

terness which the subject deserves. Moreover he shows excessive indulgence to Montparnasse by associating with it the names of Sir James Frazer, Hilaire Belloc, George Bernard Shaw, Sinclair Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, and others who never had more than a passing acquaintance with its literary circles; essentially it is the home of the thwarted smaller fry, the *poseurs*, and the outcasts, most of whom pass their time in lazy inactivity, producing little or nothing. Mr. Huddleston's discussion of the magazines of the quarter is especially good, as is the distinction he makes between the character of Montparnasse and that of Montmartre, but most of his book forms merely a succession of names and unilluminating anecdotes.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

THE CONTEMPORARY AND HIS SOUL by Irwin Edman (CAPE & SMITH. \$2.50)

PERHAPS the chief value of Mr. Edman's study will be found to consist in its usefulness as a guide-book to contemporary thought, as a kind of philosophical almanac for the year 1931. With admirable detachment, clarity and urbanity, Mr. Edman surveys the various maladies with which the modern soul is affected, examines the different remedies which have been proposed for its recovery, and at the end offers something like a panacea of his own. Of necessity most of the ideas which Mr. Edman treats are already melancholy commonplaces to the contemporary reader; another rehearsal of them seems at first hardly worth the trouble. But it is soon apparent that Mr. Edman is possessed of a gift of style which makes his survey something better than a mere paraphrase. By submitting these ideas to a clear and orderly arrangement he provides a more systematic view of them as a whole than is to be obtained from any similar studies in recent years.

In his opening essay Mr. Edman states his thesis: that the problem of the modern man

is none other than the mediaeval problem of the soul and its salvation. After a rapid sketch of the assaults on the soul by the scientific and industrial movements of the last few centuries, Mr. Edman explains the reasons which have recently forced the modern man to recognize the extent of his predicament. The chapter entitled *The Cult of Disillusion* is an excellent analysis of the special features which attach to the current psychology of despair and regret. The only objection that one might make is to Mr. Edman's use of such words as "cult", "fashion" and "vogue" to describe a mental attitude which is represented throughout as being pretty nearly inevitable in our time. In the succeeding chapters Mr. Edman performs a much more needed service by taking a canvass of all the principal schemes of recovery which have been offered and showing to what extent each of them is insufficient as a substitute for the harmonious faith of the past. For one reason or another each of the separate values or "faiths" indicated in the chapter-headings is found to be inadequate: *The Faith in Intelligence*, *Retreat to Platonism*, and *Flights to Action and to Ecstasy*. Hardly a single phase of recent thought is left undiscussed, and except in a few instances Mr. Edman's exposition is clear, informed and unbiased. One regrets the superficiality of the section on the neo-Thomist movement in England and France; and one cannot but wonder, after his casual indentification of Proust with the tradition of *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism, how closely Mr. Edman has applied himself to the text of the final volumes of *A la Recherche du temps perdu*.

After so drastic a stock-taking of other men's theories, Mr. Edman admits to a frank embarrassment in offering his own answer to the difficulties of our time. He remarks that most of the positive schemes which he has discussed represent hardly more than the wishful operation of a fantasy, "an imperious whistling in the moral dark". It is therefore with a feeling of mingled hopefulness and

trepidation that one turns to the last essay in the volume, which is entitled *Note Concerning Salvation for This World*.

It must be reported at once that the title of this essay is more promising than anything in its substance. It is, essentially, a restatement of naturalism in contemporary terms. Mr. Edman is for an acceptance of nature and for a view of nature large enough to include all those conditions of modern industrial civilization which others have sought in various ways to escape. He is opposed to any dualism between the flesh and the spirit because he believes that the foundations of the spirit are to be found deep in the flesh. "It is because he recognizes himself as thus 'umbilical to earth' that the naturalist seeks to discover the morals implicit in, rather than to impose a morality upon, the nature of which his animal body is the expression." Mr. Edman's naturalism, however, is saved from the harsher consequences of nineteenth-century mechanism by a last-minute affiliation with a kind of new and revised hedonism. "The senses are truly the beginning of wisdom, or at least, they charge wisdom with vitality", Mr. Edman declares; and a rediscovery of sensuous vitality would be "an insurance and an antiseptic against a wallowing in sentimental history or wistful prophecy". Through some such happy and mysterious marriage between naturalism and hedonism, apparently, Mr. Edman believes that love and faith will be restored to the modern world.

In the last pages of this essay Mr. Edman's style, so admirable throughout, dissipates into a kind of minor poetry. The influence of Santayana is most regrettable. Here, where we should most expect to find a precise definition of terms, Mr. Edman indulges in what is nothing short of a rhetorical holiday. What Mr. Edman means by "love" and "faith" and "the good" is never made clear to the intelligence. Religion, for example, becomes synonymous with a certain mental state—"an intuition of immortal things". The distinctly nebulous program is referred to as a "chal-

lenge". In brief, Mr. Edman has been affected by the style of the author of *The Life of Reason* to the extent of repeating the same confusion in regard to the function of language—a confusion which consists in using language emotively in a work whose intention and purpose is presumably intellectual. In place of an adequately reasoned conclusion Mr. Edman sends us off with a thinly coloured penny-world of rhetoric. To the list of retreats from actuality which he has catalogued he adds another—the retreat to "style".

WILLIAM TROY

SCIENCE AND FIRST PRINCIPLES *by* F. S. C. Northrop (MACMILLAN. \$3.00)

AFTER nearly three hundred pages of able and interesting exposition of the various philosophies of science from its early Greek beginnings to the present day, Professor Northrop arrives, with his "new theory of the first principles of science", almost exactly where he began; *viz.*, at the "extensive fact of stuff" (matter) of Thales, and the "flux" of it, of Heraclitus. But since these two principles are antithetical, he has had to introduce a third one, a "new physical frame of reference" which would synthesize his thesis and antithesis, which would give his theory a "metrical uniformity and constancy which measuring requires" while, at the same time, be consistent with the kinetic atomic principle.

Thus it follows from these premises, the author maintains, that everything in nature is basically physical and dependent on the primacy of motion, and that, since consciousness is inherent in all kinetic atoms, the only difference between animate (man included) and inanimate nature is purely one of "formal" structure, and that psychical qualities are nothing more nor less than "particularized" physically and formally determined experience.

It is obvious then, from this brief summary, that Professor Northrop's "new" physical