

British Museum has a unique collection of Victoriana, in which pursuits such as the violation of child virgins, flagellation to death, sodomy, and bestiality, are written about with a commitment that might well influence the more susceptible reader. Many of the books in the Private Case are harmless or quietly amusing. Few would be shocked by *Aristotle's Master Piece*, a bumbling account of the facts of life, and an eighteenth century treatise on masturbation (*A Treatise on the Crime of Onan*) is equally innocuous. Other books are not so innocent.

Then there are the practical reasons why books should be kept locked away. Reading room officials have an unenviable task; it is their aim to have the books in their care returned *virgo intacta*, especially rare erotica, but, as Mr Fryer relates, 'some people are kinky about such books. They cannot help themselves. Their fingers itch for a pencil, or a sharp knife, or the thrill of possession.' If all the Private Case books were made available to all readers – and it is no difficult task to acquire a reader's ticket, especially a temporary one – one suspects that historians, sociologists, and sexologists would plead for a reintroduction of some kind of censorship. Even with the present strict control on Private Case books there is evidence that the mutilator, have been at work. Freedom to read what one would is all very well; freedom to read, marks annotate, scribble, tear pages out, or steal?

Unquestionably British Museum officialdom has been coy, obscurantist, petty and don-like in the worst possible way. Peter Fryer's trials and tribulations in the exploration of the *terra incognita* emphasize this; his first encounter with the mysteries of the order came when he applied for Iwan Bloch's *Sexual Life in England Past and Present*, and his application slip was returned marked, 'please see superintendent'. 'That gentleman was as courteous as most of the mus-

eum officials are, leaving aside one notable exception of each sex. He had to satisfy himself, he said, that my purpose in applying for Bloch's book was serious and that I was unlikely to steal, mark, or mutilate it.' Mr Fryer, being a presentable young man, passed the scrutiny. He had the mien of a man not likely to steal mark,, or mutilate.

One's sympathies are divided between the genuine researchers aggravated by polite formulae, and the reading room staff, who are helpful and intelligent in a way few librarians are today, and who themselves are as puzzled by Private Case etiquette as anyone. It is not fair that dons from remote and respectable colleges should be given preferential treatment over a writer who may only manage to squeeze in a couple of hours on a Saturday morning; it is not fair that timid and retiring researchers should be subjected to a brutal scrutiny by officials who, for all one knows, may be looking for a twitch; especially, and this is surely the main point of Mr Fryer's book, once one has been screened, one should at least know the extent of the territory available for scrutiny. The catalogue of the Private Case should be accessible.

My own experiences of the Private Case situation have been pleasant. In blissful ignorance of procedure, I applied to R. A. Wilson, the Principal Keeper of Printed Books, for permission to browse amongst the books of the Private Case. 'I cannot allow you to have immediate access to the cases themselves', wrote Mr Wilson, but 'shall have no hesitation in allowing you to read the books kept in the so-called Private Cases in this Library.' Had I been allowed the free run of the Private Cases I should have established a precedent, and Mr Fryer's excellent book would have been super-numerary.

RONALD PEARSALL

THE BOUNDS OF SENSE: AN ESSAY ON KANT'S CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, by P. F. Strawson. pp. 296. *Methuen*, 1966, 35s.

Mr Strawson's book on Kant is likely (together with Jonathan Bennett's *Kant's Analytic*, published about the same time) to initiate a renewed discussion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the English speaking philosophical world. Strawson's great achievement is to get behind Kant's barbarous and often inconsistent terminology and contrived architectonic to his problems and his solutions seen afresh as living philosophical

issues. We are forcibly reminded again that Kant was one of the most powerful pertinacious, penetrating and original minds in the history of Western philosophy, and that no time spent in grappling with his thought can ever be wasted. Mr Strawson's own time, so far from being wasted, has produced what must be accounted at least the philosophical book of the year.

Mr Strawson's title is appropriate in two ways

for Kant was exploring both the bounds of meaning and the bounds of the sensibly perceptible. The limits of meaningful assertion are defined for Kant by his principle of significance, the principle that, in Mr Strawson's words, 'there can be no legitimate, or even meaningful, employment of ideas or concepts which does not relate them to empirical or experiential conditions of their application' (p. 16). It is on this side of his thought that Kant is among the ancestors of logical positivism and of the kind of 'making an experientiable difference' criterion of factual meaningfulness that remains today as the acceptable deposit of logical positivism.

The bounds of the sensibly experientiable are sought in Kant's investigation of that limiting framework of ideas and principles which are essential to the awareness of a sense field, and which are therefore implicit in our concept of conscious experience. The point of central interest is Kant's persistent wrestling with the question of objectivity. That is to say, in showing that the conditions of the occurrence within a unitary consciousness of a manifold of sense impressions are conditions inherent in the structure of consciousness itself, Kant does not want to arrive at the conclusion that the experienced world exists only as a mind-dependent phenomenon. He continually uses the non-solipsist language of a community of experiencers. He wants to think, in basically commonsense terms, of an individual's stream of experiences as, in Mr Strawson's illuminating phrase, 'a single, subjective, experiential route, one among other possible subjective routes through the same objective world' (p. 104). Kant welds subjectivity and objectivity together in his famous, but notoriously difficult, transcendental deduction of the categories. Mr

Strawson states Kant's conclusion as follows: 'What is required for a series of experiences to belong to a single consciousness is that they should possess precisely that rule-governed connectedness which is also required for them collectively to constitute a temporally extended experience of a single objective world' (pp. 92–3). As Strawson comments, 'what Kant above all insisted on in the Transcendental Deduction was the necessity of a certain unity or connectedness of experiences, just that connectedness which involves and is involved by the employment of concepts of objects conceived of as together constituting an objective world. The conception of an objective world is bound up with the conception of alternative possible experiential routes through it, with the distinction between subjective experience and the world of which it is experience, and with the possibility of empirical self-consciousness' (p. 121).

These are only indications of one of the main themes. Mr Strawson offers detailed and patient disentanglings of Kant's often tortuous discussions. The *Critique* is so rich in exciting insights and novel arguments that it should not be surprising that it also includes some fallacious reasoning and a number of instances of a point of view being forced into unsuitable moulds supplied by the logic or the science of Kant's own day. At these points Mr Strawson is ruthless in his criticisms. But the total effect is to make more clearly apparent the truly epoch-making importance of Kant's thought and its direct relevance to philosophical work today.

No book that deals honestly with so difficult a work as the *Critique of Pure Reason* could itself be easy to read, and Mr Strawson's is no exception. But it is definitely a book to read, and then to read again after a return to Kant's own text.

JOHN H. HICK

THE LAWS IN THE PENTATEUCH AND OTHER ESSAYS by Martin Noth, translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas: *Oliver & Boyd*. pp. xiv + 289. 55s.

Martin Noth is a scholar whose work illuminates areas far beyond his chosen field of study. The eleven essays in this book originally appeared in German between 1940 and 1958 in a wide range of periodicals and Festschriften; it is good to have them in an accessible form.

The essays are all concerned with the Old Testament; they range in time from pre-conquest influences on Israelite covenant making to the period of the apocalyptic writings, and in scope from the sources and authority of Israelite

law to the Hebrew attitude towards history. Except for the first one, they are comparatively short, but these shorter studies penetrate into the heart of the problems they are examining. Noth's combination of sharp insight and wide concern for fact is well shown in his examination of the work of the 'Myth and Ritual' school of thought associated with S. H. Hooke, which he criticises in the essay 'God, King and People in the Old Testament'. '... we need the sort of scientifically controlled intuition which is indispensable in all