

BOOK REVIEWS.

Structural Anthropology. Volume II. by Claude Lévi-Strauss,

Translated by Monique Layton. 383pp. Allen Lane. £6.50.

This collection brings together essays published over a space of some 20 years, almost all appearing in the 1960's and 70's after the publication of the first volume of Anthropologie Structurale in 1958. As a collection, I think it is well chosen, and, together with the first, we now have two volumes which provide convenient access to most of Lévi-Strauss' important essays. As a translation and as an offering of essays "almost all (of which) are impossible to find today" (p.vii), those already familiar with Lévi-Strauss' work may be surprised to find that well over half the text consists of essays previously translated, originally written in English, or easily available in publications in this country. It is, nevertheless, a useful reference book and, like the previous volume, will quickly become a standard text for those interested in Lévi-Strauss' work.

The 18 essays are grouped under four headings; five essays entitled "Perspective views", two on "Social Organization", seven on "Mythology and Ritual", and four on "Humanism and the Humanities". I find it is also useful to make a binary grouping of canonical essays on structuralism on the one hand and 'obiter dicta' on the other. Parts Two and Three (Chapters VI to XIV) together with Chapter V and to some extent Chapter XVI either show the structuralist method at work or revive the old debates through the well known programmatic statements. For those interested in such issues, perhaps the most important inclusion is Chapter VII where, commenting on a work by Vladimir Propp, the distinction between "structuralism" and "formalism" is argued at some length.

While this group of essays will, for most readers, constitute a re-encounter with structuralism and may offer little new, the English edition has a short preface by the author where the concluding 500 words or so present what I take to be, not a faltering of confidence, but certainly a shift of emphasis in the tone by which the structural method is presented.

Beginning (p.viii) by pointing to the "fashionable objection" to structural anthropology - that its hypotheses cannot be "falsified" - a distinction is made between the natural and the human sciences. It is explained why these two activities have a different "epistemological status" and why the hypotheses of the human sciences (as opposed to those of the natural sciences) "cannot now or ever, be falsified." (p.ix). Recalling what was written in 1953:

".....the best model will always be that which is TRUE, that is.....while being derived exclusively from the facts.....makes it possible to account for all of them....."

(Structural Anthropology, 1963, p.281)

- a statement which I have always construed as indicating something of the preconceptions and expectations of the structuralist method - I must confess to some surprise at finding the argument here going on:

"In this domain, a hypothesis is never true. Consequently it cannot be false either.....A hypothesis only possesses a relative value, granted if it succeeds in accounting for MORE facts than those hypotheses it replaces.....Structuralism does not presume to contain the truth."

(p.ix my emphasis).

I think the shift is significant and represents, however briefly intimated, a genuine attempt by the author to reconsider structuralism in response to the considerable body of critical commentary which the subject has accumulated. Practitioners of the structuralist method show little enthusiasm to reflect on questions regarding the value and significance of their findings, and if accumulations of debate urge them to do so, that is all to the good.

Qualities which Lévi-Strauss himself describes as "erudition, moral reflection, and aesthetic creation" (c.f. p.306) I find best revealed in his 'obiter dicta'. Just as Tristes Tropiques remains his best book, so in a collection like this I find that it is when he is not performing structural analysis or defending the structuralist method that the prose and the thought become fascinating and one finds that excitement elicited by the insights of an outstanding man of letters. The pedagogical essays on Rousseau and Durkheim (Chapters II and III) will, in style and content, remind Oxford students of a teaching tradition in anthropology which encourages the view that Montesquieu and Mauss, Hume and Hocart, are more important to one's education than a taste for passing intellectual fashion. The justification for anthropological research presented in Chapter IV together with the remarks on ideas like "culture", "race", "progress", "primitive" "civilization", in Chapters XVII and XVIII deal with questions of disquieting profundity in a manner of assured competence. There is a delightful essay (p. 276) on Picasso and butterfly collecting where, around the image of John Fowles' The Collector a quite passionate moral statement is constructed on the theme of "a more correct sense of beauty and truth" and the "growing stupidity of man in front of himself".

