

described as a member of the 'middle class'; on the next three pages Fr Marlé does his best to prevent further decline in our hero's social position and he at last emerges as a 'chivalrous young man' and the representative of 'an aristocracy of the mind'. This sort of thing readily convinces that the best policy is to skip the commentary and enjoy the catena of quotations.

Such a reading method has its own rewards. Bonhoeffer speaks with such various voices. Sometimes he sounds just like Pius XII: 'The spiritual office is the divinely ordained authority to exercise spiritual dominion by divine right. It does not proceed from the congregation but from God.'

Sometimes, again, he sounds just like Herr Hochhuth: 'Only a man who will speak out in favour of the Jews has the right to sing Gregorian chant.'

And once or twice he recalls the indignation of Lord Melbourne: 'The secrets known by a man's valet—that is, to put it crudely, the range of his intimate life, from prayer to his sexual life—have become the hunting ground of modern pastoral workers. In this way they resemble (though with quite different intentions), the dirtiest gutter journalists.'

What he says, in any voice, is usually interesting.

Strangely, Fr Marlé is not keen on our concentrating on what Bonhoeffer actually says: 'I am quite sure that, *as they are expressed*, Bonhoeffer's ideas are not merely disturbing, but actually dangerous. The use that has all too often been made of them shows that I am right in thinking so.'

However, once he had decided that Bonhoeffer is 'a valuable antidote within Protestantism itself to the impoverishing influence of Bultmann' he quieters all worries about Bonhoeffer with the bland assumption that if he had lived longer he would have explained away oddities and made a sensible scheme of things. Fr Marlé works in the fashion of those literary critics who lament the might-have-been poems of Keats instead of paying careful attention to the import of what has been written. Fr Marlé 'could hardly contain' his astonishment when a colleague spoke of the 'frightening' quality of Bonhoeffer's work. I am mildly surprised that Fr Marlé does not see what Bonhoeffer is doing. Even the sorcerer's apprentice would have noticed the new broom at work here:

What do we really believe? I mean, believe in such a way that we stake our lives on it? The problem of the Apostles' Creed? 'What must I believe?' is the wrong question; antiquated controversies, especially those between the different sects; the Lutheran versus Reformed, and to some extent the Roman Catholic versus Protestant . . . no longer carry conviction. . . . Barth and the Confessing Church have encouraged us to entrench ourselves persistently behind the 'faith of the Church', and evade the honest question as to what we ourselves really believe.

Fr Marlé has not Fr Malevez' understanding of Bultmann nor Mr Kuhns' of Bonhoeffer. Not a good buy.

HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

DIALECTIC IN PRACTICAL RELIGION, ed. by E. R. Leach, *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology No. 5*. Cambridge University Press, 1968. Pp. viii + 207. Bibliography. £2.

The word 'practical', as used in the title of this collection of essays, Dr Leach glosses in his Introduction as having 'much the same meaning as the word *'Savage'* in Lévi-Strauss's *La Pensée Sauvage*; . . . not concerned with the thought processes of savages, but with the ordering of categories in all unsophisticated forms of human thinking.' This admirably succinct definition of Lévi-Strauss's usage comes as a welcome corrective to the crassness of the English translation of his title; at the same time, it gives a clue to the kind of modish terminology within which the unity of this collection of essays is postulated.

In the first three papers, all of which are concerned with Buddhism, 'practical' religion,

in the sense of religion as practised by laymen at the village level, is contrasted with 'theoretical' or philosophical doctrine, as contained in the Pali texts and the theological commentaries upon them, which have until recently provided the main basis for Western scholarly understanding of Buddhism. The authors of the first two essays, Dr Obeyesekere and Dr Tambiah, have the advantage of having themselves been brought up in the Buddhist tradition, and therefore writing about it, despite their professional detachment, in some sense 'from within'. Dr Obeyesekere, indeed, seems determined not to avail himself of this advantage: starting out from a critique of Weber's analysis of 'the eternal problem of theodicy', his first

section juggles with the concepts of suffering, explanation, sin and salvation to build up a quasi-Weberian typology of religions with (as he himself admits) several empty pigeon-holes, 'ideal types' for which he can find no satisfactorily attested approximations in real life. Their sole purpose seems to be to underpin his otherwise somewhat shaky contention that 'ethicization is a phenomenon of religious evolution'.

