

REVIEWS

The Philosophical Life of the Senses (Sensibility-Existentialism) by Donald Burton Kuspit. Philosophical Library, Newyork, 1969. Pp. 126 Price \$ 3.95.

This is a hard to classify little book, some times serious: "science wants to end the difference between men to suit the convenience of its task to minimize variables so as to maximize predictables" (See 26 p. 38) ; often witty: "The infinity in the sage i.e. the maze the rat runs for the reward of reason" (see 22 p. 56) ; and at places, down right obscene: "Suppose Socrates had gone to bed with Alcibiades . . . would the profane Alcibiades in bed with the holy Socrates profane Socrates or would Socrates sanctify Alcibiades ? . . ." (see 33 p. 23) or "Modern art is a eunuch urinating" (see 27 p. 85). The whole book is a collection, but pretty haphazard, of epigrams, epithets and sneers. The writer moves affluently from poets, writers, philosophical and religious systems to open and shut obscenity.

The book is divided into five chapters, each chapter having a number of parts further divided into numbered sections. However, the question remains whether the book is philosophical. The list of contents promises seriousness and heaviness. Familiar topics like: 'Mind', 'truth' 'Solitude and Clarity', 'Mind over Matter', 'Sensing and knowing', 'Beyond Philosophy', etc. suggest philosophy. But soon after these follow titles such as: 'The Self-sufficiency of the Statue', 'The Love life of the Statue', 'The Stare of the Statue'. One wonders what is philosophical about them.

In chapter one: The Birth of Philosophy, Kuspit glosses over many things. He passes judgments over English, German, American philosophies and many individual philosophers too. "In English philosophy a great number of manners, an elaborate code of politeness, give the illusion of mind" (see 5 p. 4) ; again, "English philosophy is only interested in traditional tea, the worn out form of touch, the clink of cup against saucers" (see 6 p. 4).

Similar assertions are made about other philosophies and philosophers. To cite two: 1) "The German starts with the depths before he knows the surface. Thus in the end he thinks the most common things astonishing novelties and anomalies. The start: Hegel ; the end Heidegger" (see 9 p. 7). 2). "The American's consciousness is purest because it is empty" (see 10 p. 8).

The chapter two is captioned: The Identity of the Philosophers. And here, Kuspit does appear to be saying something that makes sense. He has, however, not argued his point. As usual he makes wide comments but the picture that emerges has a familiar ring about it. This chapter read in conjunction with things said in the first and the last chapter (pp 116-117, 122, 123) shows Kuspit's dissatisfaction with the traditional philosophy. Kuspit, I think, believes that traditional philosophy has become too dry and barren. Those who do this philosophy are cut off from the stream of life and there is an essential detachment in their outlook. Even philosophical style, which is prosaic, suffers from this detachment. "All prose is philosophical because it distances man from his own feeling" (see

57 p. 116). In fact, Kuspit believes, man shows his "mastery over the universe just by virtue of his feelinglessness. Man thinks he can turn his whole attention to reality once he is without feelings (see 57 p. 116).

Philosophy teaches this feelinglessness to achieve universality. Instead of showing man a way of life, Philosophy "beguiles him into searching for a purpose of life—a goal to replace the actual living, an eternally distant potentiality (called knowledge, later salvation) to distract from the intimacy of one's happiness with oneself" (see 31 p. 22).

The so called wisdom, Athena, or philosophy, "teaches man to distrust his nature" for the sake of "first principles of the universe" by teaching him detachment, i.e., teaching him not to love and abound . . . , teaches him futility (natural consequence of not loving and fructifying) in the form of universality, gives him an illusion of god-likeness, immortality" (pp.22-23).

These observations about the traditional philosophy make Kuspit declare: "Philosophers are mediocre men—the children of doom " (see 55 p. 115). What philosophy teaches and the philosopher professes is dead and colourless. For the sake of universality, philosophy has done away with emotions and deep feelings (see 75 p.119). This Kuspit finds in Marxism and also in philosophies opposed to Marxism. Kuspit does not argue his point yet he does bring out an important fact. He asks: "What has Marx done ? He has put the destiny of Society before the destiny of individual experience. What has the bourgeois done ? He has

put the destiny of power before the destiny of individual experience.