It is this aspect of "moral reflection", taken in a wide sense as a concern with discriminations of value and significance, that structuralism perversely refuses to respond to. If a structuralist interprets a myth as various transformations of sets of binary oppositions, we need no longer question the epistemological status of the interpretation by asking if it is verifiable or falsifiable. The interpretation claims an immunity from those conventional touchstones of the physical sciences. No claims are made for truth. What is now clear is that the appropriate question is not "is the interpretation true?" but "is the interpretation interesting?" It cannot claim immunity from criteria of significance.

Again, to return to Lévi-Strauss' intriguing preface:

"What is interesting in man is not subject to scientific decision but results and always will result from a choice which is ultimately of a philosophical order." (p.ix)

Choice, he could have added, is an ethical matter. It blurs the distinction between description and evaluation. (Ricoeur, "construing and constructing", T.L.S. Feb. 25, 1977). Hence it is not sufficient to justify a structuralist interpretation by indicating how many more facts it succeeds in accounting for. One must also justify on what grounds it is held that this way of accounting for facts is significant enough to claim our interest in the first place.

The debate on structuralism has shown, for instance, that there are sound 'a priori' arguments to support the view that structural analyses cannot tell us anything about "fundamental structures of the mind". Similarly the structural analysis of myth and ritual reveals neither "laws" nor "principles of logical necessity". Even the more modest claim that a structural analysis uncovers "a unity and a coherence" in the material it

addresses cannot be justified unless we have some idea of what sort of coherence we are expecting to find, that is, some indication of the criteria by which something is going to count as coherent.

Our interpretations are a response to the questions we choose to ask. These questions carry with them our interests and our expectations. The value of an interpretation is a matter of how far, and in what way, these expectations have, or have not, been confirmed. My dissatisfaction with structuralist interpretations does not concern doubt about criteria of verifiability but criteria of evaluation and significance. Such interpretations are, and will remain, opaque until a more coherent attempt is made to clarify the questions being asked and examine the conditions of that choice by which we decide "what is interesting in man".

Alan Campbell.

John Davis. People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology, by John Davis. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

People of the Mediterranean is an exercise in comparative social anthropology. If the lack of necessary evidence and the grounds on which comparison is based make this book a failure, it is at least an instructive failure. How is it possible to talk about the similarities and differences among the societies of the Mediterranean in a productive way? John Davis argues that by being comparative, historical, and thematic, it is possible to trace "patterns of concomitant variation" in Mediterranean societies; and that there is enough similarity and enough history in the Mediterranean to make the enterprise worthwhile (255).

The book is divided into six chapters. The first and last chapters are primarily devoted to the failures of Mediterranean anthropologists and to the ways in which Mediterranean ethnography might be improved. The main body of the text is an ethnographic survey of the economies, forms of stratification, politics, family, and kinship in Mediterranean societies. There is regrettably no chapter devoted to religious systems or to the Church, which is one unifying feature between many of the societies discussed. Davis apologizes for the lack of any such chapter and attributes its absence to the failings of Mediterraneanists. The relations between Christian doctrine and secular ideologies and practices have not been sufficiently and systematically explored in Mediterranean ethnography. Although there is very little material about Mediterranean symbolic systems in the existing literature, Davis virtually ignores the subject. He might well have included it in his list of topics neglected by Mediterraneanists.

The stated aims of People of the Mediterranean are twofold: first, to review the literature of the Mediterranean published

before January 1975; and secondly, to suggest ways in which it might be improved. The book is an informative and useful compendium of ethnographic facts from a wide range of societies. Ninety-seven communities are mentioned in the text; and these are distributed among seventeen countries from Portugal along the Mediterranean shores to Yugoslavia and Turkey. As the author admits, the Mediterranean is neither a discrete geographical entity, nor is it characterised by any specific features that are uniquely Mediterranean; but it is an area in which people from diverse societies have come into contact for thousands of years and one in which similar institutions and ideas take a variety of forms. Davis goes so far as to say that "Mediterranean social facts are the product of the interaction of people of diverse kinds from time to time" over thousands of years (14-15). The hint of cultural diffusionist thinking in that statement is disturbing, and one wonders of what those Mediterranean social facts consist. People of the Mediterranean does not provide us with any answer, and the author states quite explicitly that it was not intended to do so.

