

whose material content penetrates piety and theology, are demands I share. But they are hardly appropriate as a critique of recent Protestant theology, since the programme is equally necessary over against medieval theology or Protestant scholasticism. Moreover, Dr Meynell's critique itself is inadequate at three levels.

First, these very concerns have been those of much of 'modern theology'—even in Dr Meynell's sense—for some time. The first concern has been the dominating concern of the Bultmann school. The second concern is Jürgen Moltmann's who come from Barth. Both together are the very definition of the movement led by Wolfhard Pannenberg—to name only the more obtrusive possibilities. It is inadmissible for one who wants to make Dr Meynell's critique to ignore all this.

Second, the critique is analytically inadequate. Let me select one central example. He objects to Bultmann's reduction to 'present existence'. This is undoubtedly the place where critique of Bultmann must focus. But Dr Meynell turns out to mean by this that Bultmann eliminates the dimensions of past and future and reduces faith to subjective experience. This is to *ignore* the entire theological labour of Bultmann and such of his school as Fuchs and Ebeling, rather than to criticize it. For what these men *mean* by 'existence' is exactly life lived by and for the insecurity of the future, a life to which we can be challenged only by a word from the past. Nor is there anything vague or esoteric about this terminology; it has a long and generally known tradition. As for subjectivism, the project of the school is precisely to establish the metaphysical priority of this *word*, to create an ontology in which God and we are understood in terms of the prior reality of the word, over against which we live. Perhaps they fail in this, but then this failure would be what needed to be pointed out.

Third, one cannot escape the suspicion that the author does this sort of thing because he has inadequately acquainted himself with the work of those he criticizes. Again, one example. Dr Meynell 'wonders' whether Tillich 'really means by "giving meaning to human existence" anything more than the importing of a *feeling* of reconciliation with the world. . . .' (p. 152.) This is manifest nonsense. And there seems to be a clear bibliographical basis for the nonsense. One would expect a thinker like Tillich, constructing a classical system, to handle this question in his pneumatology. Volume III of the *Systematic Theology*, containing the pneumatology, was published in 1963. Dr Meynell lists only volumes I and II in his bibliography and uses only volume I in his text, although his publication date is 1967 and he cites his own and other work published in 1965 and 1966.

Dr Meynell's own proposal to deal theologially with the problem posed by our secular civilization is 'theology of the secular' as opposed to 'secularized theology'. 'Theology of the secular' proves to be an interpretation of the schema of 'primary' and 'secondary causes' which lays heavy emphasis on the reality and worth of the secondary causes. He gives no hint of how he proposes to overcome the notorious difficulties of this schema. And, of course, exactly those aspects of 'modern theology' to which he objects are in fact last-ditch attempts so to conceive the reality of God within this fundamental schema as to guard at once the deity of God and the reality of man. If these attempts fail, the last thing we require is to start at the beginning of the same weary way.

This review has been harsh. But surely in these matters openness is required. Dr Meynell, who himself accepts this requirement so fully, will understand that the same duty is laid on others.

ROBERT C. JENSON

MORAL NOTIONS, by Julius Kovesi. *Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967.* 161 pp. 20s.

This book is a study of the nature of general concepts, with particular reference to the way in which moral concepts are formally different from non-moral concepts.

The author introduces the Aristotelian terms 'form' and 'matter' in a Pickwickian sense to distinguish between two inseparable but logically distinct elements in most of our general concepts. In so far as I can make, not directly from memory or from present observa-

tion, an indefinite number of drawings of tables of different sizes, shapes and designs, I show an understanding (a) of what tables *are* (the formal element in my notion of a table), and (b) of the sort of features an object must have if it is to count as a table (the material element in my notion of a table). I could not have either of these understandings without the other, but the formal element has logical priority, since it is what tables are that deter-

mines the kind of features they must have. A craftsman could not design a new kind of table unless he understood what tables are, for without this understanding he would not be able to judge how far he could deviate from previous designs without producing a non-table. And we do not decide whether some unfamiliar object is to be classified as a table by comparing it with other objects already accepted as tables, but rather by appealing to the formal element in our notion of a table as determining the range of permissible variations in design.

This is not how we decide whether to say that an object is yellow: in this case we just look for the recognizable colour quality. But there is no recognizable quality of 'tabularity'. And in this respect the majority of our concepts are unlike colour concepts. Especially is this true (as Moore failed to see) of 'good' and 'bad', which are the most general of our moral concepts.

Many of our concepts are organized in hierarchies. For example, the notions (already organized into formal and material elements) of tables, chairs and beds belong to the material element in the higher concept of 'furniture'. Similarly the high order moral concept of vice includes in its material element the various ways in which people can act viciously (murder, lying, adultery, etc.), and these notions are themselves organized into formal and material elements, that of murder, for example, comprising in its material element various ways in which murder can be committed.

The author shows that the difference between moral and non-moral notions is not that the latter are descriptive while the former are evaluative or prescriptive. The difference is in the formal element of the respective notions, and can only be understood in the light of the reasons why we form moral notions. We form scientific notions in order to make predictions or to be able to control events. The point of view from which we form moral notions is that of interpersonal relations, and the need to promote or avoid certain kinds of conduct. It is for this reason, and because language is public, that our moral notions are public and apply to *anybody*.

In forming the notion of murder we are

guided by the need to discriminate between killings that are right and killings that are wrong. If we later decide that certain kinds of killing which have been lumped together under the concept of murder are in fact justifiable, we do not call them 'justifiable murders'; we form a new notion (e.g. 'execution') formally different from that of murder. This is because we need 'Murder is wrong' as a moral principle that applies to anybody in any circumstances. For our moral life cannot be based, as some situationists would maintain, on particular decisions taken without reference to moral principles. The 'cannot' is logical: for as the author says, when we have to decide whether we should tell a lie in order to save someone's life we should not be confronted with the need for a decision (we should not be 'in a situation') unless we knew that lying was wrong and that we have to save people's lives. If it were often necessary to tell lies in order to save lives we might need to preserve the notion of lying as wrong by bringing such cases under a formally different notion. We might perhaps form the new notion of 'saving deceit'. And now our moral principles would include 'Lying is wrong' and 'Savingdeceit is right'. (Just as we now have the formally different notions of a 'promise' as an undertaking that ought to be kept, and a 'threat' as an undertaking that ought not to be kept.) It is not a question the end justifying the means, or of one and the same action being right in some circumstances and wrong in others, but of *two formally different actions*.

Mr Kovesi's central thesis is that moral notions do not evaluate the world of description; they describe the world of evaluation. He is not primarily concerned to explore this 'world of evaluation' or to define precisely the moral point of view, but rather to clarify the logic of the kind of notions we call moral. As a study of the logical basis of ethical thinking this book is indispensable, but it is so closely argued that it is not always easy to see the wood for the trees, and the demands on the reader's thinking and attention are considerable. The book is excellent value for 20s in spite of a few misprints.

JOSEPH COOMBE-TENNANT, O.S.B.

DANTE'S LYRIC POETRY, Volume I: The Poems, Text and Translation; Volume II: Commentary, by Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde. Clarendon Press, 1967. 6 gns.

With this book Dante's *Rime* are for the first time made truly accessible to the English-speaking world. Where in the past English

readers of Dante have had to make do with translations in a precious and stilted language that all too often blurred the line of thought,