What has philosopher done ? He has put the destiny of ideas before the destiny of individual experience" (see 66 p.42). Kuspit now makes a telling observation: "But to be social, to have power, to think are consequences of the quality of life, not that quality itself ; and are characterizations of individual experience, not that character itself" (see 66 p. 42).

However, Kuspit thinks that, the richness of human, individual, experience is recognised in; what he believes to be, Indian philosophy. In this philosophy, which for him is also an art of life, Kuspit finds "Trust in the Universe, without losing trust in man, self-respect: man as the gist of the Universe without being universal" (see 12 p. 12). Here Kuspit sees "Life-consciousness without the predatory bestiality of analycity, yet with the deft penetration to the core from which the life can be seen without its being hidden by the veil of its consciousness" (See 12 p. 12).

Once a person has grasped the foregoing observations, he can, then, very well understand what Kuspit says in the third chapter on senses, which is in fact on 'Sensulity' and from there he can turn to chapters fourth, and the fifth on: Man's fate and Man's heart. As against pure abstractions of thought, Kuspit emphasises the worth of sense/sensuality in life.

Familiar grounds are felt at the list dealing with 'Art' but the con-tents some-time are misleading, some sections are

informative: "Taste is the limit of the mind's capacity to let itself go in life, to lose itself in life. . . i.e. a work of art inspiring an art of life" (sec. 3 p. 77). While others are sweeping and indefinite: "Art squeezes the poison out of the fangs of feelings" (sec. 4 p. 77). But from these observations emerges a picture that has its merits. Kuspit rightly sees the value of art in life and how it enriches life. The automation that has come into our social life can be counter balanced by being aware of the beauty of life and nature. Nature for Kuspit is all lyrical, picturesque. "City life is inevitably totalitarian. Only art aids individuality in the city ; love of art is self preservation, the works of art are imported countryside" (see 80 pp. I21-I22).

It is apparent that the writer has written with full throttle to his stream of consciousness. His approach is not precisely with an eye on the possible criticism. He just writes, gliding from poetry, philosophy and art to the question of free love. No one can doubt his involvement with the book, which is not a pure book of philosophy though some parts touch certain philosophical problems, or deal with certain problems philosophically.

In the end, I repeat that Kuspit's concern with Man is genuine. Yet I also believe that he could have shown his concern without being bizzare ; he could have argued his point instead of being frivolous.

The Essentials of Modern Materialism by Charles S. Seely.
Philosophical Library, New York, 1969. Pp. 64 Price \$ 3.50.

The book, claims the author, provides "a clear, concise easy-to-understand, explanation of the basic principles of Materialism (Realism)" and is, it is further held, "the most exhaustive and thorough study of human activity ever made by one person" (p. 9). This is a big claim, neither justified by the work itself nor supported by the literature on the subject. A person has only to remind himself of F.A. Lange's classical 'The History of Materialism in this regard, not to mention the writings on materialism published since then, to show that Seely is writing with an avoidable lack of scholarship. This can not be condoned even if Seely, very candidly, confesses that this 'study' is based, not on what he has read or was told on the subject (p. 11), but on what he has seen during many of his travels round the world in the last fifty-nine years (pp. 9-10) ! As such, the book is not strictly a 'philosophical treatise' but an account of "personal observations made over a long period" (p. 11).

The book is divided into three chapters captioned (i) General Principles (pp. 19-26) (ii) Theory (pp. 27-41) and (iii) Objectives (pp. 43-64), plus the Foreword (pp. 13-17).

The author's main contention is that philosophical systems, philosophies men and nations live by, fall under two mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive theses, namely, Idealism and Materialism, of which the later has contributed much to the advancement of human genius and welfare. Modern, twentieth century materialism, it is held, has roots deep into the past (p. 15) and its origin can be traced back to Thales and his fellow

Milesians (p. 17). Since then there has been a continuous and progressive development of the materialistic thought (p. 27), understood in the widest sense of the term, covering socio-economic, cultural, physical and biological phenomena. Basically, it is a thought 'invented' (p. 16) by people who had "ample economic security" (p. 16) yet wanted to contribute to human welfare. However, the rich and "the religious leaders of the period" always tried to "discredit" this thought by justifying economic differences and by denying change. Materialism has always been a reaction against economic disparity and, an argument for economic equality, and the reality of change (p. 16).