A substantial part of this book is concerned with the failure of Mediterranean anthropologists. A recurring theme is that "Mediterraneanists have not made the most of their distinctive opportunities to be comparative and historical" (10). The author complains that his predecessors and colleagues have not only failed to compare the results of their respective investigations; they have also failed to provide the sufficiently detailed evidence required if their accounts are to be comparable. The duties of the Mediterraneanists to be comparative and historical are inextricably linked in "the method of concomitant variation" to which Davis aspires. He argues that Mediterraneanists "have ignored or abused history, and ignored those millennia of intensive interaction which have made Mediterranean societies" (7). Many of his criticisms are well-founded. The wealth of historical and literary sources to which many Mediterraneanists have access has not always been fully utilised. Communities are often studied in a narrow time scale. Few attempts have been made to integrate local and national processes within an historical framework, or to incorporate past events into a sociological account of a contemporary society. Davis adduces Blok and Léon-Tolosa as the noteworthy exceptions and concludes that the anthropological future of history lies with these two Mediterraneanists (258).

As an essay in comparative social anthropology, this book does not seek to formulate any general propositions about Mediterranean institutions. No single method of comparison is utilized; and as Davis points out, comparison may mean "no more than putting evidence from one place alongside evidence from others" (15). The Sarakatsani bridegroom who makes secret visits to his bride during the early months of marriage is contrasted to the Bedouin father who ignores the seven-day wedding of his son. The result is interesting and instructive; and Davis does not attempt to formulate any far-reaching conclusions. He contends that only in some cases has it been possible to suggest very tentative sets of concomitant variations. By comparing material from a range of diverse societies, Davis has been able to point out gaps in the ethnographic record, to make a list of notes and queries for future ethnographers, and to make a plea for higher standards and conformity in ethnographic reporting. He uses his knowledge of Mediterranean ethnography in an intelligent and constructive manner; and he has few pretensions about the effectiveness of his comparisons. One simply wishes that he had a clearer understanding of the limitations and difficulties which must be confronted if Mediterranean institutions and ideas are to be compared.

What are the grounds for comparison and of what would the evidence consist? Davis seeks to establish patterns of concomitant variation, but rather than looking for structural similarities, he relies upon spurious analytical notions -- such as class, honour, household, family -- in his attempt to identify similarities and differences. Frequently he attributes the lack of evidence for an effective comparison to the failings of the ethnographers themselves. In some cases, this may be a justifiable complaint; but it seems not to have occurred to him that part of the problem rests not with the ethnographers, but with the kinds of evidence to which Mediterraneanists have access. Generally they do not have recourse to the kinds of formal criteria on which an effective comparison can be based.

This does not mean that it is an unproductive or futile endeavour to compare Berber Saints and Bedouin camel herders in specific contexts, but having noted some kind of similarity between the two, what more can we say about the "family resemblance"? Davis advises us to note the variations, changes in context, and resulting changes in the balance of elements when similar Mediterranean institutions and processes are compared within an historical framework. Unfortunately he does not fully apply his proposed method of comparison to any of the institutions examined in his book. Once having pointed out similarities and differences between Balkan zadrugas and Sarakatsani stani, he finds that he cannot take the comparison any further. In comparing different Mediterranean societies, he refers to institutions, to types of economic activity, forms of stratification (bureaucracy, honour, class), forms of representation (vindication of rights, class struggle, and patronage), kinds of family, kinds of kinship, and kinds of family-like tie. By referring to typologies and to substantive notions, rather than to formal relations, he gives us no clearer understanding of the similarities and dissimilarities which he attempts to gauge.

There is one topic in this book to which Davis might have more usefully applied his "method of concomitant variation to an historical process" (255) -- namely, godparenthood. In the section devoted to godparenthood (Chapter 5, Family and Kinship), he makes passing reference to an essay by Gudeman, "The compadrazgo as a reflection of the natural and spiritual person" (1971).

Although Gudeman is not a Mediterraneanist, the lack of attention Davis paid to this superb article is surprising, since Gudeman meets the requirements of the comparative, historical social anthropology prescribed by Davis. Gudeman examines the compadrazgo system in a Panamanian peasant community within an historical and comparative framework. He argues that "all compadrazgo systems, including the Church versions, may be seen as a set of variations occurring through time and space; that all of the forms have a similar foundation but have evolved in different directions" (Gudeman 1971; 46). He traces the historical development of the compadrazgo within the context of Christian dogma, and he looks beneath the visible similarities in compadrazgo systems in Latin America and Europe. There are certain logical rules by means of which "patterns of variation" in the compadrazgo system can be accounted for. By referring to the invariant structure of the compadrazgo and its relation to the family, Gudeman clearly demonstrates that it is possible to compare effectively compadrazgo systems in different societies. It is a pity that Davis has not made better use of this article in his own attempts to compare Mediterranean institutions and processes. He might have seen more clearly what kind of evidence is needed if there is to be a comparative, historical Mediterranean anthropology.

