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of his particular arguments". The volume closes with a somewhat uneasy discussion between Mr. Quinton, Mrs. Warnock and Professor Ryle which attempts, none too successfully, to bring together points of agreement and which also briefly considers the charge that the non-metaphysical philosophers of the present are narrow and trivial in comparison with the giants of the past.

The notable thing about the book as a whole is the generally respectful attitude to metaphysics; only Professor Ryle is sufficiently truculent to say that a man is not a metaphysician unless he asserts "the existence or occurrence of things unseen and gives for these assertions purely philosophical or conceptual reasons". The old conviction that metaphysics can be dismissed without a hearing has certainly gone. But it may be questioned whether a new understanding has yet been attained. Despite Mr Warnock's wise conclusion (which Professor Ayer had already reached in 1946), few if any of these writers come very close to actual metaphysicians: they salute them from a distance, and then return to familiar ground. It is interesting in this connection to note how, in the very first essay, the "particular quandary" which is selected to illustrate the origins of metaphysics is that of our knowledge of the external world; perhaps not surprisingly, the problem of perception is never far from the thoughts of these particular writers. Asked to name a metaphysician, they think first (cf. pp. 17 ff.) of someone who says that material objects are real but not immediately knowable, or are fictions which we cannot help postulating, or are nothing but families of sense-data; in other words, of the philosophical theses propounded by analytic philosophers of the last generation. And it is true, of course, that these theses are often characterized as metaphysical, under the influence of Wisdom and others. Now the advantage of selecting these examples to illustrate metaphysics is that you can show fairly easily, in cases like these, that the view in question arises out of some sort of logical misapprehension; and this suggests the general conclusion that metaphysics, in the end, is nothing more than the product of intellectual confusion. On this view the Positivists were wrong to think that metaphysics brings us news from nowhere, but right in believing that its only foundation was bad logic. But to test this thesis fairly we surely need to refer not the writings of misguided analysts, however familiar, but to those of real metaphysicians, however foreign; i.e. to the works of such philosophers as Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Bradley. The weakness of these discussions is that they do not attempt this task, even within the limits of the space available. An inquiry into metaphysics must begin from the fact that there is, whether we like it or not, an established body of metaphysical literature which is continuously found illuminating; we need to examine this literature to see in what the illumination consists. But to do this we have to immerse ourselves in the thought of actual metaphysicians and discover what they were doing from the inside. It is not enough to play about with straw men, or even to glance hastily through the door and then come back with sketchy and perhaps somewhat imaginative, if entirely well-meaning, accounts of what we saw.

W. H. WALSH.

Metaphysical Beliefs: Three Essays by STEPHEN TOULMIN, RONALD W. HEPBURN and ALASDAIR MACINTYRE. Edited by Alasdair MacIntyre. S.C.M. Press Ltd. Price 25s.)

This book consists of three long essays, Contemporary Scientific Mythologies by Professor Toulmin, Poetry and Religious Belief by Mr. Hepburn and The

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Logical Status of Religious Belief by Mr. MacIntyre. The editor, Mr. MacIntyre, explains that the link between these essays lies in a common philosophical attitude shared by the three writers. Each is indebted "to the revolution in contemporary philosophy which is associated with the name of Wittgenstein." Believing that traditional metaphysics is dead, they nevertheless suspect that important philosophical issues may have been buried prematurely with it.

Toulmin argues that thinking in the twentieth century is no more free from myths than it ever was at any time in the past. The difference is that contemporary myths are derived from natural science and consist of scientific theories illegitimately extended beyond their proper field. And they take their authority and persuasiveness from their scientific origins. He considers two of these alleged myths in some detail: the cosmologists' prediction of the "running down of the universe" based on an extrapolation of the second law of thermodynamics and the inflation of the theory of evolution from a reputable hypothesis in biology to a comprehensive account of the universe which starts with "cosmic star dust" and ends by explaining morals and society. Toulmin has little difficulty in showing that such grandiose extensions of biological theory are very silly. But surely very few intelligent people, with the exception of Dr. Julian Huxley, ever thought that they were anything else. But he seems to me to be much less successful in showing that the cosmologists' description of the universe as "a running down clock" is equally a myth in his sense of the word. His main objection rests on a well-known logical doctrine: we may not say the same things about a class as we say about every member of the class. "The argument (sc. of the cosmologists) works only if we assume that a 'universal' law necessarily applies to 'the universe' " (p. 43). I find this unconvincing. The second law of thermodynamics describes the changes in energy distribution of any physically isolated system. Now it may be said that the universe is not a physically isolated system; it is rather a *logically* isolated one. For by definition, there is nothing outside it. But this surely only strengthens the argument since there can logically be no other physical system with which the universe can enter into energy exchanges. But waiving this point, is a prediction about maximum entropy a prediction about *the universe*? Surely we may equally plausibly claim it to be a prediction about the eventual energy states of *every part of the universe*.