Fortunately, in the second part of his essay he abandons this sterile level of generalization for a much more rewarding discussion (based on material from Ceylon) of the relationship between the Buddhist concepts of *nirvana*—final release from suffering—and *karma*—good and bad action which has consequences, not for the achievement of *nirvana*, but for the individual's more immediate fate after death and in reincarnation. He also explains the further and related ideas of counter-*karma* (the acquisition of merit to cancel out the consequences of bad *karma*, or sin) and the transfer of acquired merit to the dead, thus enhancing their prospects of salvation. Dr Obeyesekere then contrasts the generality and abstraction of the Five Precepts of conduct enjoined upon the Buddhist laity, which allow of many latitudes of interpretation adaptive to the actual life of a village householder, with the immense rigour and detail of the 227 Precepts a monk is required to observe, and which effectually cut him off from secular society. The paradox that ensues has a familiar flavour: the holier the monk, the more the layman clamours for his presence; but for the monk, inaccessibility and solitude are necessary for sanctification. The contradiction is to some extent transcended in the person of the *upasaka* or village ascetic, generally (like the Hindu *vanaprastha*) a retired householder whose worldly obligations have come to an end: he observes the Ten Precepts required of novices—more than the layman's Five, but falling far short of the 227 which hedge about the existence of a full monk. The *upasaka*—a kind of lay monk—thus represents the ideal of renunciation at the village level.

In Dr Tambiah's detailed and illuminating study, the same basic ideas are shown as they work themselves out in the sociological context of a Thai village. Monasticism here is not, save in exceptional cases, seen as a lifelong vocation; rather it is a rite of passage, a sort of initiatory retreat from the world undergone, often for one 'Lenten' or rice-growth season only, by many though not all the young men of the village. During their time as monks, the young men

follow a mildly ascetic routine based on the 227 Precepts; they also serve the villagers as priests for calendric, mortuary and other rites. Both as ascetics and as ritual specialists, they are seen as 'making merit' for their seniors of the parental and grand-parental generations, and as assisting these to make merit themselves: having a son become a monk is only marginally less merit-producing than becoming a monk oneself (and financing the building of a *wat* or temple-monastery is more so than either). In return for this production of merit, older villagers feed, clothe and otherwise support the monks: it is this exchange of prestations between monk and layman that here transcends the dialectical opposition between them.

Dr Robinson's analysis of a Sinhalese myth in a sense provides a transition between these two Buddhist studies and the two which follow, based on East African and New Guinea material. She is still concerned with the contradictions between theoretical and practical Buddhism, between monkish asceticism and the necessities of lay existence, here subsumed under the notions of non-violence and violence; but the dialectic is here seen as resolved, in good Lévi-Straussian structuralist style, in a myth. Dr Robinson indeed herself provides a synthesis between Malinowskian and Lévi-Straussian myth analysis, in showing her myth to function also as a sort of 'synthetic charter' for structurally opposed principles of descent and residence: an interesting theoretical experiment, though ethnographically she may seem to be on somewhat shakier ground here.

With Dr Rigby's 'essay on social and moral categories' and the Stratherns' 'study of spell symbolism' we move outside the world in which 'theoretical' religion can safely be set up in opposition to 'practical'. The East African Gogo and the New Guinea Mbowamb are preliterate peoples, whose abstract ideas about religious matters are expressed, not in theological or philosophical writings, but in concrete symbols manipulated in rite and spell. Native exegesis of these can go some way towards elucidating the ideas; but the authors of these papers have gone beyond what exegesis can provide, to interpret the symbols themselves from the clues supplied by their use and by their association with other symbols. 'Dialectic' in these two essays has therefore necessarily a somewhat different sense from that which seemed to attach to it in the Buddhist studies: the opposition is no longer between monk and layman, *nirvana* and the fruits of action,

ascetic theory and this-worldly practice, but between 'opposing but complementary symbolic categories' which the theoretically-minded anthropologist has teased out of his inchoately 'practical' field material.