As an exercise in comparative social anthropology, People of the Mediterranean demonstrates how difficult and often impracticable it is to compare Mediterranean societies. The book is well worth reading. As an ethnographic survey, it should be especially useful to those who are doing field work in European and Mediterranean societies. The map of places mentioned in the text and the accompanying list of ethnographers are of special interest; but it should be noted that the list is by no means exhaustive. An excellent bibliography, which covers eighteen pages, will be welcomed by the future Mediterraneanists whom Davis so earnestly seeks to advise, to inspire, and to instruct.

S.J. Ott.

Explorations in Language and Meaning - Towards a Semantic Anthropology by Malcolm Collocott. Malaby Press, London. 212pp. £6.95. 1976.

This work, by a former editor of this journal, is a more detailed consideration of issues that have animated the pages of JASO since its inception. These can be variously expressed but may be summed up as "...the shift from function to meaning" in social anthropology (E.Ardener, Ed. Social Anthropology and Language, 1971, Introductory essay, plx.), and the move away from a crudely conceived 'scientific' positivism in the social sciences in general. The background to this reorientation is demonstrated in the first half of the book through an examination of three of the major links between anthropology and language; the theories on the relationship of language to thought developed by Muller (Ch.2), the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, from the Saussurian inspiration to semiology (Ch.3), and the recent developments in American linguistic anthropology (Ch.4). The shortcomings of these approaches in so far as they attempt to constitute any theory of meaning are demonstrated, although the works of Muller, who has all the virtue of being long dead, are shown to be in some ways more relevant than the structuralisms and formalisms of recent years, whose anti-semantic and often unrealistically optimistic programmes are clearly exposed.

The central themes of the book are expanded in the second half through a consideration of various conceptual problems that social anthropology has inherited, in various ways, from the prevalence in the human sciences of "a hopelessly inadequate positivistic view of scientific method (derived not from the actual practice of natural science but largely from philosophers like Mill)" (p.89). The aid of modern linguistic philosophy is enlisted to show that "human action is a subject matter to which the sorts of explanation given in the physical sciences are inapplicable" (p.91, from Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its relations to Philosophy*, 1958 p.72).

The important point that the 'shift from function to meaning' is more than a merely fashionable move from a functionalist world of 'concrete institutions' to a structuralist world of 'ideas' is well demonstrated in chapter 6, 'Recasting Witchcraft', where this distinction itself is shown to be derived from a positivist prejudice regarding the differential relevance of different kinds of evidence. The move from witchcraft to law and politics "was not one from a conceptual problem on to institutional relations, for our notion of human action renders this division nonsensical" (p.124).

The inadequacies of an opposition of ideas to action are further clarified in chapter 7, where, for example, a short discussion of approaches to the analysis of alchemy shows that the imposition of such analytical oppositions as 'literalist' (alchemy as a proto-science) and 'symbolist' (alchemy as an expressive medium) asks questions of the data which can only be 'answered' by a restructuring of our own academic discourse. In chapter 8, 'The Translation of Cultures', we are shown how further oppositions of this kind, technique/art, explanation/expressiveness, and science/religion, whose second terms might appear potentially constitutive of a semantic anthropology, are in fact dissolved by it. As Crick says, "most of what is important to us is spoken about in discourse which mixes inextricably the analytical oppositions which logical positivism offered" (p.159)

The semantic approach is not, therefore, as structuralism has sometimes been thought to be, complementary to a functional approach, but rather "covers all the territory which was included in the older functional social anthropology" (p.2). That it is not felt necessary to labour this point with quite such force regarding the relationship of the semantic approach to structural anthropology derives perhaps from an assessment of the modernity and youthful open-mindedness of structuralism which is becoming less apt. However, semantic anthropology, although it is not "a new school or...the announcement of a new subdiscipline", and "refers only to an awareness that anthropology is necessarily a semantic enquiry" (p.2), covers a limitless field, since "all that humanity utters is a statement about itself, so our label includes all systems" (p.159), not only in the humanities but also in the sciences, - "That there are features of scientific maps which overlap with those of others clearly makes science, too, an appropriate subject for semantic investigation" (p.137).