I have no doubt that Toulmin is right in suggesting that there are contemporary myths of the kind he has described. And he does philosophers a service by bringing this fact to their attention in so interesting and readable a way. But I am sure that he has not chosen the most characteristic examples for criticism. If he wants an instance of a grossly extrapolated theory resting on a negligible scientific basis and widely accepted by the clever-sillies (surely the hall-mark of a contemporary myth) what could be better for all his purposes than Freudian psychology? And this is, after all, a myth that badly needs to be exposed for what it is.

The essays by Hepburn and MacIntyre are concerned with more overtly metaphysical questions, the problems of religion. These essays are very good examples of a softer attitude to metaphysics which is becoming increasingly popular. Neither of the writers believes that religious propositions can be proved but both feel uneasy in assuming that there is nothing more to be said. Mr. Hepburn examines with great skill, care and sympathy an analogy between poetry and religious discourse. Though he finds that the analogy is not strong enough to explain the senses in which religious language can be said to be meaningful, he gives it an over-generous run for its money. After a very careful and conscientious treatment in which he even tries to make

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sense of the pretentious obscurities of Dr. Jung, he concludes that a close examination of the analogy may yield a new programme for philosophical theology. But surely this would be to explain *obscurum per obscurius*. It will be an evil day for theologians if ever they are reduced to guiding their speculations by the elegant uncertainties of literary criticism.

Mr. MacIntyre discusses the logical status of religious belief as it now appears to him in the aftermath of positivism. He admits that "theism is in no sense a conclusion to an argument, an inference from evidence" and that religious beliefs are not explanatory hypotheses. But he claims that the proper conclusion to be drawn from the positivists' success is not that religion is yet another nonsensical form of metaphysics. "Rather they succeeded in making clear that religion must not attempt dependence on any philosophy." But if religion is to be put, as MacIntyre claims, beyond the reach of reason, how are we to philosophize about it at all? I should guess that most philosophical theologians are going to say of Hepburn's and MacIntyre's attempts to solve their problems, sympathetic as they are, "*non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis.*"

The danger of the now fashionable "Let's not be beastly to metaphysics" movement is that it encourages the growth of irrationalism in philosophy. Philosophy is nothing if it is not an exercise of reason. It is not a matter for "sensitivity" or "imagination" or any of the other nebulous and euphemistic disguises for intellectual muzziness. The philosophers who wrote these essays are far too able and clear-headed to ignore this. But a sympathetic nostalgia for metaphysics coupled with an admission of its logical bankruptcy may encourage less able writers to believe that anything goes in philosophy. So too may their habit of decorating their essays with quotations from Donne, Eliot, Leopardi, Proust, Mrs. V. Woolf and the rest of the cultural circus of the day. As models of philosophical writing, Aquinas, Spinoza, Russell or Carnap are perhaps a little austere for present tastes. But at least they give no encouragement to confuse philosophy with belles lettres.

D. J. O'CONNOR.

Time and Modality, By A. N. PRIOR, Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1957. Pp. viii + 148.

This very stimulating book contains the John Locke lectures for 1955-56 delivered by Professor Prior in the University of Oxford. Its principal aim is to develop symbolic calculi which would give expression to the tense-distinctions of ordinary usage; but in connection with this central theme the author brings in a variety of other topics, which makes the book all the more interesting. He begins by discussing the conditions which according to Łukasiewicz must be satisfied by a logical system if it is to be counted as modal (chapter i). He then passes on to laying the foundations of his own tense-logic. In this logic the present-tense propositions are to be understood in the sense in which their truth-value may be different at different times. The symbols "*P*" and "*F*" are introduced to mean "It has been the case that" and "It will be the case that" respectively. With a present-tense proposition as the argument the functor "*P*" produces what is virtually a past-tense proposition while the task of the functor "*F*" is to produce future-tense propositions in an analogous way. This symbolism is subsequently modified and the formulae "*Pp*" and "*Fp*" are replaced by "*Pnp*" (It was the case *n* days ago that *p*) and "*Fnp*" (It will be the case *n* days hence that *p*). An axiom-system for "*F*" is then set up and