

The Christian message is always the same, but it has to be presented to each generation in terms which are suited to its particular mode of thought. This is the most convincing presentation of that message to our own generation which we have seen.

BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

**SPINOZA'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.** By G. H. R. Parkinson. (Oxford University Press; Geoffrey Cumberlege; 21s.)

Spinoza has been most often studied as first and foremost a metaphysician, with his theory of knowledge forming a chapter of his metaphysics. Among modern philosophers, Samuel Alexander liked to claim descent from Spinoza, and, for all the idiosyncrasy of the claim, it drew attention to an important feature of the affinity between the two thinkers: their refusal to make the construction of a metaphysical system wait upon the 'theory of knowledge'. This latter, as Alexander insisted, was to be only 'a chapter, though an important one, in the wider science of metaphysics, and not its indispensable foundation'. The great merit of Dr Parkinson's book is that it subjects this 'important chapter' of Spinoza's metaphysics to a careful scrutiny, which shows it to have had a much more decisive influence—though always interwoven with metaphysics—on the whole of which it forms a part, than either Spinoza or Alexander would have admitted.

The book begins with a study of the methodology Spinoza set himself, and concludes that the 'geometrical order' in which he cast the *Ethics* was demanded by, and expressed the deductive nature of, his methodology. Following Spinoza, however, into the construction of this deductive system, Dr Parkinson finds that, in fact, Spinoza's conclusions do not 'follow from his premises in the same way that the theorems of geometry follow from axioms and definitions'. In this, as in his rejection of the view that the geometrical order was adopted by Spinoza as a method of exposition without involving a claim to express a deductive system, he is surely right. His own suggestion is that Spinoza appears to have chosen 'to exhibit synthetic *a priori* truths in a guise more suited to analytic truths—that of a mathematical system. He wanted to say that all things depended on God, for in this way he summed up that unity of system at which the science of his time aimed. But he failed to note that their dependence on God was not a logical dependence. . . .' This suggestion is offered to make sense of the discrepancy between the claims and the achievements of the methodology; as an account of what Spinoza 'wanted to say', it would, indeed, hardly do. But to be fair to this study, it should be pointed out that it has set itself a more limited, and perhaps a more fruitful, task. And this is here carried out with admirable clarity and precision, without, at the same

time, ascribing to Spinoza interests which would have been as foreign to him as is the philosophical language of the modern critic.

A.M.

NATURE AND THE GREEKS. By Erwin Schrödinger. (Cambridge; 10s. 6d.)

This is a book which performs a good deal less than it promises. In hopes of solving the problems of modern science, it examines the thought of the Early Greek philosophers, first because they had not yet divorced their philosophy from experimental observation, and secondly because they are a source of the present-day scientist's basic presuppositions. Unfortunately neither of these assumptions is very easy to prove. As Hegel discovered, the pre-Socratics are a gift for philosophers of history, for it is possible to read into them almost anything one pleases. Certainly anyone who approaches them without specialized knowledge is apt to find in them simply what he first brings. Nor does Dr Schrödinger show signs of having made use of the best available guides; he mentions neither Cornford nor Miss Freeman, though he has high praise for Russell's brilliantly inaccurate and Farrington's somewhat tendentious accounts. Thus we are not, for example, very surprised to find a Kantian scepticism pervading this ancient world, nor to see Dr Schrödinger's own distrust of particle-theory emerging from his discussion of the atomists. In the last chapter the results of this survey are summarized: it turns out that we have inherited from the Greeks a belief in the intelligibility of the material universe, along with an oversimplified scientific world-picture got by ruling out the person of the observer, and lacking many features of the common-sense world. No doubt Dr Schrödinger, like most of his readers, knew this before.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

THE CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC IN NATURAL PHILOSOPHY; an inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford. By G. Temple. (Clarendon Press; 2s. 6d.)

Firmly setting aside the sublime and the prophetic styles of inaugural lecturing, Professor Temple chooses, so he tells us, the familiar. It was a wise choice, for he is master of this 'modest and friendly manner', a manner, surely, that is peculiarly Oxford's own. There are some newcomers not to be thought of as strangers; it is thus that Oxford will welcome her new Sedleian professor of natural philosophy.

The basis of his lecture is the fact of 'two great movements in natural philosophy—one leading from experiment to general principles and the other returning from general principles to experiment'. It is perhaps worth noting that there seem to be very few modes of thought in which a similar distinction is not to be found. In particular,