

sophers, including notably Père Geiger, O.P., are among the most sensitive to his contribution to our intelligence of Being.

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

ECLIPSE OF GOD. By Martin Buber. (Victor Gollancz; 15s.)

TRAGEDY IS NOT ENOUGH. By Karl Jaspers. (Victor Gollancz; 21s.)

There can be no doubt about the continued vitality of existentialism as a mode of philosophic thought. The range of its influence extends from the atheism of Sartre to the Catholicism of Gabriel Marcel. Martin Buber and Karl Jaspers stand in the middle between these two extremes. Buber as a Jewish philosopher, whose most characteristic mode of thought was revealed in his *I and Thou*, stands out as a vigorous champion of theism. His thesis in the present work is that in the crisis of the human spirit today the idea of God has undergone an eclipse; in the words of Nietzsche, 'God is dead'. This does not mean, of course, that any change has taken place in God; it means that something has come between the human mind and the reality of God, which hides that reality from men's eyes. It is Buber's contention that the cause of this eclipse is that the abstract conceptual mode of thought, which he calls the mode of 'I-It', has taken the place of the mode of living personal relationship, the 'I-Thou', and God has thus been reduced to a mere idea, a concept which can be handled by men and either approved or dismissed. 'It is the situation of the man who no longer experiences the divine as standing over against him. . . . Since he has removed himself from it existentially, he no longer knows it as standing over against him.' The battle for religion, as he conceives it, both now and at all times, is a 'struggle for the protection of the living concreteness as the meeting-place between the human and the divine'. In a chapter on Religion and Philosophy he defines the relation between these two modes of thought, the abstract and the concrete, with great insight as being determined by the 'two basic modes of our existence', the I-Thou and the I-It, each of which has its own function and its own validity. In a later chapter on Religion and Modern Thinking there are penetrating criticisms of Sartre and Heidegger, and, what is of particular interest, of Jung. Jung has, of course, always maintained that he regards religion from a purely psychological point of view and makes no metaphysical statement regarding it. But Buber maintains that Jung, in fact, constantly oversteps the bounds of the psychological and reveals himself as a Gnostic, for whom the whole of religion has been reduced to an immanent process. It is a criticism of which all followers of Jung must feel the force.

*Tragedy Is Not Enough* is a translation of a section of a long work of Jaspers on Truth. It has an introduction by Karl Deutsch, which gives some idea of Jaspers' position both as a philosopher and as a German who had to face tragedy in a very real way in his own country during the war. But in this work he is concerned primarily with tragedy as literary

phenomenon embodying a certain 'vision of reality'. It arises at certain crises in human history, such as fifth-century Athens and Shakespearean England, when new forces come to disrupt a traditional order of life; it belongs to an age of transition, 'it comes up like a flame from the fires that consume an epoch'. But the 'original vision' of the great tragic poet, like Sophocles or Shakespeare, gives an insight into the essential condition of human existence; it reveals the radical insufficiency of human life as far as the world of sense and time is concerned. It has thus a permanent value, and yet in itself it is 'not enough'; it has to find its place within the whole of a philosophy which looks beyond the temporal to what Jaspers calls 'the Encompassing'. It is a peculiarity of his theory that he denies to Christianity any sense of 'tragic knowledge'. For the Christian, he says, 'the darkness of terror is pierced by the radiance of blessedness and grace'. In a sense, no doubt, this is true. A Christian can never rest in tragic knowledge; he will always see beyond it. But in another sense we feel that his view rests on a real misunderstanding. The tragic experience lies at the very heart of Christianity; it is the experience of Gethsemane and the Cross, which every Christian has to undergo. But may it not be that too often we allow the 'consolations of religion' to blind us to the real tragedy of existence and so give ground for the view that Christianity has no real answer to it? The final significance alike of tragedy and of that 'eclipse of God', of which Buber speaks, is to be found where neither Jaspers nor Buber is prepared to look for it, in the last words from the Cross, which are repeated through history: 'Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabacthani!'

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**SIMONE WEIL AS WE KNEW HER.** By J. M. Perrin and G. Thibon. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 16s.)

We shall probably never know more of the inner life of Simone Weil, of the conflicting forces which shaped her mind and character, than can be learned from this book. It is the work of the two men who knew her most intimately (though only for a short period) at the most creative period of her life, and who moreover both loved and understood her as no one else had done. It is of the utmost significance that it was to these two men, both Catholics, the one a priest, the other a layman, that Simone Weil entrusted all her writings and gave her complete confidence. Nothing can show more clearly the extent to which she felt herself to be drawn towards the Catholic Church. On the other hand both Father Perrin and Gustave Thibon from their different points of view make it clear how immense was the gulf which actually separated her from the Church. Father Perrin writes perhaps with a more intimate understanding of her mind, and it becomes clear from his analysis how deep was the conflict between the profound intuition, which grace had given her of the mystery of Faith, and the habits of her mind which had been formed by her early education.