

Professor Bantock does education a great service in continually referring discussion to the level of values. He is the Socratic gadfly of English educational thought, dedicated to asking basic and uncomfortable questions.

Such questions might with profit be asked of many of the contributors to *18+*. This is a collection of essays by a representative group of very intelligent, well-intentioned academics, agonizing a little over the ambiguities of their vocation in the troubled post-Robbins world. Much of the most sensible talk seems to come from those concerned with sixth forms. For the rest there is a good deal of candyfloss progressivism; a slightly shrill fear of being left high and dry by the evolutionary wave, which sends the authors tumbling along in its wake, scrambling to see if they may not even ride on its crest; there is insufficient discussion of the direction of progress; few to say that there may be forms of social evolution which ought not to be passively accepted let alone actively supported. There is a great deal of rather vague talk about broadening and deepening, about trans-

discipline courses and the discovery of meanings. It is surprising to find even Miss Reeves committing herself to the very strange statement: 'Standards must be shaped to the people rather than people to the standards'; which must surely already be filed among Professor Bantock's most interesting specimens.

Among all this there shines, *sicut leo in silva*, an essay by Brian Wilson which does go to the heart of things. The university's mission is the transmission of our cultural inheritance. This is menaced by publicity, expansion, big business, attitudes in the new technologies, the pervasive materialistic youth culture from which universities make little attempt to wean their students. These forces are to be resisted. The real need of students is for an ivory tower. Minority culture is to be accepted, otherwise status inflation will simply devalue the cultural currency. This courageous raising of basic questions of value and purpose provides an essay one can get one's teeth into. It is in these terms that really worthwhile educational dialogue can be conducted.

Kevin Nichols

CHARLES PEGUY: A STUDY IN INTEGRITY by Marjorie Villiers. *Collins, 42s.*

Celui qui a le goût de l'absolu peut être un innocent, un fou, un ambitieux ou un pédant, mais il ne peut pas être heureux. This is the motto from Aragon which Mrs Villiers puts at the beginning of the most sympathetic and comprehensive account of Péguy which has so far appeared in English. Many of his contemporaries would have called him *un fou*, but it is his innocence, or integrity, and also his personal unhappiness transformed, at the end, into creative joy that has had such a profound effect on later generations in France – during the Resistance, and year by year on the road to Chartres. Outside his own country, however, he has had comparatively little impact because he continues to be seen as a publicist, politician or prophet and not primarily as a poet. Apart from his end on the battlefields of Marne his life had little outer incident; it was so closely and even

tediously bound up with the ideological situation of the France of his time and it 'tends to fall flat in the telling', as Mr Alexander Dru says in his essay of 1956 which complements the present detailed biography in important ways.

But Mrs Villiers shows that the flatness can to a large extent be avoided. In the first two sections of the book (1873–1907) she has unravelled the tangled mass of the social and political background and has guided us in a skilful and scholarly narrative to a deeper understanding of the culminating achievement of Péguy's last years – his poetic and really creative work (1908–1914). Not that she analyses his literary work critically, for that is not her field; she tells us about it and simply allows Péguy to speak for himself in translation. Modestly, she calls this 'transliteration', but it is far more than that, and it is here, perhaps, that the greatest value of this

book lies in giving a true picture of Péguy to the English reader. Mrs Villiers has really caught the atmosphere of his extraordinarily effective unpoetic diction. This also applies in a different way to her authentic renderings of a great number of prose extracts from the *Cahiers* in which she makes Péguy tell the story of his own ideas

throughout. Translation is particularly important and difficult in this case, for did not M. Mauriac, on hearing that Péguy was being translated into English, say that he wished someone would first translate him into French?

The book is attractively illustrated and has a useful bibliography.

Elisabeth Stopp

MAN AT PLAY by Hugo Rahner, S.J., translated by Brian Battershaw and Edmund Quinn. *Burns and Oates (Compass Books)*, 10s 6d.

The Fathers of the early Church were faced with the task of educating their naturally light-hearted and witty Christians in the seriousness of Christian behaviour. Today 'in a civilisation that is perishing in the barren solemnity of a purely utilitarian view of life' Fr Rahner sees it as a 'healing necessity' to recapture that sense of play, a Greek accomplishment which St Thomas 'baptized in Christ' as the virtue of *eutrapelia* (Cf. *S. Th.* 2a 2ae; 168, 2).

And so he traces through Greek and biblical thought, Fathers and mystics, the idea that the image of human play best expresses the Creator's freedom and that man is most like God when he can look on this life as 'a divine children's game' and man as God's plaything. With the Incarnation, the game of grace, the playing Logos becomes man's playmate and begins that love-play with

the Church his Bride which the Fathers saw pre-figured in Isaac's playing with Rebecca (Genesis 26:8). And since all play is at root sacral and a striving towards *theoria*, the vision of God, Heaven is seen as a game, a dance led by the Logos in rhythm with the Spirit, like the cosmic dance of the stars.

Here is a mysticism of humour, that 'divine drop of oil' so often the sign of highest wisdom. Haecker believes that humour constitutes the real human background of European civilization. Sharing this view, Fr Rahner proposes the man who can play and jest in measure and season as 'the answer to the secret and heart-stirring question as to how we are to give a mature Christian character to our modern existence' (p. 92).

An unexpected and stimulating book in a very readable translation.

S.M.A.

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