

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE, by Hannah Brendt; Faber; 25s.

TOWARDS A THIRD CULTURE, by Charles Davy; Faber; 18s.

Miss Brendt has rightly gained the reputation of being an original political thinker. Basing herself on the practice of the Greek Polis and the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and using Marx as the prime interpreter of the modern age, she has made herself a remarkable yardstick with which to measure contemporary society. Like De Tocqueville she has the advantage of a clearly conceived image of a society organized on principles very different from our own.

This book is a series of 'exercises' developed from the system outlined in her book *The Human Condition*; her aim is to initiate the reader into 'thinking' rather than to present any new truths. Her topics are History, Tradition, Authority, Freedom, Education and Culture, and she is concerned throughout to show the unique state of modern man in being so cut off from his past and from any living tradition. Protected neither by religion nor traditional authority, he is peculiarly exposed to the danger of chaos—social, moral and cultural, leading to a possible atrophy of his nature, so that he becomes nothing more than a predictable functionary in an unending technological process; a condition in which history is assimilated to the blind state of nature.

A central and original feature of her thinking is the high valuation she places on 'public happiness'—the political life of action as contrasted to the private life of work, family and recreation; a realm distinguished by freedom as opposed to the necessity of private life. Action, as distinct from work or labour, is inspired by neither motive nor end, but is self-justificatory, existing by virtue of its own principle (she quotes Machiavelli's 'vertu' as an example of such a principle). It is essentially a performance, enacted in public, akin to the stage or conversation. Now provocative as this idea is—being a corrective to the prevalent notion of politics as social engineering—its implications are disturbing. For if one considers societies dominated by such an idea of politics, as was the Greek Polis or Renaissance Italy, we find them governed by an endless struggle for power and preferment, accompanied by civil war.

The method followed by Miss Brendt is a priori and deductive: she declares her distinctions, e.g., between action, work and labour, and then illustrates them by examples drawn from a historical and cultural field ranging from the Greeks to the present day. And while she has that Germanic capacity to give substance and depth to her ideas, doubt must remain as to the actual validity of her distinctions.

Mr Davy has read extensively and is also worried about our present condition—about the 'onlooker consciousness' induced by the rise of modern science, which the Romantics strove in vain to combat. He feels that not enough attention has been given to the evolution of consciousness in man himself. He traces this well-known theme in a most perfunctory manner, and at the end of

his trek has few solutions to offer. It is hard to see why this book was written: the reader would do better to read Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*.

DAVID BRADING

TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Margaret Boveri, translated by Jonathon Steinberg; Macdonald; 35s.

This is a German work. It is in two parts. There is first a sort of historical-philosophic study of the changing nature of treason. Then follows a series of pen-portraits of European and American figures prosecuted and condemned for treason during and after the second world war. These 'profiles' are done with skill and intelligence and many of them with sympathy; for among them of course are the heroic figures involved in the famous twentieth-of-July attempt on Hitler's life. Not much that is new here; nothing for students or historians. But it is good and readable journalism, even though there are also remarkable omissions.

One cannot praise the historical and theoretical part. It is at once pretentious and superficial and often loosely inaccurate in its statements. Two examples of its history will suffice:

'In the year 1105 Pope Pascalis II felt himself powerful enough as God's representative on earth to grant a German prince forgiveness up to and including the Day of Judgment for having disobeyed his father'.

'The Weimar Republic was the first state in German history which was not accepted unquestioningly by its citizens as the highest authority under God'.

There is one contemporary figure not discussed in the book. Any study of technical treason in the twentieth century must surely consider the matter of General de Gaulle. This book puts King Leopold of Belgium among the 'traitors', but not a word of the President of France. It seems completely wrong.

SAUNDERS LEWIS

FREEDOM, GRACE AND DESTINY, by Romano Guardini; Harvill Press; 21s.

The pattern of this book is to sketch philosophical notions of freedom and something corresponding to grace at a natural level (graciousness) and destiny, and then to contrast them with the implications of Christian revelation in which they find their fulfilment or transcendence.

Mgr Guardini admits that these are difficult subjects and that his account must