While this potential universality of some kind of semantic approach is established with confidence, it has possible strategic disadvantages. The recognition that "if anthropologists are to tackle this kind of issue more competently we shall need

to cultivate the sort of sensitivities possessed by literary scholars" (p.135), and the perhaps ironic observations that "human beings are naturally anthropological" (p.166) and that "To be a person requires the exercise of considerable anthropological skills" (p.104) all imply that the 'newer anthropology' (p.8) will appear very like the subjects whose fields it will find itself raiding for material, far beyond its own established empire of the traditional society. Bearing in mind the current vogue for ethological studies of man, the shortcomings of which are outlined in chapter 5, it might be feared that the space in academic and popular discourse which 'anthropology' occupies is more likely to be filled by some new and exuberant reductionism than by a semantic enquiry, however painstaking, which is so lacking in the definitional criteria necessary within the 'nation-state' organisation of academic disciplines. This criticism is to some extent anticipated - "No doubt, for some, the very familiarity of this 'anthropomorphic' approach will make it unacceptable, yet clearly scientific realism demands that an anthropomorphic model be used when a science actually is about human beings". (p.91). We thus have a welcome, if risky, invitation to disarmament - "A Social scientist has no more basic capacity to understand human action than the people whom he is studying, but it is clearly absurd that he should proceed as if he had far less" (p.91).

Behind the apparent clarity of this anthropomorphic approach, however, we can discern several difficulties. For example, we are made aware that "since social interaction is so much a matter of exchanging meaning, the precision of measurement of the physical sciences corresponds in the social sciences to a more minute conceptual delimitation" (p.92, from Harré and Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*, 1972, p.132), and that we must "try to analyse in a more painstaking fashion" (p.159). We must also bear in mind however, that "Most of our leading concepts have blurred edges, but this is a vital and subtle imprecision" (p.82), that "it seems highly unrealistic to regard the whole of a lexicon as a mosaic of tightly structured fields". (p.72), and that the "linguistic registration of conceptual fields may be very partial" (p.72). Furthermore, pertaining to British work on dual symbolic classification, we are reliably informed that "symbolic grammars never exist at just one level, and so to set out a series of homologous pairs could at best be only a start" (p.73), and that "we cannot know how complex (the) contextual grammar will be" (p.73). Bearing these points in mind, then, when we are told, in a dissolution of the category of witchcraft, that "the total moral space of a culture will have many dimensions, each constituted by a system of collective representations. For dissolving witchcraft, only two primary structurings will be discussed : firstly a system of concepts of human action and its evaluation; secondly a system of person categories. Naturally to understand any particular patterns of social action it would be necessary to relate these planes to the other classificatory structures" (p.113), we begin to feel rather ill at ease. Bearing in mind the indeterminacy of concepts, non-linguistic registration of the 'basic tacit background' (p.81) to social interaction and the potential complexities of contextual grammar in inter-systemic relations, not to mention the difficulties of translation, the 'naturallyit would be necessary' rings rather hollow, and we begin to doubt whether conscientiousness will be enough.

Such criticism as this, of an enterprise which is emphatic in its claim to provisionality, and which has "not shrunk from emphasising diversity because it seems more important for anthropologists to avoid an opposite error" (p.149) is not irrelevant, since this book is, among other things, a consideration of the inevitable limits to our enquiry, and it would be a pity if our power to penetrate the 'total moral space' of a culture were thus casually overestimated.

A more serious criticism of a work emphasising the mutual opacity of conceptual systems concerns the use of superficially similar ideas from diverse academic discourses to establish a theoretical concordance such that the only alternative to error appears to be a theoretically innocent unremitting effort. For example, we are told that "...a scientific account is (not) concerned only with noting the forms of event which ordinary language traces. One also has to account for the nature of these forms; and to express their deep structures it will often be necessary to go beyond the resources of ordinary concepts, even to systems like non-metrical mathematics, for instance." (note 3, ch.5 p.173). Also that "...the analytical notions of French sociological thoughtare richly paradigmatic, and sufficiently empty to express the deep structure of cultural facts without violating their surface form" (p.166).

