

One need not be told, therefore, that Dr Langmead-Casserley is in sympathy with, and admiration of, 'the once despised and perversely interpreted philosophy of the middle ages' and that he gives full credit to 'the greatness and lasting value of its achievement in metaphysics' and still more in ethics. (cf. p. 76.) He shows that various modern systems of ethical theory represent 'a falling away from the comprehensiveness, concreteness and realism of medieval ethical theory'. (p. 72.) And, in another very illuminating sentence, he indicates how 'the violence of modern politics and the predatory self-assertion and self-interest characteristic of an industrial and commercialised civilisation' follow from the substitution of 'the concept of sovereignty, in which man appears as the maker and master of law', for 'the (thomistic) concept of an absolute rule of law to which all forms of human power must submit'. (p. 146.)

One only regrets that Dr Langmead-Casserley is not more fully master of the thomistic synthesis. He would then distinguish more clearly between the natural and the supernatural (pp. 51, 139); the problem that gives him so much trouble—the distinction between man and nature—might even appear to be a pseudo-problem; he would see that the institution of property not only can be defended, but that it must be upheld (p. 54); he would, I think, revise his estimate, at least as touching thomism, 'that medieval thought as a whole underestimates the extent of the relative element in social ethics'. (p. 59); and he would certainly not have committed himself to the suggestion that men are not 'even usually free and responsible'. (p. 143.)

These remarks are meant as a compliment to a writer whose work is worthy of real study and critical appraisal.

ÆGIDIUS DOOLAN, O.P.

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY. By E. E. Evans-Pritchard. (Cohen and West; 8s. 6d.)

Most people who have dipped into the vast mass of anthropological writing find themselves very quickly bewildered by the variety and divergence of the views which they encounter. We come across a whole forest of facts, but these facts seem to mean quite different things in each of the works we consult. At times it appears that such writings are essays of creative imagination and that each expert recreates the history of cultures and institutions in the light of some intuition derived from whatever may be the integrating feature of his own *Weltanschauung*. Our confusion is increased when we pick up one of the modern 'field work' monographs, for we probably do so in the hope that they will provide evidence which will refute or confirm some theory which we have encountered in Marrett, or James, or Frazer; instead, they seem

to be concerned with something quite different and to have a quite different purpose.

The great merit of Professor Evans-Pritchard's book is that it clears up a good many of our difficulties. His sketch of the history of anthropological writing provides a key to the understanding of the classic works of the last century and gives an introduction to a very stimulating discussion of the method employed in social anthropology.

The method of the great pioneers was sober documentary research. In spite of its great value, their work was dominated by the genetic approach, by the desire to explain the present by the past, the nearer by the farther, and this led them to embark on historical reconstructions of doubtful value. They loved to construct scales of progress which were regarded as complete explanations, and to formulate dogmas which were more properly philosophical than capable of anthropological verification.

Of recent years, passing through a number of phases, a reaction has set in. The emphasis has shifted from the comparative consideration of facts to a study of the structure, in the sense of the integrating harmonies, of the social life of the community. Customs are no longer considered as if they were things, for it is stressed that they are rather abstractions based on the comparison of sets of relations between persons. Thus what are studied are not entities but relations which derive their significance from the pattern in which they are found in a particular grouping. This implies that the function of a particular cultural fact can only be seen in terms of the structure or harmony of relations which integrates a set of relationships into a system in which all the given part-facts are interdependent.

Such a functional approach departs both from the diffusionist and the psychological views of anthropology. It may be felt that the departure is a little too decided, though it is true that social anthropology in the sense defined by Dr Evans-Pritchard is not a venture in depth-psychology or historical reconstruction. The danger of the functional approach, as Dr Evans-Pritchard makes clear, is that it tends to conceive of its task as the discovery of sociological laws, with the implied claim that such laws will have the same liberating effect on the social sciences as the discoveries and method of Galileo had in natural science. The final portion of this work is devoted to a criticism of this view, and Dr Evans-Pritchard claims that social anthropology is an art rather than a science. As the scholastics would say, the simile is derived from physical science but is analogically applied in the study of the structure of societies.

The work of the social anthropologist falls into three stages and these stages illustrate the method of the discipline:

- i. The impressionist phase, in which the anthropologist lives with a given people absorbing their outlook and translating it into the values of his own culture;
- ii. The interpretative phase, in which the significance of details is seen in terms of a structure known and felt, this being expressed in a set of interrelated abstractions;
- iii. The comparative phase, in which patterns are compared and hypotheses advanced.

Dr Evans-Pritchard's account of this is impressive and quite clearly he does draw attention to an important aspect of life in society. The question the book leaves us brooding on is whether a pattern for anthropology has at last been discovered or whether once again we are dealing with an image-model, derived, perhaps unconsciously, from contemporary philosophic theory.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

CONFUCIUS, THE MAN AND THE MYTH. By H. G. Creel. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.)

This, the English edition of a book published in America in 1949, embodies many years' research into the Confucian question. Confucius the questioner, the innovator, the democrat, has been overlaid by a later 'Confucian orthodoxy' dating from the Han Period, when his school was first adopted by the state and made to serve the purposes of despotism, benevolent or otherwise. The ancient texts, not even the *Analects* excepted, were distorted and interpolated and the picture so confused by Taoist and Legalist infiltrations that the great advocate of government for the people's happiness, of popular education and of equal opportunity for all men, was well-nigh lost in the reactionary pedant of later official tradition. Not quite lost; for there were always a few discerning scholars, among whom the Jesuit missionaries have an honourable place, who could brush away these cobwebs and appreciate the true genius of the Sage.

Professor Creel tells the story most competently, with close reference to the voluminous Chinese sources and a copious bibliography. The interest is chiefly social and political, and the influence of Confucius (through the Jesuits) on the European philosophers of the Enlightenment and (through the latter) on Western democracy is adequately sketched. The metaphysical and religious element is notoriously evanescent in the original Confucius, when detached from later syncretism, but it is not entirely absent and perhaps too little is made of it here. In spite of his guardedly agnostic approach to ethics, a transcendental background can be seen in the Sage's references to 'Heaven' and the cosmic harmony and the mission laid on him by Heaven.

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