

tion' (p. 136). Hence, in his own account of how our brain works, Professor Young uses analogies with the new calculating devices and with the statistical treatment of population, holding that we must now 'concentrate on the *patterns* of action set up among the millions of cells'. (p. 60.)

There is little sign here, then, of the conflict spoken of by the other writers. It is true that there is an echo of Professor Ryle's criticism of the concept of mind, and a similar attack on creation, but it concerns notions that no reputable thinker has ever held, and it does not seem that Professor Young would find much to disagree with in teaching such as that of St Thomas. And surely if, as appears, the progress of science depends as much on ideas as on observations, collaboration between biologists and philosophers might be of profit to both.

L.B.

INQUIRING SPIRIT. By Kathleen Coburn. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.)

More than almost any other Englishman, Coleridge succeeded in bridging the gap between philosophy and poetry, and yet perhaps because of his peculiar ability in this direction his work remained incomplete. This was bound to be so for two reasons: he lived in an age when 'mythologies, including the Christian, were now felt to be exploded' and it was almost impossible for a man to begin his investigations from a standpoint of faith in a plan of reality. And Coleridge himself was keenly aware of the oneness of truth; it was impossible, he felt, for true poetry to be the opposite of true philosophy; their hostility was only one example of the apparent opposition of various revelations of the one same eternal truth.

It was this interplay of diversity and unity, relative and absolute, that fascinated him. Good Platonist as he was, vowed servant of the Idea, he entertained no contempt for the real and actual problems, and in passages like the following it is the voice of Aristotle we hear: 'You know, that every intellectual act, however you may distinguish it by name in respect of the originating faculties, is truly the act of the entire man. . . .' Throughout his voluminous writings this same idea is revealed, varying only in statement according to the context; the oneness of truth, the unity of substantial form, the dignity of the human person. Such agnosticism as there is is only the healthy agnosticism of any honest man faced with a plan of creation that is still unfolding itself.

That seems to be a satisfactory explanation of Coleridge's 'incompleteness' and of the need that exists for Miss Coburn's book. Because Coleridge's thought was really alive and part of himself it is not possible to fit it into any ready-made scheme. Much of it, most of it in fact,

will fit traditional Christian belief, but to catch it alive we must find it in its natural element. And for that reason Miss Coburn's book will prove a most useful treasury because it preserves the treasure in its original state. Miss Coburn has done a twofold service: to us by classifying Coleridge's thoughts, and to Coleridge by keeping him alive. Even though the book looks like a catalogue with paragraphs, numbers and references, nevertheless we are conscious either as we read, or as we skip about among the gleanings, of watching a sensitive mind at work in face of truth for which she has the profoundest respect.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE ROMANTIC AGONY. By Mario Praz. (Oxford University Press; 30s.)

'Romantic agony' is an evocative phrase. It leads us, in England, to the thirty years following the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*: to Wordsworth, and his long fight, with dwindling resources, against loneliness and desolation; to Coleridge, haunted by the pains of day and the terrors of night—he called his dreams 'the foot-thick calamities of my life'; to Keats, who died with 'Hyperion' unfinished, still intent to show that 'what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth'; to Shelley, the Minstrel Boy of the movement, who went to war with his father-in-law's 'Political Justice'—we have come to think it a blunt weapon—in his hand, and the armour of Plato girt loosely about him.

Professor Praz is talking about a lesser agony, and a lesser romanticism. He claims to study Romantic literature 'under one of its most characteristic aspects, that of erotic sensibility'. But the result is less a work of literary criticism than a treatise on sexual oddity. Swinburne gets more attention than any other Englishman. Byron is the only English writer of the first rank who receives more than passing notice—and Byron was an aristocratic republican whose literary sympathies were very largely those of an Augustan. When Professor Praz deals, as he occasionally does, with literature that matters, he relapses into vagueness: 'The magical, metaphysical meaning which Keats found in the song of the nightingale (*Ode to a Nightingale*) was applied by the aesthetes, from Gautier downwards, to female beauty, as we shall see shortly', and so on.

The Romantic movement was certainly, in one of its most important aspects, a vindication of the natural man; of the natural, and so of the sexual, man. There is good reason to think the relation between sex and creative work a close one, but it is difficult to say more about it without talking nonsense. To dismiss as nonsense this extremely close study of all sorts of animalism and satanic silliness would not be just: it were better, perhaps, to call it much ado about very little.

JOHN JONES