Also that "...the common language used here to recast witchcraft seeks to sink beneath cultural terms which are not safely used in anthropology to an analytical level of sufficient depth that satisfactory commensurability between cultures can be obtained" (p.113); all of which would suggest that 'deep structures' are not semantic, and as such, however they are inferred or located, cannot be subjected to the niceties of semantic and conceptual investigation which are central to this approach. "We require far more to observe the discriminations existing in the culture under study, instead of employing those which our own supplies" (p.113), and there is no reason to suppose that this is any easier at a deep structural level, or that it is at this level that 'satisfactory commensurability', if that is what we are aiming for, will be achieved. As Crick himself shows in his criticism of Lévi-Strauss in chapter 3, both structuralism and the search for universals are basically anti-semantic concerns - "structuralism opts for syntax rather than semantics" (p.45).

On the other hand, referring to the apparently innocently empirical nature of a demographic inquiry, he says "Numbers here are the 'surface structures' of systems whose deep structures are necessarily classificatory in nature" (p.92), and similarly, "It is the semantic structures which are generative, behaviour merely being the linear physical realisation of these constitutive programmes" (p.96), where it is clear that deep structures are susceptible to semantic investigation. Since we are told that "semantic anthropology assumes that...more ordinary terms of human self understanding have a most strategic scientific value" (p.57), and that "where human beings are the subject matter of a science they themselves engage in, a perspective which presents its discoveries in terms which they can hardly recognise is in a strange position" (p.56), then the employment of the imagery

of surface and depth would scarcely seem to be necessary, and one might suspect that the invocation of a deep structure serves only to conjure up a spectre of understanding. This confusion arises in part from the conflation of a series of oppositions introduced to express the inadequacies of functionalist anthropology. The opposition of behaviour to ideas from the crude observationalist model whose conceptual dependence on the first of the pair has been reversed by later anthropology, is felt to be congruent with an opposition of the superficial to the profound, of surface to depth, of ideas, words, and action to the programmatic and explanatory. The success of the first reversal, the relegation of a (never practised) behaviourism that discounted linguistic inquiry, is felt to guarantee the success of the second, although the second in many ways re-establishes the anthropologist as the prime arbiter of explanation.

This problem, in another guise, is formulated by Crick when he says "the...tension between diversity and invariance is clearly locatable in our two central notions of system and map - the one with its implications of closure, and the other involving limited presuppositions" (p.148). We are told that Evans-Pritchard showed how, for the Zande, "The mode of discourse is the very fabric of their thought, and as men are born into conceptual structures in the same way that they are born into the social system, they cannot think that their thought is wrong" (p.131), and that "it is in a diversity of modes of discourse that human beings think and act" (p.150). And Foucault is quoted to the effect that "Sciences exist within a larger 'epistemological space', so their histories are only surface effects of an 'archaeology' which forms the unconscious of all knowledge, which decides how it shall be arranged and approached, and what shall not be formulated at all" (p.138, from Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1970, p.280). We can see that the tension between diversity and invariance derives not just from the twin truisms that translation is essentially indeterminate and that translation is always to some degree possible, but also from the attempt to make the discourse of the system, of diversity, the discourse of discourse, lie down with the discourse of the map, of invariance, the discourse of structure, which it will not do. The depths that are excavated by Foucault's archaeology are not at all the same as those inhabited by deep structures, and it would be unfortunate if their juxtaposition were to make it appear that they were.

That being said, however, the central message of this book, the exposure of the deceits practised on social scientists by our 'scientific metaphors' and 'scientific mythologies' (p.142), is skilfully and thoroughly conveyed. Bearing in mind the importance of this message (which is still very far from being widely heard), and the encouragement that the book offers with its own example to use ordinary language critically and well, it is both unfortunate and inevitable that it could not be read with comprehension by anyone lacking some experience of the problems it confronts. The necessary journey that the aspirant to knowledge in the social sciences must make through the errors that this book exposes will, however, be enlivened by its presence.

Malcolm Chapman.

Psychoanalysis and Women Edited by Jean Baker Miller M.D.,

Pelican 1974. 75p.