With these observations to provide the background, Sealy enumerates the "Principles" of Modern Materialism which are thirteen in number. To name a few: Materialism holds that the Universe is an unlimited material entity (p. 20), while matter is anything that has extension or "occupies space" (p. 28). It further contends that the universe is governed by natural laws of cause and effect (p. 20) ; that these laws are discover-able by sensory experience (p. 20) and "senses are the only source of knowledge" (p. 21). Modern Materialism takes "man to be 'measure' of all things" (p. 20) ; does not allow anything to obstruct human progress ; holds that all matters pertaining to human affairs be settled by negotiations or by "parliamentary means" (p. 21).

After stating these "General Principles" of Modern Materialism, Sealy goes on to give an account of eight fundamental concepts of the theory under discussion. They are:

Truth, Matter, Thought, Change, Opposites, Environment, Organization and Cooperation. I find nothing illuminating in this chapter which at places is down right misleading and sometimes very imprecise and-vague.

For Seely, 'truth' is "objective reality, or the nearest thing to objective reality" (p. 27, our italics). It is not 'permanant' but 'prelative'. "Truth emerges when an experiment is carried through to its final ("true") conclusion. . . ." (p. 28). One arrives at the 'final' or 'true' conclusion through the dialectical (Hegelian !) process. This true, or the 'final conclusion', for Seely, is a 'higher' level of reality.

Seely gives the example of parliamentary debates in this regard where from a clash of opinions of opposing speakers 'truth' comes out. I wonder if Seely has really established his case here, not to talk of a very eccentric use he has made of the concept of truth.

As is usually understood, 'truth' is the 'property' of statements and when statements fulfil certain conditions, they are said to be 'true'. Truth-claims are neither settled by 'parliamentary procedures' or by a show of hands by the majority party. At best, parliamentary procedures make the participants in the debate arrive at a decision for a certain course of action. But we must remember that decisions are neither 'true' nor 'false'. They can, of course, be right or wrong. I believe Seely has overlooked certain important logical distinctions and introduced some loose

expressions such as "truth is objective reality or the nearest thing to objective reality" (our italics) etc.

Seely has invoked the concept of dialectic to explain change and movement, scientific investigation, truth, etc. By 'dialectic' he under-stands a tension between opposing elements being resolved at a higher level. This movement is inevitable and there is no escape from it. Nothing is at rest, neither thoughts nor things. In fact, things change and concomitantly, thoughts undergo changes. There is nothing new about this thesis.

Seely is giving the kind of epistemology Plato wanted to refute in his Theatetus. However, there is something more to it. Thought, the argument goes, is a 'function of matter' in the sense that it is produced by mind which in its turn is "produced by brain" (p. 28) and brain is "a highly specialized" matter (p. 28). From what is said here, one gathers that there is an asymmetrical relation between Matter and Thought, Brain and Thought. What is true of the former is true of the latter, but not vice-versa.

I take exception to such conclusions. I believe that the properties which are ascribed to the brain and matter (e.g. that it occupies space) cannot be ascribed to thoughts. We can always talk about brain phenomena occurring at a given time and place, thus located, it does not make much sense to say that thoughts are located somewhere, or are spaced out the way nerve fibers are.

As has already been said above, for Seely, change is real. He cites examples of change from different regions of experience and in this attempt he is so much carried away by his enthusiasm that he overlooks scientific facts. He, for example, talks about pre-historic days when due to 'abundance of food' there were large bodied animals. From this follows that when the supply of food declined, the animals shrank to their present condition ! I am not saying that this is actually what Seely has said, but this is the natural conclusion a person can draw and this is highly misleading.

I now come to the third and final chapter of the book: Objective.

