

1970 appeared three years ago in *Logico-Linguistic Papers*. This new collection is much more uneven than *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, not only because of the wide-ranging variety of theme but also because of the quality of the essays themselves. Of the eleven essays, nine have been previously published and a tenth is due for publication shortly. The first two essays deal with problems of ethics, and are followed by three on various aspects of perception; then essays on Ryle, Wittgenstein, and Descartes; and finally essays on aesthetic appraisal, existence as a predicate, and transformations in certain kinds of action sentences. A mixed bag, indeed. The most valuable essays in the collection are without a doubt the title essay, which deals with problems of morality and determinism, and the long review of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

Nevertheless, some things do manifest themselves in this collection which are less evident in the individual essays. For one, Strawson's ability to keep a perspective and a firm hold on the important issues even in the most involved of discussions. Again and again he reminds us that the easiest *philosophical* solution to a problem may not be the best solution to the problem as such—a point indeed worth pondering. Also, the perspicacity of his argumentation could serve as a model to any philosopher.

But these are things that we have come to expect of Strawson. More interesting are new juxtapositions which this collection creates. Two important ones emerge. The first has to do with an issue raised in the first essay, about studying reactive attitudes like resentment. He points out that by so studying the attitudes of the receiver in human interactions, the complexity of the situation becomes apparent in a way usually missed by 'our cool, contemporary style' of philosophising. Unfortunately, the very next essay reverts to the great individualist tradition in British philosophy, with its visions of society and morality bereft of this very social sense.

The other juxtaposition is broader. Although British philosophy is more and more acknowledging and utilising the achievements of linguistics in its philosophy of language, it doggedly continues to ignore seventy years of research in physiology and psychology when it comes to talk of perception. Strawson's three essays on perception would have been greatly enriched, if rendered partially superfluous, had he been as aware of Gestalt psychology and general learning theory as he so admirably is of current trends in linguistics. To continue to depend so much on Hume and Kant (or even Wittgenstein) in matters of perception is like refusing to take discussions of time beyond Zeno's tortoise.

ROBERT SCHREITER

TO HEAVEN WITH SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, the Jewish Path to God, by Lionel Blue. *Darton, Longman and Todd*, London, 1975. 103 pp. £1.50.

Highly informative, at the same time as being light-hearted and extremely readable, this is a fascinating account of what makes a modern English Jew tick. It is chatty and even racy, but no less serious for that. No other account I have seen leaves one with such a whole and satisfying picture of the mind of religious Judaism today.

Rabbi Blue insists from the beginning that a Jew is not concerned with theology. It is a mistake to look for an orthodoxy, when what makes a Jew a Jew is orthopraxy. So much is commonplace, but he explains the thought behind this (I had almost said the theology behind it), that Jews regard themselves as co-workers in God's work of creation, and work as having a therapeutic function. This idea explains a lot in the conventional picture of the Jew, busy and active, usually making money; these

attitudes are not only the result of centuries of persecution and survival of the fittest by relying on their wits, but have a religious basis as well. History, of course, is never far below the surface, for Judaism is dominated by its history, whether it be the historical dimension of the Law, the memory of the various attempts at genocide it has survived, or the medley of cultures in the decoration of a synagogue (p. 50). The historical dimension dominates the future too, for hope and yearning for the Kingdom are integral to Jewish thought and action.

There is a very fine chapter on prayer, with some gentle and entirely justified criticism of some Christian attitudes to prayer, and another chapter on Jewish humour and its function: life has sometimes been so bitter that it is only humour that has enabled the Jew to live with defeat (p. 68), and on the

other hand it also saves him from rigidity in his attitude to the Law. For Rabbi Blue is very aware of the danger of rigidity in what he calls (p. 28) a religion of knot-making: if one makes too many knots to remind one of God, one is in danger of forgetting their pur-

pose and being left with only the knots. Perhaps the tone of the book is best summed up by the mention by the author of one legal puzzle, for the book is humorous yet earnest, devoted yet self-critical: *is it allowed to wear a self-winding watch on the Sabbath?*

HENRY WANSBROUGH

GENIUS: An Ideology in Literature, by Robert Currie. *Chatto and Windus*, London, 1974. 222 pp. £3.25.

Mr Currie's thesis, in barest outline, is as follows. There is an historical train of thought, traceable from Judaism and Christianity, through the Romantic movement to the Modernist epoch, which regards the human condition here and now as one of tragic alienation and disintegration, but which looks to some higher realm where unity is to be found. The ideology of genius is common to all three, in that they share the belief that the search for unity is primarily the task of the great individual, or man of genius, who finds himself set over against the philistine common run of men precisely because he is chosen for that task. The difference between the religious and the Romantic versions of this ideology is that the former sees ultimate unity in a 'heaven' beyond this world, whereas the latter—in this sense mere 'split religion'—sees it as the secular goal of the man of genius in this world. The difference between the Romantic and the Modernist versions is that the former is an optimistic faith in the man of Genius as hero, whereas the latter sees him pessimistically as doomed to be a victim. The development of the ideology of genius is traced, first of all in a potted history of the secularisation brought about in the transition from Christianity to Romanticism, and later in a series of essays on five key figures: Hoffmann, Kierkegaard, Wyndham Lewis, Kafka and Beckett. Finally, Mr Currie argues, on the basis of his findings, that it would be best if we could cry a plague on all these houses and settle for a culture without genius; a culture which accepts the fact of alienation as inevitable and

comes to terms with it by affirming the commonsensical democratic virtues of what the ideologists of genius call 'philistinism'.

Reading this book over the weekend which included the aftermath of the Birmingham bombings and a peculiarly vile political hi-jacking, I found Mr Currie's thesis exceptionally attractive. The case is argued persuasively, with—especially for a political scientist—a formidable and sensitive understanding of literature and the arts. I am not qualified to comment on all the specialist essays, but the inner links between the chosen writers are effectively established. But the book as a whole seems to me flawed by working at two distinct levels. The essays on the various writers presuppose a very close familiarity with the material discussed (for example, quotations are not identified or references given). One would have to be very inward with, say, Hoffmann or Kafka to judge for oneself how valid Currie's interpretation is. Here the book is for the specialist: the ordinary philistine wouldn't get much out of it, I fear. On the other hand, the general theory which encloses these chapters at beginning and end seems too sketchy to latch on to. I was asking myself, all the time, is this thesis true?—because it is certainly important, and the question is therefore crucial. But I did not feel I was given enough to be able to decide for myself. When the author has worked out his general position in as much depth as his analysis of particular cases demands, he may well have produced a very formidable work.

BRIAN WICKER

NEW DIRECTIONS IN LITERARY HISTORY, edited by Ralph Cohen. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, London, 1974. 263 pp. £4.50.

This selection of thirteen essays from *New Literary History*, the journal edited by Ralph Cohen from the

University of Virginia, exemplifies usefully a programme of literary-critical slants and tacks as yet fairly unfamiliar