

Bauer stood the 'classic view' on its head: examining the early traditions of ecclesiastical centres such as Edessa, Alexandria, Antioch and Asia Minor, Bauer thought he could discern traditions which, looked at from elsewhere, or later, would be labelled as 'heretical'. In the earliest age of the Church, he argued, there was no clear distinction between heresy and orthodoxy. 'Orthodoxy' emerged only gradually, and, when it did, it was the doctrine which triumphed over competing traditions only on account of the dominant influence of the group which held and propagated it. What emerged as 'orthodoxy' was, in fact, the doctrine of the leaders of the Roman Church, which came to define the meaning of 'orthodoxy' as a consequence of its wide and preponderant influence.

Much has happened in the study of Christian beginnings in the forty years since the first publication of Bauer's book. His account of early Christianity particularly in Edessa and Egypt has had a rough passage, and his interpretation of the evidence for the extension of Roman influence has found little favour, especially outside Roman Catholic circles. The present translation, from the second edition (1954) by George Strecker, includes a survey of the reception accorded to the book. It must be said, however, that these rather scrappy excerpts and summaries give little notion of the importance of the issues raised by Bauer, and of the fundamental discussions of their theological implications. The best easily available discussion is still the second of Professor H. E. W. Turner's Bampton lectures of 1954.

Turner rejected Bauer's total scepticism with regard to any 'fixed elements' in orthodoxy,

and reaffirmed the inherent homogeneity of orthodoxy in the course of its historical development with the apostolic tradition. Whatever force his arguments have (and they seem to me to have a great deal) Bauer's scepticism has performed a positive service. It has enabled us to understand better not only the primitive development of Christian doctrine, but the permanently problematic character of orthodoxy. While we have learnt to recognize that a plurality of traditions is as old as Christianity itself and that, in a sense, the Church has always comprehended a variety of 'denominations', it is also clear (*pace* Bauer) that the line between heresy and orthodoxy is no mere accident of ecclesiastical or political power to win through. In the crisis of identity which Christianity underwent in the second century, orthodoxy came to differentiate itself from a large variety of gnostic, Jewish-Christian, Marcionite and other sects. The confrontation with heresy was not, however, a repudiation of something seen as a threat to a clearly recognized 'orthodoxy'. More often it was a moment in a crystallizing self-awareness. The emergence of the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy from a previously undifferentiated Christian self-awareness was the product of a real crisis of identity. It is the great and lasting merit of Bauer's analysis of this process that it serves as a warning to the Church historian against his besetting temptation: to take the identity of the Christian Church too much for granted; and to the Christian as a standing reminder that Christianity is always a process of self-discovery.

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OUR KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHT AND WRONG, by Jonathan Harrison. *George Allen and Unwin Ltd*, (Muirhead Library of Philosophy), London, 1971. 407 pp. £4 net.

This book makes not a few good points, and offers not a few good arguments. Yet it is not, on balance, a good enough book for its length, its price or the importance of its subject.

The first part examines 'every possible account of the nature of moral judgments, and the manner in which we come to know them as true' and finds that every account 'has turned out to be a blind alley' (250). 'Moral judgments are not *a priori*, necessary, analytic and such that they can be seen to be true because to deny them would be contradictory . . .', yet 'though it follows from this that they are synthetic, it is implausible to claim

that they are synthetic propositions which we are able just to see *a priori*, intuitively and without argument to be necessarily true. Attempts to show that they are synthetic, contingent and empirical judgments, known to be true by observation and experience, and about the natural world, also break down' (250). That shows both the drift and the limitations of the first part, for although moral sentiment theories generally are briefly treated under 'subjectivism', and although the ghost of emotivism in particular walks in more than one chapter, Professor Harrison does not entertain seriously enough (to refute it even)

the view that moral judgments do not express propositions, prescriptions or anything strictly meaningful, but sentiments or attitudes only. 'I do not see that there is room for doubting that the function of ethical sentences is to express propositions or something very like them' (258). Must 'ethical sentences' have only one function anyway? And could they not sometimes express one sort of thing, and sometimes another? Yet the mine of good (and even fresh) arguments on stock issues of modern moral philosophy which this part provides, is perhaps what students will appreciate most in the book.

The second part promises something new. Chapter 13 considers some 'practical uses of language' (giving commands, making requests, pleading . . .) and says 'moral judgments are more like statements than any of the species of practical discourse considered in this chapter' (303). Moral judgments are instead 'judgments to the effect that some action or other is *to be done*' (304). 'Wrong' means 'not to be done' (331). The theory offered 'does not need to postulate any non-natural concepts over and above those natural concepts we acquire by observation of the natural world' (332). But the catch is that 'to be done' is appropriately used only when people who say it are 'pushing people in what is the right direction for them to go if their community's needs are to be met and their wants satisfied' (333). (So if the community consists of fifty-one Jews and forty-nine Nazis, it is wrong to put Jews into gas chambers; whereas if it consists of forty-nine Jews and fifty-one Nazis, it is wrong not to do so?) But there is more to the theory. 'We justify the view that certain actions are to be done by showing that doing them has certain advantages' (334). It is social, not individual, advantage in which the author is interested, and something is 'an advantage or disadvantage to society if it secures the ends which society in fact has' (339). (So. The killing of ten million Vietnamese fails to bring about the salvation of Vietnam for the free world, which the community in question has set as one of its ends, so the killing of ten million Vietnamese was wrong, i.e. was not to be done. But the killing of thirty-eight million Vietnamese and the brainwashing of the remainder brings about the salvation of Vietnam for the free world, so the killing of thirty-eight million etc. is right, i.e. to be done. The killing of *all* Vietnamese without remainder would however preclude the salvation of Vietnam for the free world, so it is not to be

done, *pecca efficaciter ma non troppo*.) 'I very much doubt', he adds, 'whether I really *would* want to live in a world in which everyone was guided by rules dedicated to the good of society' (340). I rather doubt whether either of us would be allowed to.

