

Gita 'flat' and 'jejune', though it is often done by Europeans, seems to show an extraordinary degree of insensitivity. But on the whole there is little cause for complaint, and the chapters on Marxism and Existentialism are exceptionally good.

When it comes to the presentation of the Christian faith itself, Dr Neill's position is more open to criticism, yet it deserves attention. In the first place he is deliberately honest and critical about the actual state of the present Christian Churches. He sees the need for a severe self-criticism on the part of Christians and a return to the most authentic traditions of the faith. It is clear that both Kierkegaard and Karl Barth hold a high place in his esteem. But when it comes to the fundamental basis of Christian faith his position though firm is so broad that it hardly goes beyond what might be generally accepted by the most 'liberal' Christian. It is clear that before the dialogue with other religions can become at all effective, the dialogue between Christians seeking a definite measure of agreement in their common faith has still to go a long way.

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SCHOLASTICISM: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy, by Josef Pieper; Faber and Faber; 21s.

Hegel, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, excused himself for skipping over the period between the sixth and the seventeenth centuries with seven-league boots because 'it is as prolix as it is trivial, dreadfully written and voluminous'. M. Gilson and a few other scholars have done much to change this picture for us, but the life which their work has breathed into some of the dry bones has been slow to make itself more widely felt; the Pelican-reading public is still left in secure enjoyment of its Hegelian picture. Herr Pieper, who has devoted several books to the study of the thought of St Thomas, has now written the best general introduction to medieval philosophy known to me.

His book begins with Boethius, 'the first of the scholastics'. In this choice of a starting point Pieper makes some illuminating remarks on the general character of medieval philosophy. Contrasting Boethius with Augustine (a little more than a century earlier), he comments on the radical cleavage between the worlds to which the two men belonged: Augustine still breathed the air of the *imperium Romanum*, the intellectual climate of antiquity was still a living reality to him and to his contemporaries; Boethius belonged to a world in which Rome and the civilization of classical antiquity were quickly becoming a relic to be carefully protected and fostered even by a barbarian king. Boethius is the first 'scholastic' in that he was the first creative thinker of considerable power who deliberately used his gifts in the task of assimilating and transmitting to posterity the classical heritage of philosophy. Throughout his account of medieval philosophy Pieper lays stress on this process of learning, of digesting and assimilating something received rather than created. This is the sense he

gives to 'scholasticism', and it is within this framework that he discusses the significance and the originality of individual contributions to its development. He explains the sterility and dissolution of later scholasticism as the consequence of adhering too rigidly to the established procedures, assisted by the institutionalization of 'the machinery for acquiring knowledge', at a time when the basic tasks of philosophy were changing and could no longer be confined within the perspective of 'the primarily "learning" attitude' characteristic of scholasticism. Pieper treats this time-span between Boethius and William of Ockham by approaching it through the outstanding philosophical personalities and the problems with which they were grappling. In this way a living world of thought is allowed to take shape before the reader's eyes. What it lacks in 'completeness' can easily be supplied by a dozen or more dreary catalogues of views which go by the name of 'outline' or 'introduction' to medieval thought.

The translation is clear and generally reads well: the original has not been available to me for comparison. It has a slight but unpredictably erratic tendency to adopt Latin personal names when English would do, a similar lack of consistency in its use of designatives, and an irritatingly inept manner of citing medieval works by a German title (e.g., Abelard's *Leidensgeschichte*) and giving references to citations only to the page of a particular German edition.

R. A. MARKUS

**DIVINITY AND EXPERIENCE: The Religion of the Dinka**, by Godfrey Lienhardt; Oxford University Press; 42s.

Dr Lienhardt's approach to Dinka religion is in a sense a return to the classical problem of Tylor and Frazer, the modes of conscious thought of the average believer in a primitive religion, but he has used modern methods of field work and shows a keen understanding of the social framework in which the religious idiom of the Dinka is expressed.

The Dinka might be regarded as slightly degenerate monotheists or as pantheists, or as polytheists. These are all European concepts; for the Dinka the monotheistic or pantheistic terms in which divinity may be spoken of reflect their awareness of human experience vis-a-vis the ultra-human as a unity, while beliefs in individual Powers reflect particular configurations of experience.

For Dr Lienhardt, the basic religious experience of the Dinka comes from their awareness of the world of nature. With these perceptions of, say, rain or lightning are joined the experience of external events, moral values, and states of mind (for the Dinka do not, like Europeans, clearly distinguish the inner and outer worlds) to form images. These images are personified as Powers, manifested by their action on men.

To the action of the Powers, man replies by sacrifice, in which both the acknowledgment of human weakness, and the re-assertion of human vitality