

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION. Theory and Practice, by M. J. Jackson, Batsford, London and Sydney, 1974. 253 pp. £6.50.

The title is deceptive. From it one is tempted to think that Michael Jackson has produced a conventional text-book which might be recommended to students in polytechnics and universities studying the sociology of religion. Such is not the case. Instead, although claiming to write for such a readership, he offers us in the first section a general criticism of the discipline, particularly of the way it has developed or implied an anti-ecclesiastical or anti-religious ideology. His positive plea (not positivistic) is that the sociology of religion can offer help to the Church, and here he means in particular the Church of England, in its task of maintenance and mission.

The reviewer recently drew attention to some of the problems which the sociologist encounters in working for the Church in the kind of way Canon Jackson suggests ('Sociology: Friend or Foe', *New Blackfriars*, September 1974). Insofar as he raises such problems as defining of religion, the reduction of religion to its social dimension, relativism, the bias of the observer, the relation of sociology to theology, and so on, his book is to be welcomed. These problems are extremely important in the sociology of religion and are crucial for the Church in coming to terms with sociology (see M. Hornsby-Smith and G. Dann, 'The Contribution of Sociology to the Catholic Church', *New Blackfriars*, August 1975). What is alarming, however, is the facile way in which Jackson writes off these and other issues (for example, natural theology) in a mere 50 pages! Without saying a great deal about the achievements of the sociology of religion, especially at the hands of its founding fathers, such as Weber and Durkheim, Jackson is negative and simplistic. Nor is it clear in the last analysis what he plumbs for—a religious sociology which the Church directs and uses for its own purposes, with the parameters defined

by the 'officers of the Church', or on the other hand, a 'neutral' sociology of religion, seen as an autonomous discipline whose findings may only incidentally be of direct value to the Church, and in which theory and explanation are the dominant interests.

In the second half of the book, 'The Sociology of Religion in Practice', he offers very little that is new and his selection of material is ecclesiastically slanted. He does not seem to have heard of the Roman Catholic Church in England, or even the Free Churches! And on the subject of leadership he offers, in the main, criticisms of reports on the Anglican clergy (papers written for journals perhaps, but with no references) and which demand a prior detailed knowledge of the reports themselves. However, much material comes from surveys on French Catholicism, where, for example, church attendance is related to geographical and demographic factors—surveys connected with such well-known names as Le Bras, Boulard, Pin, etc. This information is interesting enough but its limitations, by way of repetitive description, and (above all) the precise manner in which it is actually used by the Church is not spelled out. Nor, at a very practical level, does the author show how the clergy might undertake simple surveys themselves, which could be a starting-point for a parish in the task of self-analysis, for he admits he is also writing for those in the churches who need 'some assessment of the help the sociology of religion can bring to the life and work of the churches' (p. 2).

Altogether the book is an extraordinary hotchpotch, with a strong, nineteenth-century establishment ideology. 'Our Victorian forefathers were probably right in thinking Gothic to be the Christian architecture' (p. 161). And if Victorian Gothic is for all times, so is this book!

W. S. F. PICKERING

WISDOM: Twelve Essays, edited by Renford Bambrough. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1974. x and 300 pp. £4.50.

'Without Contraries is no progression'. 'The Holiness of Minute Particulars'. Blake's slogans stand as mottoes to this collection of essays in honour of John Wisdom, and are expanded in the editor's own contribution to the volume: 'Philosophy is the conflict of

the obvious with the obvious. . . . The process of resolving such a conflict is the process of examining more minutely and particularly the minute particulars concerning which the opposed generalities are in conflict. Such a method of reasoning is usually informal, and its

typical informality serves to link it with literature rather than with the formal and generalising mathematical and natural sciences, and so to disguise from many of its exponents as well as from nearly all its critics the fact that it is a method of reasoning at all'. Such is Wisdom's own view of the philosophical process, and these essays serve to explore it. In doing so they bring out the coherence and penetration of Wisdom's later philosophical work and also its distinctiveness.

Four essays are concerned to explore and defend Wisdom's approach to Philosophy. Professor Gasking's 'The Philosophy of John Wisdom' opens the exploration (the only essay not specially written for this collection), showing how philosophical questions may be seen typically either as paradoxical or as calling for a decision, and how answers to them may help us 'to gain a grasp of the relation between different categories of being, between expressions used in *different manners*'; crucial to this understanding is the thesis that such answers cannot be conclusively demonstrated by deductive or inductive logic, yet they may be wholly rational. This latter point is the theme of Professor Yalden-Thomson's exposition and discussion of Wisdom's unpublished lectures on 'Proof and Explanation' at the University of Virginia; he takes up their central theme, the 'case-by-case procedure' or 'reasoning by parallels' to which, according to Wisdom, all reflection comes in the end—even deduction; the formal/empirical dichotomy with its attendant line of argument 'No further deductive reasoning can help; no further investigation would reveal facts; therefore the issue is a matter of words' is thereby undermined and a conception of rationality developed less liable to distort philosophical reflection. It reflects, indeed, Wisdom's own earlier work—especially in his *Other Minds* series of articles with its three typical moves: 'You might as well say . . .', 'Exactly so' and 'But this is different', a procedure Mr Bambrough rightly compares to literary criticism as understood by Dr Leavis: 'This is so, isn't it?' and 'Yes, but . . .'. Ways in which such procedures lead us both to the consideration of 'minute descriptions' and to paradoxes, together with their affinities on the one hand with imaginative literature and on the other with the work of Wittgenstein, are explored both in the editor's 'Literature and Philosophy' and in Dr Dilman's 'Paradoxes and Discoveries'.