The ultimate objectives of Modern Materialism, according to Seely, are Freedom and Democracy. They can, however, be realized only when optimum in Health, Peace, Justice, Equal Opportunity for all, and Universal Education, is reached. But this in its turn depends upon people becoming more responsible towards their civil duties (p. 43). How this state of affairs can be brought about, is not explained.

The objectives of Materialism described in the book need not be disputed. What is to be disputed is the belief that only modern material-ism can realise these objectives and these ends are particular to it and not shared by Idealism, or religions like Islam and Christianity and Buddhism. Seely holds that religious leaders:have always fought against the ideals of materialism (p. 16). I wonder if it is a historical fact. One has only to study the lives of

Jesus and Muhammad to realize that Seely has not gone deeper into his material.

Seely has made an impassioned appeal to realize the virtues of materialism. I, however, believe that people have not always striven for material gain, economic security or worldly riches, but have fought and died for objectives not reducible to or measurable in materialistic terms.

The Theory of Auto-Deism: Evolutionary chain in Ontological Terms by Alberto Cernuschi. Philosophical Library, New York, 1969. Pp. xi, 59, Price \$ 3.50.

This is a small book with a long intimidating title written by physicist-mathematician on a problem that is as personal as universal: where do I come from? where am I going? (p. 1) Cernuschi believes that different religions and philosophical systems originated as various attempts to answer this question (pp. 1-3, 4, 6) by pointing to some-thing beyond. But both religion and philosophy failed in the long run to satisfy man in this regard. Religion failed because its central source, the Temple, withered away. Philosophy failed due to its conflicting systems and preoccupation with a "tiny fragment of the eternal problem" (p. 5). But every failure takes man beyond to a higher stage and man evolves new faiths and new philosophies (pp. 7-8). Accordingly, Cernuschi argues, our age "necessarily must give birth to a spiritual movement which will attempt" to satisfy man's urge to know the final answer and that is to be god (pp. 8-9). This, Cernuschi thinks, is going beyond the Sartrean thesis.

For Sartre man is desire to be for-itself i.e. God. Since this is an impossibility, this desire becomes an ontological illusion and all life becomes a pursuit for the impossible. Cernuschi wants to break this wall of impossibility by arguing that man is "moved by his vital necessity for God. Like a new dawn in the sombre night, the vision of a new faith arises in Man, of a great faith in himself, in his limitless possibilities, in his infinite and glorious ascent towards the final goal, which is God" (p. 9).

This is all very poetical but Cernuschi does not think it to be pure fancy or mere sentimentalism (p. 28). He regards this evolutionary urge to be present in the scheme of things, finding its most profound expression in man (p. 13). But the evolution does not end here. Man is not

the "peak of the chain of evolution" (p. 49). He is only a link in the evolutionary chain" (p. 50). On the earth, which represents a determined age, we find innumerable manifestations of organic life, with the respective states of evolution, whose end is Man. The other part of the chain from Man to God, may exist in the infinity of worlds with their distinct ages (p.48). The movement of progression is in perfect continuity, even when the physiological stage ends to give way in turn to the initiation of the incorporeal (p. 49).

Cernuschi calls this incorporeal entity soul. It is also called 'Spirit, Spiritual force' and 'psychic energy.' "It is an invisible force, without media of transmission and without conductors, which does not belong to the categories of waves which we know (p.

28). But, Cernuschi hopes, the day is not far when scientists will make a gadget to sort out and classify such invisible forces or energies (p. 28). Should we take this invisible energy or soul as immortal? Cernuschi is not sure. But whatever it is he thinks that, it is also subject to the law of evolution (23). Soul's association with body is its 'period of pregnancy" (p. 23). With the death of the body it is born. It, then, commences its life outside the maternal cloisters, and is now independent (p. 23; also p. 26). It enters into psychic development (p. 23). This evolution, Cernuschi says, will lead man to his destiny, which is God (p. 23). For Cernuschi, Man, then, becomes God. This is his theory of Autodesim. The question is: How far it is Cernuschi's theory?

