

THE SEARCH FOR VALUES. By Russell Coleburt. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Coleburt is a Christian philosopher with a special interest in ethics and a conviction that the moral problems and troubles of our generation are largely due to mental confusions which a little clear thinking may do much to remedy. He writes for the ordinary reader, in a simple conversational way, but his thought is not in the least superficial; he is widely read in philosophy and is sympathetically sensitive to the modern temper as revealed in contemporary writing and painting. This temper he finds to be characterized by a number of fatal divisions—between the self and objective reality, the senses and the intellect, science and morality, art and ordinary human nature. We are suffering from a deep 'split' in the mind, and this is the first thing that Mr Coleburt analyses, taking his start from the rage of Jimmy Porter in Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, in which he sees a 'desperate attempt to rediscover some fundamental reality or value that has been lost'. From this he goes on to show the inadequacy of various attempts to provide (a) a satisfactory ethic for modern man (the Huxley brothers, C. G. Jung, Professor Nowell-Smith) and (b) a satisfactory theory of art (Bell, Collingwood, Harold Osborne). In the course of these criticisms Mr Coleburt's own view of things emerges, presented, unassumingly but very firmly, as the right one because it is the one that draws the divided parts of the mind together in harmony with themselves and with nature.

Mr Coleburt's chief concern, as a philosopher, is with morality; and this, in the present context, means that he has to show reasons for rejecting the utterly sterilizing division between being and goodness, knowledge and morality, 'is' and 'ought', which Hume first formulated clearly and which has plagued moral philosophy ever since. In a chapter on 'Moral Values' Mr Coleburt takes up the challenge on this point thrown down by Nowell-Smith in his Penguin book on ethics (1954); and quite effectively, I think, he meets it. In a short chapter, and in a book of this sort, you cannot indulge in much subtlety; but enough is said for the purpose. Behind the simple non-technical language one senses a distinguished mind formed in the central Catholic tradition. It is the same in the chapter on 'Art Values' except that here Mr Coleburt is less indebted, naturally, to Catholic teaching. But in fact this chapter is one of the best in the book, though it is suggestive rather than definitive. At bottom the view of art put out here, and the criticisms of Bell, Collingwood and H. Osborne, rest on the same epistemology as the chapters on morality: 'the external world is something which we *see into*'; with results that are more intuitive or more discursive as the case may be. I was interested by what Mr Coleburt says on the varying blend of form and content in the different arts, and especially by a subtle paragraph on music, the extreme case of an art 'so abstract that form absorbs the content'. And in general I would thoroughly recommend this little book, particularly to the intelligent young. They will find in it a wise and genuine teacher who never talks down to them.

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