Professor Linnell's bibliography of Wisdom's published writings at the end of the volume enables one to chart the development of Wisdom's thought on these matters over the years.

General reflections must be rooted in particulars, and four essays take particular arguments by Wisdom as their theme. Professor Roberts and Mr Hinton consider his discussions of phenomenalism; the former to modify and extend them, the latter to oppose them. Professor Gunderson and Mr Newell concentrate on his work in *Other Minds*; the first to undermine certain objections to the Mind-Body identity theory, the second arguing that it enables us to gain a grasp of what is at issue deeper than is possible in arguments by *reductio* against the sceptic.

This notion of 'grasp' provides a key to the remaining four essays, which explore themes at a rather greater distance from Wisdom's own work. Professor Thomson examines Moore's 'Proof' of an external world by considering the strengths and weaknesses of attempts to apply the same pattern of argument elsewhere, thereby enabling us to get considerably clearer about the nature of the 'Proof' itself. Professor Morris's essay 'Shared Guilt' is also strongly reminiscent of Wisdom; by considering criticisms of this notion and then ways in which they might be met, he brings out with great sensitivity considerations which may incline us to 'stretch' the concept of guilt, 'thereby gaining an insight into our own moral condition': a lawyer himself, he exemplifies patterns of reasoning close to those advocated by Wisdom, who has himself been profoundly influenced by legal methods of argument. Dr Ayers's 'Reason and Psycholinguistics' is concerned to argue that 'in an explication of rational insight reference to rules of language is simply circular' because of the role 'reflective rationality' plays in language acquisition. Finally, Dr Lyon considers Wisdom's examination of ways we can assess conceptual revisions in terms of the (sometimes) deepened understanding they may offer, and examines discussions of scientific explanation in the light of it.

One of Dr Lyon's remarks stands in interesting contrast to a major editorial thesis. He maintains that all that is of value in the Duhemian paradox that 'physical theories never provide explanations' can be described univocally and non-paradoxically. Mr Bambrough, on the other hand, sees paradox as playing a less dispensable role in philo-

sophy, providing us with 'grasp' in a way we could not otherwise achieve. 'A series of unsatisfactory ways of putting it may succeed in conveying what none of them would convey by itself and what could not be conveyed by any *one* way of putting it'. His volume provides a valuable lesson in the ways in which

such 'dialectical' approaches may be genuinely illuminating, but that such methods may reveal truths not otherwise graspable still remains 'not proven'; perhaps the publication of Wisdom's Virginia Lectures will carry the argument further.

MARTIN WARNER

BECKETT THE SHAPE CHANGER, edited by Katherine Worth. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*. London and Boston, 1975. 227 pp. £4.95.

The impact of Beckett on the person who knows him only as a name, whether as a novelist, playwright or prose poet, is liable to be extremely intense when it does occur. Of all contemporary writers, he is perhaps the one who is best introduced to a new audience by the methods which T. S. Eliot adopted when giving 'extension lectures' during his early days as a bank clerk and aspiring poet: 'I have found only two ways of leading any pupils to like anything with the right kind of liking: to present them with a selection of the simpler kinds of facts about a work—its conditions, its setting, its genesis—or else to spring the work on them in such a way that they were not prepared to be prejudiced against it'. As a professional extension lecturer, I have always found this advice to be very sound, and never more so than when introducing Beckett (the only living writer, I think, who approaches Eliot himself in producing a precise sort of understanding, on the part of the uninitiated reader, long before any exact study of the text has occurred). It is therefore with some trepidation that I come to this symposium, itself the product of a series of Extramural lectures in London organised by the editor.

The emphasis in the book is on the fiction, though there are several discussions of the plays. Now this means, among other things, an emphasis on that aspect of Beckett which most invites the sort of scholarly academic commentary which was also invited, for example, by *The Waste Land*: I mean the commentary which involves the less simple kinds of fact about a work (e.g., the tracing of literary cousinships, the explaining of learned jokes, the writing of footnotes on obscure allusions or textual peculiarities) and which is likely to prepare a person to be prejudiced against the work itself. On the whole, this symposium avoids the worst faults of this critical style, though some of the essays seem

to me to be rather laborious explanations of the obvious—and I mean obvious to the literary specialist: and this kind of explanation is, of course, **neither obvious nor necessary** to the novice in the Beckettian house of fiction. The best pieces, therefore, are those which point out features of the Beckettian architecture which we might otherwise not have noticed, rather than those which tell us (in a way mostly foreign to Beckett's own practice) what it all means or how we should respond. Barbara Hardy, for example, shows that we are mistaken to suppose there are no consolations to be had in Beckett's treatment of such themes as art, love or nature: beneath the bleaknesses, there are still consolations to be had, if only of a 'dubious' sort. And the editor herself illuminates (almost literally) the plays by discussing one of the most obvious but least discussed facts about them; namely the implications of the stage directions, especially those concerning lighting and the spatial disposition of the various elements (and the sound effects in the radio plays). On the other hand, John Chalker's reading of *Watt* in the light of Swift and Sterne as satirists, or the discussion of the novels as a whole as exercises in the search for the self which Charles Peake provides, are—for my money—less useful and exciting. Martin Dodsworth mounts a vigorous attack on *Film* (a subject on which I'm not competent to comment) and *Eh Joe*, saying that both are failures, and he ends by actually preferring some bits of Beckett to others: a piece of critical boldness scarcely matched by any of the other contributors, who all stand equally in awe of the great man himself. Harry Cockerham's discussion of the differences between French and English versions of the plays is helpful and unpretentious, and I learned several things in the course of it—especially about Lucky's big speech in *Waiting for Godot*. But it seems odd that, in a book mainly