

In his introduction he tells us that the main object of the foundation of this series of lectures, is the 'illustration of the scientific approach to the problems of civilised society'. This obligation he conscientiously sets out to fulfil. In his first chapter he gives a concise account of the subject matter which calls for the attention of the field worker, in terms of the concepts which may be considered to give rise to the observed facts. No one reading this book must expect to find a full account of any given society. That is not its aim. Professor Firth has looked at 'societies' and has deduced what are the ideas that lie behind appearances.

The chapters on 'the social framework of primitive art', 'moral standards and social organisation' and 'religion in social reality' are the most lively and controversial. He sees art, morals and religion as *functions* of society: their *raison d'être* being the welding together of a group of people into a whole. The implication seems to be that the phenomena of civilisation are devices for forcing man, who is naturally asocial, into being a 'social' creature. This is an assumption which Professor Firth does not seem to be aware of making as he does not discuss it.

The concluding chapter on religion in social reality is of value in presenting the so-called 'scientific view of religion.' This purports to be an estimation of the part that religious beliefs and behaviour play in the overt life of a people. Professor Firth sums up in a final paragraph his own *credo*: 'A comprehensive hypothesis here is that religion is a form of human art. The understanding of religion is most fully obtained not by embracing its symbolic system, but by scrutinising it. It is then seen as a symbolic product of human desires in a social milieu'.

As an introduction to one method of approaching the problems of social organisation and thereby stimulating the reader to examine his own approach, the book can be warmly recommended.

DORIS LAYARD

THE FILM IN EDUCATION. By Andrew Buchanan. (Phoenix House; 25s.)

This will undoubtedly become, for a long time, the standard work on its subject in this country. In so far as it has been written 'right up to the minute', it will date; but only till the second and successive editions. And these will be demanded by the enduring qualities of interpretation and constructive stimulation that underlie the ground-plan of facts on which the book has been built. It is an altogether comprehensive work. Whatever one's 'non-entertainment' interest in film, there is a definitive chapter here to serve it: the technique of learning through the eye; the diversity of child (and adult) audience; the his-

torical development of the educational film in this country and most of the others; the technical (and fascinating) fields of planning, production and distribution; the considered views of the teaching profession; and that much debated phenomenon, the children's Saturday cinema. Thus far the themes of the ten chapters. But those who know Dr Buchanan's actual work in films, and religious films in particular, will have expected more than that. And it is there—between the lines and 'informing' all the rest rather than treated as just one aspect—the sociological and spiritual crux of the whole gigantic problem.

The work done, since the pioneer days of the Royal Polytechnic Institution as long ago as 1896, or since the first intervention of the London County Council in 1913, is far vaster than most of us could have imagined. So is its present-day integration under the National Committee for Visual Aids (which deals with policy) and the Educational Foundation for Visual Aids (which deals with problems of distribution). The great pioneers themselves get their due tribute: H. Bruce Woolfe since 1919, Miss Mary Field since 1926, the Dartington Hall Film Unit, and Mr Kitson-Clarke in the battles of today.

There is no doubt whatever that the greatest strides have been made in the fields of the descriptive rather than the philosophical: in science, engineering, medicine, arts and languages. Dr Buchanan is frank about the tentative nature of the historical film even yet, and above all about the conventions, some of them psychologically misplaced and some of them simply archaic, that still prevent the religious film from being either natural or convincing. There are surviving difficulties, too, over the notion of an educational film as such. They show themselves in a lukewarmness among many teachers (though today three teachers out of every four are using film and film-strip); a lack of any advisory source among the Universities (despite the telling experiments carried out by the Engineering departments of Cambridge University); and the absence of any real protection for short films under the Renters' quotas established by the Act of 1927—whence the growth of 'non-theatrical distribution'.

'The line between classroom and cinema', says Dr Buchanan, 'is thin.' The more educational films in the cinema, therefore, and the more cinema appeal in the classroom, the better. By now we have a 'film-educated generation' already in existence, to appreciate the interplay of entertainment and instruction. But we may speak of the 'educational' film only where the audience has come, expressly, *to learn*. The films (like classbooks) are best classified by the *age* of the audience; they are best needed where *motion* is necessary for the point under demonstration. Dr Buchanan quotes John Grierson's wise definition of the documentary: 'The creative treatment of actuality. What one

means by that is that actual events have been taken, but analysed from the creative point of view, and given some angle, some form of narrative, or dramatic meaning. . . . It is not a discursive description of natural events, but a creative one.'

