.

To those who have studied psychology in British universities since the war, Craik has heretofore been known mainly for his short book called 'The Nature of Explanation', and as a name with which those of their teachers who knew him were wont to conjure. Killed in an accident in 1945 at the age of 31, and with his published works dating only from 1937, he can now be seen, in this collection of his posthumous papers, to merit the praises of his admirers and the deep regrets expressed over his death.

Craik's publications read more like entries in an encyclopaedia of psychology than the work of one man. He ranged during his eight years as an active research worker over the fields of retinal physiology, theories of measurement, philosophy of science, the design of the artificial cockpit for pilot training, and visual perception. Throughout the papers runs a hard core of precise, brilliant thought. And perhaps the most direct tribute to his genius is that to someone who, like the writer, studied psychology 10 years after Craik's death, many of the ideas which he put forward were ones we took for granted.

Apart from the specialised interest which the book will hold for psychologists, however, there is a second major contribution which it holds for any reader. It contains the draft chapters for a book which was to succeed 'The Nature

of Explanation', and which shows that Craik could have written the first formal text on what we now call cybernetics, at least with respect to its analysis of the brain. The chapters we have left of 'The Nature of Human Action', as the book was to be called, are clearer than any other account of the subject known to the reviewer. Moreover, although written before 1945 and unfinished, they can stand even now as an accurate formulation of the subject. Here, expressed with extreme clarity, are the ideas of purposeful machines; of the mechanistic models of learning by feedback; of artificial nerve cell nets to simulate behaviour. Of few people it can be said that their unfinished work is the best introduction to a field of thought which only developed after their death. And those who wish to understand the way in which these ideas impinge on the traditional ways of thought about mind, mechanism and the nature of man, will probably not find the position stated more clearly in any book of comparable price. As a bonus, some of the shorter pieces include what must rank among the best descriptions of a scientist's experience of the value of his work, and of life and beauty, that have been written in modern times.

This is a most remarkable collection of essays.

NEVILLE MORAY