

to the main concerns and interests of our civilization' (p. 171). A short piece on Berkeley is followed by two important concluding chapters on the philosophy of Newman - especially interesting because they are not just studies of the *Grammar of Assent*.

In a collection ranging over so wide a field, there is always a danger of superficiality. In general, these essays are superficial only in the sense that they are in no case exhaustive treatments of their subject. What Professor Cameron has to say on all these very varied topics is always worthwhile and often illuminating: one's only regret is that he has not been able to develop them all more comprehensively. This is the most *civilized* book I have read for a long time.

BRIAN WICKER

SELECTED ESSAYS: 1934-43, by Simone Weil; Oxford University Press; 30s.

This collection of essays, admirably translated by Sir Richard Rees, very nearly completes the task of translating Simone Weil's varied works into English. Although this present collection is very much a miscellany - an omnibus of articles, published and unpublished - there is a connecting thread holding them together. This is the extraordinarily nimble, almost ethereal personality of this twentieth century mystic, whom T. S. Eliot described as 'a kind of genius akin to the saints'.

Simone Weil, the outstandingly brilliant daughter of a French Jewish doctor, combined in her writing the traditions of French analytical logic and Jewish compassion with suffering. Had she lived, she would have developed the maturity to synthesize the two into a balanced philosophy of life, but she died, her task only partly achieved, at the age of thirty-four. Her essays, some of which were written when she was in the middle twenties, suffer from excessive severity of judgment and the characteristically sweeping generalizations of youth. She lived in a world of lengthening shadows, of which the longest, that of Hitler, was to cast its shade over her whole race. Her fundamental belief in the goodness of man led her into many different attempts to explain away the wickedness of the society in which she lived. By refusing to accept the existence of evil as an active agent, she found herself obliged to postulate a number of historical forces which were responsible for perverting the true course of civilization. The force with which she is principally concerned in these essays is that of 'Romanism', by which she is not referring to the Catholic Church, but to the large-scale, centralized, irreligious, bureaucratic, totalitarian state of which the Roman Empire was the prototype.

In contrast to 'The Great Beast' of Rome she counterpoises the pure character of Greek civilization with its emphasis on the down-trodden, ill-fated hero, of whom Odysseus is perhaps the most famous. Her attempt to interweave the Greek emphasis on blind fate with the Christian concept of divine destiny

brought her to an idealization of the early Romanesque civilization. And she saw in the reforming movements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the re-emergence of the suppressed goodness of man.

Whatever the reasons behind her flowing enthusiasm for the purity of the Franciscan period, the world has immensely benefitted from this literary release of the purity of her own soul. The last essay in this collection, her 'Draft for a Statement of Human Obligations', is a magnificent outpouring of the philosophy of compassion. However much the trained historian may want to join issue over her interpretations, he, like every reader, will end this book captivated by the shining beauty of its many shafts of mystical insight. I, for one, will always be grateful for her penetrating definition of what is beauty: 'that which one does not wish to change'. And recognizing that beauty in her life, and in her writing, I would not wish to change a line of them.

PETER BENENSON

CAMUS, by Nathan A. Scott; Bowes and Bowes; 10s. 6d.

THE NOVELIST AS PHILOSOPHER, edited by John Cruikshank; Oxford University Press; 21s.

Dr Scott's hundred pages will give those who have not read Camus' work a pleasant sense of involvement; but in paying tribute to Camus as an ethical thinker he probably damages the reputation as an artist.

Throughout his career he remained a poet of *rébellion*, but, in the last fifteen years of his life, there was a noticeable deepening of his concern that the act of revolt should not so generalize itself as to betray the human sodality, and so make the rebel's last state worse than the first.

Camus' 'drastically truncated Pascalianism' is a neat and precise touch; when we are told on the same page that in *L'Envers et l'endroit* Camus 'aimed at creating a repertory of images that will each incarnate some aspect of the nakedness and vulnerability and solitude and banality that make for man's permanent and irremediable anguish', the hint becomes nerveless by over-insistence. Indeed, Camus will too easily turn into a substitute for reading the novels themselves. The philosophy in this handily written volume is popular philosophy, and the literary criticism is inexpert. 'Show us,' we exclaim, 'not simply what, but how'.

The issue is serious, and must be seriously confronted. All artists 'think', and great artists 'think' greatly; but the novelist's thought is not the philosopher's. The novel in France since the last war has given us a peculiar blend of thinking and making: Sartre and de Beauvoir, for example, have written to a theory-or rather, fictionalized what theory could not contain. How much does the philosophy wound, or nurture, the art? To what sort of liaison do the two elements subscribe?