Above all, mass-education and 'fundamental education', as now carried out pre-eminently by UNESCO, does not automatically (nor even primarily) mean mere literacy. 'Fundamental educators were working amongst the Mexican Indian peasantry living in remote villages where poverty, squalor and disease were rife. They were teaching the Indians by film to procure proper water supplies, to combat disease, farm their land productively, build houses, and use hygienic methods with regard to food and clothing. So far the teaching of reading and writing had *not* begun; for these . . . were secondary considerations.' One of the most captivating examples of this, in the whole book, is the detailed script of one of the films made by Dr Buchanan himself when the arrival of cars and aircraft in Arab Lands, which (till World War II) had never heard of them, made it imperative to explain the wonders by a series of films on 'Why It Moves'. As examples of teaching-method these are technically exquisite. So, on the production side, is the description of how the film on the use of the jack-plane was made.

But it is in the matter of the Saturday cinema that the sociological and spiritual factors in juvenile film-going all come to focus; in those 2,000 Cinema Clubs, totalling some million-and-a-half children. Dr Buchanan's *résumé* of the issue—the dangers of the commercial cinema to children, the opportunities of these 'controlled' Saturday mornings—is crisply done. His own views, where he lets them stand out, will reassure every thoughtful parent. The great danger at the moment is lest these shows should stop. For the J. Arthur Rank organisation, which had been making children's films for the purpose, and ploughing back the profits, has ceased to make them since 1950. Dr Buchanan analyses the proposal put forth by Mr Frank A. Hoare, for filling the gap by means of a Children's Entertainment Films Trust, before canvassing his own, alternative, plan. This is: 'that the production and distribution of *all* such films, through of theatrical content, should be reborn *non-theatrically*, and released only on 16-mm., in halls of all available kinds, but never in cinemas. What the non-theatrical movement has achieved, against great odds, in so many specialised fields, it can certainly repeat for children. Such shows would create miniature children's cinemas distinct from the matinees now held in mammoth theatres which seem to me to be both out of proportion and out of character for the purpose.' He doubts the success of 'any plan designed to operate *within* the framework of the industry *as it at present exists*';

and the book ends with a bold challenge to the existing order. That order is a world of two sorts of film-makers: features, and shorts. 'I feel it might be wise', he says, 'to consider establishing a third category of film-makers for the very special needs of the educational world—a pocket-size branch of the industry', serving halls but not cinemas, winning its spurs through merit, and standing in the same relation to the film industry as the pocket edition does to the publishing industry. The conclusion can be stated thus briefly. The case for it is the 240 pages of the book.

A. C. F. BEALES

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ART. By Arnold Hauser. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 42s., 2 vols.)

EARLY MEDIEVAL ILLUMINATION. Introduction by Hanns Swarzenski. (Batsford; 30s.)

The study of art history in England has been transformed by the influx of central European scholars during the years that immediately preceded the last war. Before that, English art history had been to a great extent the prerogative of the great museums. It had developed out of archaeology and the techniques used were still largely archaeological; the study of art object precisely as object. It had not established itself as any part of the elaborate faculty system which formed the skeleton of all English universities. The art history publications of that period suggest that there was then only a limited demand in any section of the English public. Since 1935 the study of art history has developed in all the major English universities, and a perpetually increasing number of publications suggest a wide untechnical interest. This new approach to the history of art has branched partly from the study of changing aesthetic theories and partly from the study of the social and cultural transitions that these reflect.

Two recent publications illustrate the new methods; it is significant that both are continental in their ultimate provenance. Dr Hauser has composed an analysis in two volumes which may prove equal in its influence to Dr Spengler's *Decline of the West*. The first seventy pages consist of a most ingenious and stimulating survey of the possible influence of social factors on prehistoric art-forms and on the art of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Crete. The next 880 pages contain a detailed account of all the changing forms of West-European art and literature studied in terms of sociology. An attempt is made to restate the significance of each movement in art or literature in the terms of the particular social context in which and from which it developed. No scholar can be a specialist in so many fields. Inevitably both volumes contain a great number of blunt statements on which the only possible