

EXISTENTIALIST THOUGHT. By Ronald Grimsley. (University of Wales Press; 15s.)

SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN MODERN THEOLOGY. By James Brown. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

With the publication—dismayingly frequent—of each new book on existentialism, the forlorn hope that 'this may be the last' momentarily reasserts itself. Dr Grimsley has added yet another to the series. Once more the usual succession from Kierkegaard to Gabriel Marcel is marshalled and displayed before us—and, we hope, for the last time. With the hope that this may be the last book to be published about existentialist thought, for once goes the conviction that it deserves to be. In place of the idiosyncratic enthusiasms or offended philosophical propriety which so often find expression in books like this, what we are given here is a straightforward and sober exposition of the principal themes to be found in the work of the foremost existentialist thinkers. The account is clear, balanced, and as complete as can be expected within the covers of a 200-page book.

In his Croall Lectures on *Subject and Object in Modern Theology* the Rev. James Brown attempts a task similar to that brilliantly carried through by Dr John Macquarrie in his book on Bultmann's theology.* He seeks to elucidate the work of a number of modern theologians by tracing to its sources, and analysing the meaning of a set of philosophical concepts employed by them. The concepts he is interested in are those of 'subject' and 'object'. Rightly, he concludes that behind the identical terminology of Kant, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Barth, among others, and the related language of Martin Buber, there is a whole multiplicity of meanings. This variety, on the one hand, gives catch-phrases like 'God is the Subject who is never object' whatever plausibility they possess, and, on the other hand, tends to undermine serious discussion of such slogans. Unfortunately, the author hardly goes beyond this. The result is that the book, far from giving new insight into the work of the theologians discussed, gives little more than an anthology—albeit a critical anthology—of themes illustrating an existentialist thread in their thought. The thread is scarcely enough to help us pick our way through the problems raised—the problems of what can and cannot be known and said about God, and of how it can (and cannot) be known and said.

R. A. MARKUS

THE REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY. (Macmillan; 10s. 6d.)

This book comprises a series of talks given on the Third Programme, and is an excellent introduction to contemporary English

* *An Existentialist Theology*. (S.C.M. Press, 1955). Reviewed in BLACKFRIARS, January 1956.

philosophical thinking, for in explaining its origins the writers are at the same time giving an example of how philosophical problems ought to be discussed. Professor Ryle shows in his introduction how important for the new movement was the logical analysis by which a proposition is seen as more fundamental than the terms which compose it; a faulty logic of terms had made it possible for the traditional British empiricists to turn philosophy into a psychological investigation of impressions and ideas. Mr Wollheim shows in an interesting chapter how the origin of this change can be found in Bradley, and Mr Pears develops the same theme in showing how Russell sought for the 'logical atoms' from which all statements could be built up, and produced the disastrous theory that the meaning of a word is the thing it designates. Mr Kneale and Professor Ayer respectively treat Frege's enquiries into the basis of mathematics and the positivism of the Vienna Circle, both of which fall outside the main line of development continuing in Moore and the later Wittgenstein. Unfortunately the two chapters in which Mr Paul deals with them do not leave a very clear impression, largely because of his method of constructing a mosaic of short quotations into which he has introduced far too much unacknowledged italic print. But one could hardly succeed in compressing Wittgenstein's complex and subtle thought into a short chapter, and Mr Paul does bring out important features of linguistic analysis as practised by the masters, from their rather different points of view.

In the final chapters Mr Strawson and Mr Warnock analyse the present philosophical position, and find that four types of work are being done. In analysis there is the normal therapeutic process of resolving puzzles that arise when language has got too far away from ordinary usage; and there is also (though not so much in England) systematic pure research into language. In what they call the imaginative task of philosophy, explanations are being sought of *why* we use language (e.g. causal language) in the way we do, and philosophers are also discovering genuinely new ways of seeing familiar facts. As most of the writers in this book are willing to admit, this is the way in which analysis leads towards sober metaphysics.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

NUNS ARE REAL PEOPLE. By Sister Mary Laurence, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s. 6d.)

In the last few years nuns and convents seem to have become a subject of general interest. Books and pictures have described the nun in her convent setting. On the films and in the press we have seen a nun pirouetting skilfully on roller skates and another with