

REASON AND ANTI-REASON IN OUR TIME. By Karl Jaspers. (S.C.M. Press; 7s. 6d.)

If we do not yet know what is wrong with that curious entity in which we live and move known as 'our time', it is certainly not for lack of books on the subject. A good many, indeed, of the six thousand pages of Professor Jaspers's published writings are devoted to it. Here he discusses it again in ninety pages—or rather, in thirty pages, because on page 37 he ends his diagnosis of Marxist, psycho-analytic and pseudo-scientific errors by stating how these errors are to be overcome: 'by taking a leap into the imageless, unobjectifiable, self-impelling source of oneself, which is Reason'. The following chapters of his book are a Hymn to Reason; I cannot follow the Hymn very well. He seems to be saying many important things in an obscure style of his own which could be much better said in traditional language; his neglect of traditional language seems to fall under his own condemnation of 'the devaluation of everything traditional' (p. 56).

I mention this matter of traditional language because one benefit a Christian reader might derive from the earlier part of the book is to try to restate it in his own terms. Jaspers, for instance, brings out clearly the central concern of Marx. Marx observed that men are *alienated from themselves*; on any score, this was a most tremendous insight into our human condition, and one which we Christians might meditate on far more than we have done. Marx regarded capitalism as *the* cause of self-alienation. Capitalism has been *one* cause, but *the* cause is our alienation from God. A person is alienated from *self* when he is alienated from God, because *God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves*. Which does not mean to say that we are *one with ourselves* so long as we talk a lot about 'God'; the word 'God' may simply be a three-letter word for our own projections. For instance, a staunch Catholic told me recently that he never worried about the morality of war or atomic bombs—'when the time of crisis comes the Jesuits will show us the way to go'. Such a person may rightly be described as alienated from his self. To abandon one's conscience means becoming sub-human; one answer to Marx is for us Christians to recover our consciences, and perform truly human acts. That might also prove the Christian answer to the second feature of Marxism stressed by Jaspers: Marxism aims, quite literally, at producing a new man, a new type of being—that is the Promethean motif in Marxism. And again Marx had achieved a tremendous insight into a neglected Christian truth! For Pentecost also is a re-creation, it introduces a new being into the world; and the fire that is brought down to earth at Pentecost is the work of the true Prometheus.

In his second section, on psycho-analysis, Jaspers delivers some shrewd blows (a few below the belt). But it is in his third section on science and pseudo-science that Jaspers comes nearest to helping us in a big way. He has been pointing out that Marxism and psycho-analysis are false because they are totalitarian; they try to make a certain aspect of life into the One, whereas Reason leads us towards 'the Comprehensive'; as opposed to the narrow positivism at the back of the specialised sciences. Reason leads us to ask what it is all about; we are drawn towards 'the Comprehensive'. An attempt to state this profoundly helpful observation in traditional terms might be as follows. When humanity begins to lose itself in the details of technique, trying to dominate the earth by its current magic (Marxism, psycho-analysis, or pseudo-science), then it ceases any longer to have soul-space and soul-leisure in which to ask, 'What is the *whole* of life about?'; and it goes dead. This is more or less the condition of Britain at the moment; thousands of young people are leaving our universities every year regimented in the positivist prejudice that to ask what the whole thing is about is nonsense—'metaphysics'. They 'couldn't care less' what the whole thing is about. We can observe the effect of this attitude around us—the nation goes *dead*, it neglects the land, which bears no fruit or food. This condition of a nation, and the cause of this condition, were long ago described in the traditional myths of the people, in certain legends of the Grail. It will be remembered how the land was dying because the knights who should have been searching for the Grail (for what the whole thing is about) had given up the struggle. Then Sir Galahad comes along and *puts the question*—the search is on; and immediately the land springs to life again. Life begins to flow strongly, and the everlasting springs are unfrozen—as soon as the question is put. To search for the whole meaning of life is to release life-giving energies for the salvation of the people and the fruitfulness of the land. If the Devil can persuade us to stop putting this question, and we wearily shrug it away as 'nonsense', or 'metaphysics', then he has blocked the springs of life—and we go dead. Perhaps Professor Jaspers has never considered himself a twentieth-century Sir Galahad; but he is.

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THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH: Papers presented to the Theological Commission appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order. Edited by the Rev. Newton Flew. (S.C.M. Press; 2ls.)

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