D. Z. Phillips). Both parties insist that Christian discourse is in some sense 'beyond criticism', and on the irrelevance of our general notions as to what the world is like. It may be thought that Barth, unlike Bultmann, wants to have it both ways. He wants to be a *realist*, but at the same time avoid the checks on one's language which realism presupposes. The 'Wittgensteinian Transcendentalist' (to borrow a phrase from Professor Hepburn), on the other hand, does not claim to be a realist, save in a very Pickwickian sense; to this extent he is being more consistent.

PAUL GORNER

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF: A PHILOSOPHY OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE by Michael Novak; *Darton Longman and Todd*; 30/–.

Michael Novak is best known in England for his outstanding report on the second session of the Vatican Council (*The Open Church*) and his symposium *The Experience of Marriage*. Now from the same publisher comes a philosophical essay which has been long in the making and which is clearly a serious and intelligent contribution to the philosophy of religion.

Mr Novak's fundamental sympathies – though not his style or terminology – are with the thought of the French phenomenologists. Sartre and Camus represent to him the best in honest, intelligent and sincere unbelief. But it seems to me that it is a pity that in his book he has turned to Bernard Lonergan rather than to Merleau-Ponty for the analytical tools his position requires. Often, in the details of his thinking, I wished for the kind of meditative *argument*, and the concrete precision of thought to be found in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

The kernel of the philosophical argument is that man is ineradicably a conscious subject thrown into the world, and he cannot be properly or adequately described from outside of himself as if he were simply one species of object in that world. The totally alien world of external objects, which was the product of empiricist thinking in the line of Locke and Hume, is an intellectual artefact wiich actually presupposes a farmore primitive engagement of consciousness with the world we experience. My most basic awareness is of myself as a conscious subject, a personal identity, enmeshed in the world. To think of myself as part of the world I have first of all to set up a certain dissociation of myself from the world which inevitably distorts – by objectifying – my own most primordial experience. This subjectivity of mine is inescapable, and underlies all my acts. But it is, all the same, possible to give a certain analysis of it. And such an analysis reveals a structure, or pattern of typical acts: awareness, insight, reflective consciousness and the drive to understand. Furthermore, a thoughtful meditation on these acts shows that they each seem to demand a fulfilment which they cannot find within the sphere of personal life as we experience it. They seem to have, as their true resting-place a personality which transends our own life: and this is what we mean by God.

There are a number of questions that Mr Novak's argument raises but which he does not explicitly face. For the believer, perhaps the most crucial is, if we conceive of God as the ultimate objective of our 'drive to understand', is it possible to give God that independence from created things which traditional theology at any rate seems to insist upon? On Mr Novak's view, it would appear that to say that God created the world *freely* – that is, that he does not need the world – is strictly senseless. For the very concept of God is bound up inextricably with our own creaturely subjective activity in understanding. To speak of God as either needing or not needing his creatures would seem to be just a category-mistake, or breaking of the rules for speaking about him at all. I am not sure how far it is possible to go along this road without finishing up in pantheism, or heresy, or both. But neither am I sure – any more than Mr Novak is – that there is any other way of speaking intelligibly about God than in terms of our own experience as subjects. At any rate he is surely right in maintaining that to speak either of ourselves or of God in the old empiricist-type of 'object' language is useless.

Part of the trouble, however, may be due to the occasional use of such terms as 'understand' or 'aware' without it being clear that to be aware, or to understand is to be aware, and to understand *something*. This unclarity is linked to the fact that, in the very act of trying to insist upon the unity of the personality – the need to avoid speaking of the person as a union of two kinds of 'object', body and soul – one

has to use language which presupposes precisely this quality. There is here a limit to what can be said, which has analogies to Wittgenstein's distinction in the *Tractatus* between what can be said and what 'shows itself' indirectly in what can be said. And it is this limit which, I think leads Merleau-Ponty to speak of the yearning for God and for eternity as 'hypocritical'. While Mr Novak seems to sense, at times, that there is a problem here, he does not attempt any clear answer to the challenge it offers to the believer.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution the book will make, in the context of Anglo-Saxon philosophy and of the contemporary western cultural climate, lies in its *tone*. Firstly, it is frankly personal – beginning, as it does, with a confession that atheism is, at times, an almost overwhelmingly attractive position, and that such events as one's brother's murder, or the problem of civil rights, or the manifest corruption of the church, are the kind of stimulus that the philospher needs if he is to attain a wisdom which is also a basis for living. Secondly, there is the extreme tentativeness with which the philosophical position is held, and the understanding that the dividing lines today are not between intelligent atheism and intelligent christianity but rather between intelligence and stupidity themselves. Lile Professor Cameron's *Night Battle*, Mr Novak's book is a refreshing manifestation of the new style of thinking that is coming from an academic catholic philosophy that has to live with intelligent atheism (and often with unintelligent christianity) and does not find it easy to secure a foothold anywhere, except in the honesty of the pursuit of understanding, and the belief that this pursuit, wherever it may lead, is the philosopher's task.

BRIAN WICKER

USES OF SOCIOLOGY. Edited by J. D. Halloran and Joan Brothers. *Sheed and Ward, 1966*; 12*s*.

Sociology is a discipline in which, until recently, there has been slight interest in this country, but which now enjoys considerable popularity. It is therefore timely that a collection of papers about sociology and the use of sociological analysis should be published for a lay readership. For those who would like to know what sociology is, James Halloran's introductory essay will be very useful, particularly on the negative side. Sociology is not, he says, social work, social reform, socialism, statistics or polling, or what is known in Ireland as 'normative sociology' – the study of papal encyclicals on 'the social question'. The positive definition is of course more difficult, but here too readers should find what Halloran has to say quite valuable. One cannot help feeling, however, that in introducing us to the subject matter and basic concepts of sociology, he relies too much on the schemata of certain American sociologists. He also (p. 4) shares Professor D. G. MacRae's enthusiasm for the 'body of interconnected work of social research, professional criticism and shared theoretical postulates' which has grown up in America in the last ten to fifteen years. Now it is among those involved in this work that we find most of the sociologists who, to use Halloran's words, 'appear not to be concerned with, and at times even to glory in, their failure to communicate outside their own elitist cliques' (p. 15). And it is this body of work which, in contrast to, say, marxist sociology, often seems peculiarly irrelevant to actual human concerns. Hugh MacDiarmid once wrote that 'Poetry like politics maun cut/The cackle and pursue real ends', and one feels that this applies *a fortiori* to sociology, where the cackle is much louder and real ends tend to get lost in a fog of warnings against 'value-loading'. Halloran's treatment of this problem, although quite balanced and a lot better than much that has been written on this subject, seems to me less than satisfactory. The christian must surely *start* from a position of full commitment, and aim at a social theory which illuminates problems of practice. We must go much beyond the state in which 'there are at least some bridges between (sociological enquiry) and larger human hopes and purposes', to a full integration of theory and practice; unlike Halloran, I cannot see that there is any room for differences on this point.

Halloran sees this problem largely in terms of the relevance of existing sociology to social problems. Joan Brothers goes further than this and in an important paper on 'Sociology and Religion' sees a much deeper relation between sociology and christianity. She argues for synthesis, not just one-way application. She warns that 'just as in the nineteenth century the churches were slow to synthesise growing scientific knowledge with theological thought,