The theory of Ego-Evolution, as I would like to call it, is as old as Rumi's (d. 1273 A.D.), Ibn Maskwaih's (d. 421 All./1030A.D.) and as recent as Iqbal's (1877-1938) and, not only in outline but also in details. I will first give an account of Ibn Maskwaih's theses as developed in his *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*,¹ then I will refer to Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* 2

In the section on Prophethood in his *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*, Ibn Maskwaih refers to the fact of evolution experienced in nature. There is a hierarchy of beings from the lowest to the highest upto man. However, the evolution does not end here (Cf. Cernuschi pp. 48-49). Man goes on to attain a level of existence higher than that of the human beings (p. 98 Cf. Cernuschi pp. 48-49) It is possible for the evolution to continue even after the

annihilation of the corporeal because all through the evolution has been of the incorporeal (Fauz al-Asghar pp. 54-75). The corporeal has been a mere tool ('The submissive' of Cernushi, p. 20)

1. All references are to Fauz al-Asghar as Translated by Hakim Mohammad Hasan [Aligarh Muslim University Press, 19231.

2. Iqbal. M. Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam [Lahore, August 1962]

of the Incorporeal ('The Dominant' of Cernuschi p. 20. Cf. Fauz al-Asghar, pp. 39-40).

Ibn Maskwaih then goes on to argue why the incorporeal or the spiritual should survive the corporeal. He gives the example of human body (a corporeal substance) which has many parts to perform different actions and they perform these actions for an agent other than them-selves (Part II sec. V, pp. 54-57, also II, sec. I, p. 39).

This agent can not itself be a part of body, be corporeal, or it will be an instrument too, then there will be one particular organ to perform its set functions. Since there is no such organ, this agent is incorporeal and uses the corporeal for its ends or purposes. And since annihilation or dissolution is the characteristic only of the corporeal, the incorporeal survives body and the corporeal (Fauzul Asghar, pp. 54-57). Iqbal in his Reconstruction (pp. 121-123) develops this thesis further. He believes that "in

view of the past history of man it is highly improbable that his career should come to an end with the dissolution of his body."

Iqbal argues that certain verses of the Qur'an suggest that it is possible to maintain a sort of individuality to further human action "even after the disintegration of what appears to specify his individuality in his present environment" (p. 122). It is only the contemporary theory of evolution that has brought "despair and anxiety, instead of hope and enthusiasm for life, to the modern world" (p. 121). And the reason behind this is the "unwarranted modern assumption that man's present structure, mental as well as physiological, is the last word in biological evolution, and that death, regarded as a biological event, has no constructive meaning" (p. 121).

As can be seen, Cernuschi has not gone far in his thesis from Ibn Maskwaih (A.D. 1031) and Iqbal (1877-1938). He echoes them, not only in outline, but also in detail and at places in almost the same language. It is thus clear that Cernuschi's claim to give a "new ideology" is not borne out by facts. More than nine hundred years before his time Ibn Maskwaih had already worked out this thesis and in the immediate past Iqbal had added some new arguments to the original theory in the light of contemporary scientific research.

I now come to certain remarks made by Cernuschi while developing this theory. To take one example: "The distance between the force that moves the world and Man himself, was not so great as it was in monotheism" (p. 15). This "great" distance,

according to Cernuschi, makes it look impossible to reach the Divine. However, "When the image of Olympus with its divinities and a God similar to Man is more

real and closer to us, fewer difficulties face us in reaching Divinity" (p. 16). From this follows, paradoxically enough, that one can reach the Divine only by being a pagan.

That there is no great distance between man and God is borne out by two things (illustrating from Muslim religious experience):

1. The spiritual Ascension,

2. The word of the Qur'an: Man is the representative of the Divine (2: 28 ; 6: 165).

The ascension shows that the distance can be covered and the Qur'an shows how it can be covered and that it doesn't take long to traverse this distance. My second judgment: Cernuschi has not been careful in making historical assessments.

There are a number of misprints. Some of which are:

p. 6 line 11, read 'resigned' for designed ; p. 14 line 10 read 'cycle' for cycles ; p. 17 line 15 read 'once' for 'one' ; p. 20 line 13 read 'replaced' for 'replacing' ; p. 21 line 12 read 'nor' for 'or'.

Kazi A. Kadir