The advances in a theoretical understanding of female psychology which Dr. Baker Miller has collected in this book indicate two things : firstly, that the popular conceptions of psychoanalysis with regard to women are fifty years out of date; and secondly, that the advances themselves have been made in response to the critical social changes of the twenties, World War II, and the feminist movements in the late sixties (405). Disciplines like Anthropology and Psychoanalysis seem linked to social problems. However well a line of research may be advancing, general interest is lacking unless this research has a fashionable orientation.

Few women have been able to recognise in themselves the theories of penis - envy, innate biological passivity, submissiveness, and masochism which early theorists believed characterised the female mentality. This book picks out the classical developments in the approach to women's psychology and exposes the myths while demonstrating the continuity of progress, largely contributed by eminent women analysts. To identify with the subject is a luxury women have seldom experienced, except perhaps vicariously and indirectly, as in Lessing's The Golden Notebook. Miller says that it has fallen to women writers to emphasise women's own set of values' (390).

The book clears misconceptions, but of greatest importance is its contribution in presenting an entirely new and positive theoretical picture of women's growth and development as distinct from men's. This has far-reaching implications for philosophy, sociology, and politics - the minority neglected being 50% of the population.

In a culture whose prevailing ideology is one of individualism, the expectation of growth to achieve integrity of individual identity and personality has so far been conceived as a male prerogative (393). Women's success in this male model appears as a 'deviation', or a second-best to fulfilment as wife and mother - the roles of caring for and servicing others (376).

The stress on individualism has led western anthropologists to borrow ethological and bio-social models, ignoring the complexity of human development. We are familiar with the notions of status, hierarchy, competition, aggression, territoriality and even altruism, which have recourse to Freudian discoveries. What this book shows is that neglect of the psychoanalytic study of 50% of humanity has given us a false picture of 'human-ness'. An understanding of the development of a human infant through to maturity reveals the processes of distortion and tortuous alienation we place on boys to achieve the male notion of maturity (387). The idea of sex-linked attributes necessitates that a boy renounce the growth process of identification with the person caring for him - 'the very process and essential feature of growth' (384).

Whereas women's 'work' of 'caretaking' has taught them, from girlhood on, to value their identity in participating in 'the care and growth of human life' (396), men have been socialised away from an appreciation of women's keener sense of the meaning of human activity' (388):

'What is rare is a man who has incorporated an image of himself as a person who takes care of his equals - both men and women - who feels this identification as a critical part of his inner self, equal to or more important than other images, like that of being superior to his "equals" for example. This leads to...severe distortion and limitation of our conceptions of the total human experience' (386).

Anthropologists like Mead have long established the fallacy of sex-linked social characteristics. What have been lacking until now are studies which show the psychological development of the female, and how, when working outside the confines of the family unit, she continues to operate within the framework of this alternative value system. Her socially inferior status perpetuates a devaluation of her 'awareness of the intricate interstices of human relationships rather than the manipulation of things'(388). This limits their application, and creates the frustrations and conflicts familiar to women whatever their occupation.

Zilboorg's article explores the relationship between the male ideal and the female, in which by:

'attempting to conquer nature rather than live in harmony with it men have developed a hypertrophied, aggressive, executive and organisational ability that has become a Frankenstein. Their efforts....have squeezed and distorted them into inhibited robotlike creatures, yet militaristic and aggressive power-seekers who have fouled and polluted a large part of nature and threatened to destroy it altogether' (400).

Miller shows how hope for solutions to human and social problems depends on 'a new model for childhood - one which incorporates the idea of the development of some accurate sense of effective individuality as part of a process of interacting equally with others' (392)

Juliet Blair

Anita Goode

Books Received

Human Biology. An introduction to human evolution, variation, growth and ecology. 2nd edition. By G.A. Harrison et al. O.U.P. 1977. 483pp. £5.50 (paper) £10 (board).

The Evil Eye. Clarence Maloney (Ed). Columbia U.P. 1976. xvi, 334pp. £15.

Kalahri Hunter-Gatherers. Studies of the 'Kung San and their Neighbors. R.B. Lee and I. DeVore, eds. Harvard U.P. 1976. 408pp. £13.90.

Thai Peasant Social Structure. Jack M. Potter. University of Chicago Press. 1976. 244pp. £13.15.