Chapter 15 relates 'duty, 'obligation', 'good', 'justice' and other typical items of moral discourse to the main account of 'to be done': not always happily. Chapter 16 sets itself to examine 'the nature of the connection between the reasons for an action and the action which is performed for these reasons; the difference between good and bad reasons for doing something; whether acting rightly is really any more rational than acting wrongly, or the good man more rational than the man who is not good; and whether the right answer to the question "What is it right to do?" is the rational answer to this question' (378). It concludes that 'The rational moral rules for men to adopt . . . are those rules about what actions are or are not to be done which it is necessary that mankind should have for their own welfare and preservation' (398). Is there no non-descriptive content being smuggled into 'welfare' (as earlier into 'the good of society')? And is it the preservation of just any human society that is to be secured, a society of poetry-lovers to be taken as on all fours with one of pushpin-lovers? If so, then why preserve a human society at all? The longer men loiter, converting limited resources to wasted heat, the longer it will be before a new species of rational ants, now confined within a dirty sleeping bag in Khatmandu, can have the advantage to which their multiplication will soon entitle them. (With a simple nervous system, their rationality is less impressive than ours, but is enough to handle elementary calculations.) It is to their advantage that we are eliminated, and they are fit to last a lot longer than we are in a disintegrating universe. To put an objection less picturesquely: what is objectionable about the 'preservation of mankind' bit is not that it seems to confirm an impression that this theory is just one more rationalization of having, to comfort the haves and infuriate the have-nots: for even the best worked out ethical theories can be made to sound like that. It is rather that 'welfare and preservation' either has some evaluative content built in—in which case we should be at the beginning of a philosophical enquiry, not at the end of one—or else it has not: in which case it is beside the point, and Moore's words

on Spencer become not inappropriate, 'The survival of the fittest does *not* mean . . . the survival of what is fittest to fulfil a good purpose—best adapted to a good end' but 'merely the fittest to survive'.

And what is objectionable about the second part of the book generally is not, as some of the teasing objections above could perhaps lead one to think, that, in conjunction with certain situational assumptions, it entails views found shocking by the vulgar: for some of the best worked out theories can be made to do the same (though not nearly so easily); and it is no harm to a philosophical theory that it should be at variance with vulgar prejudice. What is objectionable is that the high standards of arguing set in the first part were not maintained

in the second, where good arguing was more important, and that distinctions easily made were not made, and that some fairly obvious sources of objection (including some to which Professor Harrison will certainly have an adequate reply) were not considered, or obviated. It seems natural, certainly, to believe that moral judgments are true, or false, and that we do have knowledge of right and wrong. But is it necessary to understand such propositions in a quite literal sense, as descriptivists wish us to? Professor Harrison has not shown that it is.

There is an index, and the proofs have been carefully read, though read 'argument' at 51. Pp. 47-50 are loose in the review copy.

L. MOONAN

SCIENCE IN A RENAISSANCE SOCIETY. W. P. D. Wightman (Hutchinson Library), London. 1972. £2.50.

This short introduction to the search for scientific reasoning in that slippery age called 'the renaissance' (1450 to 1620 says the author) presents a number of problems to the lay reader. My chief complaints are centred rather in the scope of the problems treated than the specific investigation of each topic. The book plainly tackles too much territory, both in terms of what is 'scientific' and in terms of the period defined.

There are some very strong areas of this study: the history of medicine is quite well documented (especially in Italy and Germany) during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and there are some very good summaries of the work being done by specific men (Paracelsus) in university centres (Padua and Montpellier). However, looking at the treatment of the history of chemistry, one is disappointed to find no treatment of the search for the philosopher's stone (in Europe) or the Arabic elixirs (the Middle East); these preoccupations spurred chemistry to some of its most fruitful work. In astronomy, the Copernican revolution is covered with new insight into the theory involved, but little comment is made on the political significance of the impact of the theory. There is, however, a good discussion of the influx of Neo-Platonist thought via Campanella.

The celebrated Gutenberg Galaxy is also treated, but too diversely for us to grasp what the author wishes us to think about it. The one carefully worked out insight about topology and its relation to scientific schema (and its departure from the McLuhan thesis) is not

well enough substantiated to be clear (as, for example, in Foucault's *Les Mots et les Choses*). The author seems to favour a German-Italian axis of discovery, leaving Spain and France aside. There is, by way of Iberian material, a good discussion of the role of cartography in the explorations of the new world.

The excursions into the realm of the relationship of political and scientific thought are poor. The author ascribes Vittoria's theory of the *ius gentium* to Bartholomew de las Casas (p. 81), and further treats Machiavelli's *realpolitik* as a basically reactionary force (opposing it to the more inclusive *weltpolitik* of the exploring nations). Additionally, an interesting demonstration of the interaction of political ideology and nascent scientific discovery is called for but nowhere treated (there was a fine opportunity to do so when discussing the advancement of national interest through the new weaponry).

The closing chapters are very good indeed. It is here that the reader's attention is drawn away from a bewildering maze of names and references, and focused on the matter of the genesis of scientific discovery. The transition from the world of magic (the medieval one in general) to that of the scientific (the renaissance in part) is well presented. In the magical world, the emphasis was wonder, that Platonic spark that generated interest and the quest for knowledge; this was the prime mover towards the careful application of quantitative method to qualitative change. Nowhere is this better seen than in the transformer of