

he clearly loves the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and he will bring others to love it with him.

JOHN JONES

*EVOLUTION IN ACTION.* By Julian Huxley. (Chatto and Windus; 9s. 6d.)

This small book of 153 pages is based on the Patten Foundation Lectures given at Indiana University in 1951 and on a series of special talks given a little later for the B.B.C.

We can always trust Dr Huxley to provide us with interesting reading for he has that somewhat rare gift of making whatever he writes about seem of supreme importance. We can also expect him to be stimulating and provocative, even exasperatingly so, for his faith in his own ideas is impregnable and knows no boundaries. His latest book is well up to standard and it takes us a little further along the road of Huxleyism, but dressed up in the garb of a crusader concerned now with the destiny of Man.

Dr Huxley, of course, takes evolution for granted, and there seems little reason why he shouldn't, and he gives us many fascinating examples of his evolutionary assertions. He does not bring forward any of the now old-fashioned proofs. Instead, he attempts to give an overall impression of evolution and to discern the principles behind the process. He considers that modern work on evolution, in conjunction with a general consideration of the subject, has shown that evolution is a unitary process displaying several special features and common trends, such as the efficacy of natural selection, adaptation, speciation, and deployment of groups leading to a general spread of organisms into new environments. This process leads to advances in general efficiency, but in the case of man only has this general efficiency developed so well that he may affect the course of future events, and so progress enters into the process. Biological progress (as distinct from mere biological advance) has now ceased, but human progress leading to higher planes of activity has only just begun (shades of Olaf Stapledon!). Dr Huxley considers that man became human only when he learnt to use verbal concepts, to benefit from his experiences and to pool them. In other words, he considers that the essential uniqueness of man lies in his powers of abstraction and his building up of tradition. If these age-old attributes of man have now a biological foundation, biologically they would seem to imply that only man can make real progress in an evolutionary sense because man knows he has a destiny and, as Dr Huxley says, 'He could come to the realisation that his destiny is to participate and lead in the creative process of evolution, whereby new possibilities can be realised for life'.

What the ordinary man, or even the advanced thinker, is to get out of this realisation, Dr Huxley does not attempt to say. But, no doubt, even to think along this line is to think against the evolutionary process. It is difficult to see, however, how such an idea of the transcendental importance of the evolutionary process is more uplifting, or more satisfying in any

sense, or truer, than the Christian attitude that man is made by and for God and is destined to share eternal life with him. A radical difference between the two attitudes, of course, and one which may greatly offset man's behaviour, is that, according to Huxley, the man of progress is the man who follows his biological urges along the lines they would lead him, while according to the Christian, the man of progress is he who controls, and if need be suppresses, these same urges. If tradition has assumed such great biological value as Huxley makes out, what has tradition to say of his conclusion regarding the place of man in relation to creative evolution? Dr Huxley builds up a case for the 'intrinsic wrongness of absolutism', but is he not here making of evolution an absolute end in itself, and a vague end at that, with no moral compunction at all behind it?

In the end we see that Dr Huxley is extending his views to what he calls 'Evolutionary Humanism' which concerns man and his destiny, and may even furnish him with the germ of a new religion. But it seems to be little removed from the chaotic agnostic humanism of a bygone day. In order to arrive at matters of this kind and to discuss them, besides putting forward biological criteria, Dr Huxley assumes that life has two essential aspects—a material and a mental one, and it is the latter which has the greater evolutionary significance. Thus he acknowledges the over-riding importance of mental activity, but at the same time he denies the reality of mind, considering that 'mind and matter are two aspects of a single underlying reality—shall we call it world substance, the stuff out of which the world is made'. One may legitimately ask here what advantage is to be gained by calling this reality world substance, and if the world is made out of it, then who made it? Anyhow, this idea leads him to deny materialism and later to acknowledge a certain spirituality in man.

If Dr Huxley allows a spiritual side of man, one wonders what conclusion he would come to if he also took his evolutionary views to their logical conclusion in relation to the spiritual end of man, bearing in mind that he has already acknowledged that the material side is relatively unimportant? Would his conclusion coincide with that of the Christian?

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