

as such—i.e. that one can think of anything at all, whereas one cannot cuddle or be eaten by anything at all—is interpreted oddly by Neo-Scholastics as meaning that Thought is an intuition of Pure Being. The schema of formal objects is applied also by the author to make a distinction between actions and relations, and to construct a theory of volition. The argumentation of these sections is far too intricate and condensed to summarise.

The author brings a formidable logical technique and great historical erudition to his task, which he executes with unflinching concision and wit. In all, the book seems to me to be very good indeed, and I know of no better recent treatment of the problems with which it deals.

HUGO MEYNELL

GENERALIZATION IN ETHICS, by Marcus George Singer; Eyre and Spottiswoode; 30s.

This book is a description, elaboration and defence of the generalization principle as that on which moral judgments are grounded and by appeal to which they may be justified.

Scepticism in moral philosophy is only too often accompanied, remarks the author, by dogmatism in actual moral judgments. But it has at least the merit of being a stimulus to more accurate thought on the part of those who, like the author himself, believe that their judgments can be objectively grounded. The generalization principle states that what is right (or wrong) for one person must be right (or wrong) for any similar person in similar circumstances. Many influential authors have objected to the principle as vacuous, saying that I might argue on this basis that it is right for me to steal, lie, and commit adultery, but not for anyone else, since I am in a class of my own as having freckles, being the fourth cousin of a peer, and being an employee of the Egg Marketing Board. The author answers, very reasonably, that the dissimilarity must be relevant to the case, and one must be able to show that it is relevant to the case, for it to constitute an exception. A moral judgment is similar to a causal judgment in that both imply some general principle. If one states for instance, that a particular death was caused by carbon monoxide poisoning, one implies that death would occur to others in a similar situation, apart from special circumstances to the contrary. These differ, of course, according to the situation envisaged. In the same way, the principle that it is wrong in general to lie does not entail that one ought not to lie to a lunatic who wishes to know where someone is in order to kill him. The generalization principle validates the exception here just as much as it validates the rule. Kant would have disagreed about this, but his ethical rigorism does not follow from his use of the generalization principles; philosophers have often been misled into rejecting the principle by confusing it with the unnecessary consequences which Kant drew from it.

All this seems to me to be true, and it is argued cogently, by the author, with refreshing reference to moral problems which really cause people perplexity. The author's attack on the principle of utility is a good deal less satisfactory. As he says, slavery (which he assumes as most of us do to be self-evidently wrong) is by no means obviously contrary to the principle of utility. But it may be wondered whether it is any more obviously contrary to the generalization principle. If someone argued that all those below a certain I.Q. should become slaves, I am not at all sure that he could be put in the wrong by the author's version of this principle.

If it is worthwhile to subsume all forms of moral reasoning under a single principle—which I for one very much doubt—this book shows that the generalization principle is one of the best for the purpose, and that many of the arguments which have been alleged to invalidate it are themselves invalid, or at least inconclusive.

HUGO MEYNELL

THEORY OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR, by Neil J. Smelser; Routledge; 45s.

In his opening paragraph Professor Smelser remarks that previous writers on collective behaviour, although they attempt to be objective, 'frequently describe collective episodes as if they were the work of mysterious forces'; moreover he says, 'the language of the field . . . shrouds its very subject in indeterminacy'. His aim in the present book is to 'reduce this residue of indeterminacy which lingers in the explanations' and he approaches the problem by constructing in his first four chapters a series of matrices of growing complexity which may be applied to any instance of collective behaviour to produce an analysis in terms of determining and precipitating factors. These are also held to provide a diagnostic instrument which will help in forecasting the types of reaction to be expected when certain combinations of variables are found to be operative in a situation.

The major determinants are classified as: structural conduciveness, strain, crystallisation of generalised belief, mobilisation for action and social control. The underlying principle of the analysis is that of 'value added'. Explanations based on this start with the most indeterminate conditions necessary for a particular type of behaviour to occur and then, within the framework set by these conditions, enquire how other more determinate factors come to bear upon the situation. The application of this method is held to result in the identification of all the factors necessary for an explanation of the occurrence of a particular instance of behaviour and at the same time to show why any other outcome is impossible. In the second half of the book this method is demonstrated by application to instances of the principal forms of collective outburst—the panic, the craze, the hostile outburst and the norm and value-oriented movements.