

Of the philosophical journals *Pensamiento*, the Jesuit quarterly, contains in the number for April-June 1960 articles by José Gómez Caffarena on the Analogy of Being, and on Nature and Substance by Alejandro Roldán. Among the *Notes, Texts and Comments* is an account of the conference held in Cologne in 1959 between representatives of Oriental and Western cultures, at which the mutual relations between Moslem and Christian cultures during the Middle Ages were discussed. There were more than fifty participants, representing sixteen countries. The purpose of the Congress was to decide upon the subject of present investigations in the field of Islamic philosophy, the possibility of work in common and of the exchange of information and documents; also the editing of Arabic texts. Problems of translation in the Middle Ages arising from the difficulty of obtaining access to the sources formed an interesting point of discussion. Father Daniel Callus, o.p., lectured to the Congress on the Introduction of Arabic Philosophy in Oxford.

The *Revista de Filosofía*, which appears twice-yearly, opens the number for April-September 1960 with a long and interesting article on the influence of Bergson, in the first stages of his thought, on Antonio Machado. Other articles deal with the Phenomenology of Gaston Berger, with Husserl and with Keyserling. Francisco Subinos contributes a discussion on Technics and Humanism. The Notes include a detailed criticism of a work by Luis Cencillo: *Experiencia Profunda del Ser (bases para una Ontología de la Revelación)*. The books reviewed include French, German, English and American works, as well as Spanish. In the June number of *Arbor*, José María Garate Córdoba writes on the end of time in the Philosophy of History.

K. POND

HEARD AND SEEN

Form and Content on the South Bank

ITS most fervent partisans would hardly deny that the British Film Institute is idiosyncratic in its choice of films: a glance at *Sight and Sound*, a cursory examination of any season's programmes at the National Film Theatre would be enough to make the point. Commitment, engagement, the primacy of content over form, if not of mind over matter; a leaning towards the left and a slightly self-conscious protest, a discernible intellectual sniff when it comes to social or moral convention, and a disinclination to see much real validity in films lacking such characteristics—all this the wise picture-goer will discount, making his own use of the excellent things made available by one of the most dedicated bodies in British cinema.

The 1960 London Film Festival, held on the South Bank in the wet and windswept autumn, illustrated some of the pitfalls of so firmly-held a position. It will be recalled that the London selection committee chooses its films from amongst those which have won prizes, or approval, during the

current year at one or other of the major European festivals, but no prizes are awarded in the framework of the London fortnight; in addition, the authorities issue special invitations to a few films which may not have been shown or gained any special notice in any other festival, but which they think will prove of interest to the specialized audiences at the National Film Theatre. And in this connection I found it mildly amusing that one of the most interesting pictures shown this time was one of these special invitees, which turned out to be a classic demonstration of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* theories, and so, one would have said, in flat contradiction in method and theme to all that the *Sight and Sound* school stand for. This was François Truffaut's second film, *Tirez sur le Pianiste*, which was shot, like the unforgettable *Quatre Cents Coups*, exclusively on location; the director has used streets, fields, and actual interiors with such feeling for their nature that the picture gains immeasurably in depth and weight. He has taken his story from an undistinguished American thriller, translated it into French terms, and by the alchemy of his direction and the quality of his actors, particularly of Charles Aznavour as the pianist and Nicole Berger as his wife, has transmuted it into the purest cinematic gold. The camera-work—Decae again—is brilliantly apposite, and certain shots from inside moving cars, others swooping down from high buildings or raking up their towering flanks, an almost subliminal glimpse of a girl silhouetted against snowy fields, are nothing short of masterly. Not moral, quite without a message, committed to nothing except the use of its medium, this film was a delight to see and its showing a tribute to the objectivity of the selectors.

Three other films shown had come trailing clouds of glory if not of official laurels from other festivals. Bergman's *Virgin Spring* shows his work at its violent, tormented and visually beautiful best, but it is in a recognizable progression. The two Italian films, on the other hand, Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* and Antonioni's *Avventura*, were *sui generis* and, in a way, the highlights of the fortnight. *Avventura* is essentially a director's film, and combines extremely beautiful and significant images with a story of great subtlety but little movement: a youngish man and his fiancée go on a yachting party; she disappears, they begin to search for her; gradually the lover and Claudia, the girl's best friend, realize to their dismay that they are more concerned with their own relationship than in the loss of Anna. We never find Anna, we never know why or where she went, but we know almost all about the other two before the finish. The director has, for the most part, avoided the dangers inherent in his slow tempo by playing it out in close-up, both visual and psychological, against the brisk pace of ordinary life going on around. A very sad, sensual, tactile film, it has made an enormous impact on those who have seen it. *Rocco*, on the other hand, is full of stormy cries of protest against the human condition: it is savage, passionate and sometimes gratuitously sensational. Both in the character of the hero, who makes all his worst mistakes when most consciously striving to do good, and in its view of human relationships, I found it curiously reminiscent of Dostoevsky, though I doubt whether this is in any way due to the Communism of the director, for Alyosha is hardly smiled upon by the purists of

Soviet writing. The film is very long, and one staggered out feeling that one had undergone an experience of some magnitude, and this less because of the horror of the scenes of rape and murder than for the pitiful predicament of this family of five brothers and old mother, come up from the south to see what they can make of life in rich Milan, and finding that what they achieve is disaster.

There were twenty-eight films to be seen in the South Bank—films from East Europe, including Poland's extremely brave *Bad Luck*, with its gay criticism of almost everything; two social-realism Spanish films, films from the Far East, *Studs Lonigan* from America; two Russian films, both shown at Cannes, and a very odd production indeed from Greece in Michael Cacoyannis' *Our Last Spring* which was really very bad, and yet so intriguing that I feel I shall remember it long after I have forgotten much better works. Without the British Film Institute we might have had to wait months and years to see many of these, so let us be grateful to their enterprise whilst not overlooking their prejudices.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I was much interested by Mr Avery's article on Christian Ideas of Islam in your issue of November, but I should like to put certain thoughts before your readers, whom I cannot expect to read my book, which he reviews.

About the medieval Christian attitude: the writers of that formative age are our masters in many ways; where we have an advantage over them is in not being bound by a political situation which forced them to concentrate on points of difference. In the case of Communism we are like them. We feel that it threatens, and we concentrate on its faults. Readers of *BLACK-FRIARS* in a thousand years' time may think that we were blind to truths that co-existed with error, but no one will feel superior to us for not seeing Marxist-Leninism altogether dispassionately. One contemporary interest in the study of the medieval approach to Islam lies in the light it sheds on the attitudes of good and intelligent men caught up in the antagonism of hostile cultures.

I think I must insist that we have to judge the reactions of a society by its literate and articulate representatives. Material on the popular view of Islam in the Middle Ages is limited, and so was that view; once it is stated, there is little more to say. It is the whole attitude of society that is interesting, and this by definition articulate people best reveal; but I cannot trespass on your space by summarizing what I have said in my book on the social psychology of prejudice, or of the effect on beliefs of personal situations of horrible difficulty.

The medievals are our masters in that they covered much of the field with intelligence, interest and, often, learning, which we need not, should