mentaries on social issues in five parts: race relations; urbanization, the family, and social change; crime and punishment; adolescence; and the social role of the family. Many of these articles have been published previously in periodicals.

On the whole, *The Introspective Society* is easy to read. Occasionally, the reader is rewarded with an originally phrased explanation that succinctly states the issue: 'Crime seems to be to modern society what poverty was to older days.' 'What I call social adolescence is an indefinite period of time which continues quite a long way after physical growth has made boys and girls into men and women.'

In one of his best discussions, that on race relations, Professor Mays demonstrates the intertwining of three features of the problem: colour prejudice, problems of immigration, and the difficulties of lower-class status. He explains why the 'business of helping both local-born and immigrant coloured people is a tricky psychological matter' by reference to the situation in Liverpool. His experiences in a Liverpool youth club serve as the focus of his comments on the problems of delinquency (defining those who are merely 'naughty' and the confirmed anti-social); the talent of lower-class youth surfacing in Beatlemania; and the ambivalent feelings of most of us toward punishment in modern society.

Professor Mays leaves little doubt that he believes sociologists must adopt moral positions which apply the knowledge gained from research to our current social problems. Each chapter contains imperatives which we must, should, need to, or will do. By injecting many positive statements and personal suggestions into the discussions, Professor Mays makes the book more practical and realistic for some readers, but diminishes its influence and importance for professionals and those sociologically alert.

If sociology is regarded as a perspective—an approach to understanding social problems, *The Introspective Society* is a valid translation. However, if sociology is a discipline which requires careful empirical data collection for use in limited generalizations, this book is a very sweeping exercise in personal judgment. Experience suggests that broad generalizations often lead to vague debating and popular rambling rather than to serious questioning and purposeful inquiry. Still, the importance of these social issues and the concern for human misery which Professor Mays addresses are so deeply affected by 'the inertia of public opinion' that the generation of interest in these topics among casual readers may hopefully lead to their concern. JACQUELINE SCHERER

ON SCIENCE, NECESSITY, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, by Simone Weil. *Oxford University Press*, London, 1968. 198 pp. 42s.

Anyone who has read *Waiting on God* will be familiar with Simone Weil's singularly sympathetic appreciation of Christianity, but it may come as a surprise to discover that her grasp of science and the scientific method is no less deep. Indeed, she shows in this book the understanding of science we expect from Nobel physics laureates—and we don't always find it there. We certainly hardly ever find there the degree of compassion Simone Weil has, and her ability to realize just what it is science is trying to do, and just what is its subject matter.

This book is a collection of essays, divided into two sections, the first, roughly speaking, on science, and the second on the love of God. The majority of them were published during 1940-1943, and appeared in various journals in France; some were written under the pseudonym of Emile Novis. Although some essays are no more than fragments, there appears in most of the more substantial ones the theme of necessity. The sense in which science is the study of the nature of necessary entities is well illustrated in the long essay 'Classical Science and After': consider that a book is on the floor, and it must be laid on a table, stretching infinitely far in all directions. Then in order to transfer the book from the floor to the table, it is absolutely necessary that the whole book pass through the plane. There is *no* way of getting round this; if I tear the book apart, I still have to take each page separately through the plane, and to repeat the process as many times as there are pages in the book. 'And if, in place of me, there is an idiot, a criminal, a hero, a sage or a saint, it will make no difference.' Because of the irreducibility of the nature of this problem, it is a scientific one. But Simone Weil goes further: 'The totality of geometrical and mechanical necessities to which the action is always subject constitutes the primal curse which fell upon Adam, which makes the difference between the world and an earthly paradise, the curse of labour.' It is this connexion

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with morality which is so important to Simone Weil; science is the study of conditions to which, because they are necessary conditions, we are *slaves*, and so 'nothing is more foreign to the good than classical science'. Classical (nineteenth-century) science is to be distinguished from Greek science (where scientific ideas—like equilibrium—are used in moral contexts—like justice and injustice), medieval science (where results arrived at by relating science to the good are expressed in medieval myth and image, like the water that will not drown the innocent), and, lastly, and most severely, from twentieth-century science, characterized by the revolutions of Einstein's theory of relativity, and the quantum theory. Simone Weil offers penetrating criticisms of the quantum theory, both because it introduces the discontinuous into physics, and also because it relies heavily for its interpretation on the concept of probability, and probability is not easily reconcilable with necessity. (To give a simple illustration: according to the quantum theory, particles sometimes behave like waves, and waves like particles. However, a particle is localizable—we can say exactly where it is—but a wave is not, it is spread out. So if a particle *really does* behave partly like a wave, we may only give different probabilities that the particle is in different places, and not its exact location.)

Besides this, there are general observations on the teaching of mathematics, on the 'New Scientism', and on the philosophies of contemporary physics and physicists. As a physicist, I feel that some of Simone Weil's more pungent remarks on the sterility of theoretical physics about 1940 are ones that she would perhaps withdraw in speaking of the present day, but this certainly does not lessen the interest of what she has to say, nor the excitement of understanding her insights.

The basic subject matter of part II will be more familiar to readers of *New Blackfriars*, but the novelty of Simone Weil's approach, the clarity of her understanding and the depth of her compassion never cease to amaze. There are two extended fragmentary essays on the Greek concepts of God, two short and beautiful notes on the Love of God and two notes on the responsibility of writers. Here Simone Weil argues that writers usurp their responsibility by taking advantage of the *necessities* to which literature is not subject, but reality is. Hence a situation is made possible where a country girl cannot distinguish a poem of Valéry and a advertisement for a beauty cream promising a rich marriage to anyone who used it. Finally there is a very moving essay 'The Love of God and Affliction' where the theme of necessity and the Love of God is most fully developed. 'A blind mechanism buffets men hither and thither and flings some of them at the very foot of the Cross. It rests with them only to keep or not to keep their eyes turned towards God through all the shocks. It is not that God's Providence is absent; it is by his Providence that God willed necessity as a blind mechanism.

'If the mechanism were not blind there would not be any affliction. Affliction is above all anonymous; it deprives its victims of their personality and turns them into things. . . . They will never find warmth again. They will never believe that they are anyone.

'Affliction would not have this power without the element of chance which it contains. . . . The martyrs who came into the arena singing as they faced the wild beasts were not afflicted. Christ was afflicted. He did not die like a martyr. He died like a common criminal, in the same class as thieves, only a little more ridiculous. For affliction is ridiculous.' The dependence of affliction on necessity appears in the passage: 'Christianity is not concerned with suffering and grief, for they are sensations, psychological states, in which a perverse indulgence is always possible; its concern is with something quite different, which is affliction. Affliction is not a psychological state; it is a pulverization of the soul by the mechanical brutality of circumstances. . . . Its essence, the thing it is defined by, is the horror, the revulsion of the whole being, which it inspires in its victim. And this is the very thing one must consent to, by virtue of supernatural love.'

Richard Rees's translation is beautifully lucid, as the reader will have seen from the passages quoted. How great a service he has performed for us, and what an immense debt we owe to Simone Weil. 'The man who has known pure joy, if only for a moment, and who has therefore tasted the flavour of the world's beauty, for it is the same thing, is the only man for whom affliction is something devastating. At the same time, he is the only man who has not deserved this punishment. But, after all, for him it is no punishment; it is God himself holding his hand and pressing it rather hard. For if he remains constant, what he will discover buried deep under the sound of his own lamentations is the pearl of the silence of God.'

LEWIS RYDER

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