

Semitism may have been the part played by Jewish financiers in the support of those who defeated Germany in the First World War.' Somewhere Mr Widgery makes a bitchy remark about the 'trivia considered by some

contemporary Oxford philosophers'. No-one would accuse him of considering trivia: the mind behind the book is quite another thing.

ERIC JOHN

IN SEARCH OF PHILOSOPHIC UNDERSTANDING, by E. A. Burtt. *Allen and Unwin*, London, 1967, pp. xviii + 329. 30s.

Professor Burtt's book opens up interesting historical perspectives, and he has some useful things to say about Ordinary Language Philosophy, Existentialism, and Marxism. He seeks to 'open a path from moral relativism beyond moral nihilism, guided by the vision of a truly ultimate value—a value that is universal while making full room for variety, all-encompassing and yet dynamic, free from dogmatic pretensions and thus ever open to revision' (p. xv). Philosophical inquiry helps replace current presuppositions by others allowing a more insightful interpretation of man's growing experience. The findings based on intuition, logical thinking, observation and experiment are always a function of unconscious interests, desires and fears. Realization of the motives that help or hinder openness to all facets of reality strengthens the need to accord with reality, and makes it easier to overcome all pettiness. Even at the price of seeming inconsistency, nothing must be excluded from one's account of reality. It is less important to have a language that unambiguously reports the present position, than to ensure effective communication and to determine its conditions, thereby to secure a further advance. The philosopher does not say what man is, but asks what he may become. By positive presence to other persons, whole-hearted sharing of their experience, and sensitivity to their values one both grows in love and knowledge oneself, and evokes a mutually enriching response in others.

Self-transcending understanding born of love is reliable and known to be so, but it is never dogmatic—precisely because one is concerned not with mapping out one's present whereabouts, but with the ascent to greater heights. Despite the risk of universal annihilation there is no sane alternative to optimism. The author points beyond the secular tragic hero's limiting preoccupation with self and obstinate immolation to the religious tragic hero's acceptance of death in compassionate concern for justice to others.

The author assumes that Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* meant by science empirical science, and that he then thought one could speak intelligibly only in a non-ordinary ideal language (but cf. *Tractatus* 4.11 and 5.5563). He also supposes ordinary language philosophers to regard the word as the unit of meaning, that for them 'use' means 'usage', and that they concentrate on language to the neglect of speech (but cf. Ryle G., *Use, Usage and Meaning*, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XXXV, 1961, pp. 223-30). The work would also have been improved by a careful account of the logical behaviour of expressions including words like 'motive', 'emotion', 'desire', 'feeling', 'unconscious', 'action' and 'thought'. It remains that we should be grateful to Professor Burtt for a book that is stimulating, hopeful, and, to put it simply, lovely.

COLIN HAMER, S.D.B.

SEEING, KNOWING AND BELIEVING, by J. F. Soltis. *Allen and Unwin*, 1966. 25s.

Here is a competent if uninspired work on the philosophy of perception, for which unusually exaggerated claims are made on the dust-cover. The overall flatness of the style is accentuated rather than relieved by the forced jocularity of phrases like 'quite a few pages, ash-trays, deer, and automobiles ago' (p. 75). The dowdy if worthy social worker does herself harm rather than good by periodically dressing up as a street-walker. Yet the important problems in the philosophy of perception, as they apply to seeing in particular, are intelligently handled. The various senses of 'see'

—the diversity of which is illustrated by the sense in which we do, and the sense in which we do not, 'see' a coil of wire which we have mistaken for a snake, or any other object which we mistakenly identify or fail to recognize—are judiciously distinguished by the author. An interesting distinction is made between 'mistake' and 'error', the former occurring when a subject can get right what he has got wrong without additional knowledge, the latter when he cannot do so however favourable the circumstances of perception.

HUGO MEYNELL