Dr Rigby seems to go very far indeed in this direction. In a previous article published elsewhere, he has arranged Gogo cosmological, religious and social categories in terms of a series of complementary oppositions; since he does not recapitulate his previous argument, his presentation here of 'a limited series of oppositions' in terms of which Gogo rituals of reversion are to be understood has, inevitably, a somewhat bald, take-it-or-leave-it air. If, however, the reader is disposed to take it, on Dr Rigby's authority, that the Gogo really do classify their universe in this neatly dualistic manner, then the ensuing analysis does indeed provide a fascinating example of the ritual manipulation of opposed categories, reversing them in order to obtain an analogous reversal in the quality of time-experience.

The Stratherns' approach to the symbolic vocabulary of Mbowamb spells is rather more modest and tentative; and they accordingly make the Mbowamb universe sound rather richer and more complex than that of the Gogo. The question they ask themselves concerns the magical potency of marsupials, whose names form an important feature of the spells. A detailed and careful examination of the New Guinea highland environment, and the ideas associated by the people with different species of trees, birds and animals, different types of crops, different places and different categories of spirits, elicits both a dichotomy between 'the wild' and 'the domesticated', and the central paradox whereby 'the same [wild] places and

objects which are the home or manifestations of destructive forces are also pre-eminently the symbols of a kind of life-giving power in other contexts'. The ancestors may help men in their efforts to harness the wild; 'but it is the wild itself which is called in to work in the spells'. But 'the wild that is called in', even with the help of the mediating ancestors, must to obviate its perils be itself already a mediated wild: marsupials and certain birds are particularly appropriate here because, unlike other wild creatures, they are eaten by men and sometimes even kept in captivity. It is the use of the names of these creatures in spells which here resolves the 'dialectical' opposition between the wild and the domesticated worlds.

In what sense can this 'synthesis' be regarded as being the same sort of thing as that posited between 'theoretical' and 'practical' Buddhism in the first three essays? Dr Leach is certainly right in supposing that this rich and many-sided book can be read with advantage by 'many students of comparative religion and philosophy who are in no sense anthropologists'; and certainly no one in their senses would expect 'massive generalizations to flow from such work'. (If they did, the first section of Dr Obeyesekere's essay might suffice as a deterrent.) Nonetheless, it does not seem to me that the collection as it stands establishes any kind of 'cross-linkage' (as Dr Leach also claims) between so-called 'higher' and 'primitive' religions. An index might, perhaps, have given the book some slightly more convincing semblance of unity; as things are, all its claims to such unity seem to derive from the latitudes of interpretation offered by its ambiguously trendy title.

EVA KRAPP-ASKARI

THE INTROSPECTIVE SOCIETY, by John Barron Mays. *Sheed and Ward*, London and Sydney, 1968. 223 pp. 35s.

Can the sociologist translate complex social investigations simply and clearly for the average reader? The importance of establishing such communication is obvious, but few prominent sociologists have been able to accomplish this difficult task. In *The Introspective Society*, John Barron Mays attempts to bridge the gap with a non-technical discussion of some major social issues. He has tried not to oversimplify the complex but to trace important themes with sociological insight and reasoned argument. In so doing, however, he illustrates one of the hazards of trying to bridge the worlds of the

sociologist and the layman. For the result is a book too simple for the professional dealing with these social problems, and too broad and generalized to satisfy the really unsophisticated reader. Professor Mays admits that he ranges 'so widely and often so speculatively over a great variety of topics', but the danger in this is that the serious reader will forgo his balanced perception of many serious problems, whereas the unsophisticated will not appreciate the important qualifying comments which he includes in many of the discussions.

The fifteen chapters consist of brief com-