

which, although without scale, will greatly assist in identification. Botanists, horticulturists and travellers will find much to appeal to them in this book, and it will be indispensable to all with interests in South African botany.

GEORGE TAYLOR.

ETHNOS AND THE MODERN AGE

The Science of Man in the World Crisis

Edited by Ralph Linton. Pp. xv+532. (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1945.) 23s. 6d. net.

TWENTY-ONE papers by twenty authors constitute a symposium inspired and edited by the professor of anthropology of Columbia University. The majority are of rather specialized anthropological interest, though there are some—notably “The Present State of World Resources”, by H. A. Meyerhoff (professor of geology at Smith College)—which fit with difficulty into the pattern of the volume. The range of topics is intentionally wide in order to meet Prof. Linton’s purpose. He points to the recent flood of books concerned with plans for world reorganisation, and supports the generally accepted view that the problems involved in the planning of civilization are so complex that they can be solved only by collaboration between workers in many different fields of scientific inquiry. Aware that more than a generation may elapse before the discoveries and techniques of one science become part of the regular working equipment of other sciences, he offers the present volume in an attempt to shorten the time interval.

It is perhaps inevitable that Prof. Linton should not only approach the study of world reorganisation from his particular professional point of view, but should also claim for anthropology a unique contribution to the solution of those problems of civilization which beset the citizen of the world. It is unfortunately true, however, that despite wide dissemination of knowledge of civilizations and cultures, the understanding between peoples which should result is greatly hindered by the normal organisation of science along national lines, in keeping with the rigid partition of the world between competitive sovereign Powers. Indeed, certain anthropologists—not all of German origin!—have been criticized for national or racial bias in the prosecution of their researches. Of the motives which actuate the Great Powers and frustrate the efforts of the peoples of the world to attain harmony in their complex relationships this volume says little: though they are not entirely ignored, as witness the final article on “Nationalism, Internationalism and War”.

It is assumed in the discussion devoted to the physical and mental endowment of the races of mankind that the ‘average reader’ knows and accepts the basic facts of man’s origin and evolution. The assumption seems to be unreliable, however, in view of widespread ignorance on the subject of man’s antiquity, not to mention the controversies which have gathered around the topic of evolution. Prof. Linton does well frankly to admit the difficulty of handling within the outer frontiers of his subject both physical and cultural anthropology, of which the respective objectives, techniques and disciplines vary so widely from each other; but his emphasis is laid on the abundant opportunities for collaboration between them.

An omission—the more notable because the place of environment in the pattern of human life is mentioned—is the significance of climate as an influential factor in the shaping of society. Such a topic would have fitted well and easily into the design of this symposium. But such omissions as may be noted, though they affect the balance of the volume, do not affect the virtues of the individual essays, each an achievement of vigorous scholarship.

WALTER FITZGERALD.

INTRODUCTION TO PLATO

Discovering Plato

By Alexandre Koyré. Translated by Leonora Cohen Rosenfield. Pp. xi+119. (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1945.) 10s. net.

THIS is a delightful and much-needed book; may it be read as widely as it deserves. There is no doubt that Plato’s dialogues are still, after twenty-four centuries, the best introduction to philosophy; but they themselves need to be introduced to the modern reader, who otherwise may come away with the wrong impression or none at all. Not only neophytes and the unlearned require help. Two recent books by writers of considerable academic standing are full of gross errors about Plato. One of the leading philosophers of the day has just published misunderstandings which an hour’s reading of M. Koyré’s book would have dispelled. Indeed one sentence would have gone a long way—“Though Socrates often has his fun at the expense of his interlocutors, Plato never mocks his readers”. But Plato does expect his readers to play their part in the intellectual drama he unfolds. M. Koyré’s concern is to prepare the modern reader to play it.

After an account of the intention and method of the dialogues, M. Koyré introduces us to the *Meno*, *Protagoras*, *Theaetetus* and the political part of the *Republic*. The introduction to the *Republic* is specially needed because Plato’s politics are harder to understand than anything else he discussed. Even where his political views are most repulsive to modern ways of thinking, understanding ought to come before criticism. Too often Plato is represented simply as a hater of Athenian democracy and an admirer of the totalitarian Spartan regime. It is forgotten that Athenian democracy was in its intentions scarcely less totalitarian than the Spartan system. The main difference was that it was less thorough and efficient; it did allow for change and variety, but that was its weakness. Plato’s totalitarianism was not his invention; it was just Greek politics. It is not noticed that Plato’s severest criticism is directed against other forms of government and not democracy. The chief indictment of democracy is that its weakness tends to anarchy, which is the way to tyranny. It is forgotten that where Plato’s positive proposals sound most oppressive, he was assuming that political power would be in the hands of genuine experts, who really knew what was right and what was wrong, that the others would all recognize the fact and therefore willingly obey them. M. Koyré reminds us of all these things, and many others.

The translator may be congratulated on a translation which does not read like one. There is a useful index and a foreword by Prof. Edman, whose encomium is not a bit overdone. A. D. RITCHIE.