

MAR 1 0 1968

2 IN AND OUT OF BOOKS

By C.L. NAHAL

SPEAKING in Princeton the other day, Miss Anais Nin made out the case that both life and literature in the 20th Century were richer than they had ever been before because of the discoveries of psychology. Psychology had opened up vistas, she went on, of which man had no awareness earlier. It was a big claim, and it remained unchallenged. "Diaries of Anais Nin, Vol. II" (Harcourt, Brace & World) had just been published, and Princetonians did not want to embarrass a guest.

It is questionable to what extent James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter or Miss Nin's prime example of subtlety, — Henry Miller — (going by what she says in her diaries are superior to and more profound than Homer, Dante, Shakespeare or even the stodgy Dickens, all of whom, poor chaps, had paced the earth without having known Sigmund Freud. So far as life in general is concerned, only heavy blinkers would prevent one from seeing the sickness of the soul from which each one of us seems to be suffering. Psychology has taken away from man some of his finest values, and what it has given him in return is only meaningless anger, irresponsible social behaviour, vulgarity of speech, and violence, animal violence.

Hence the applause I wish to give to two new books which in a highly refreshing and I should say forceful manner hit hard at the present-day orthodoxy, where every individual is swearing by his id. Arthur Koestler in "The Ghost in the Machine" Macmillan, \$6.95 presents in a massive fashion, what he calls "the poverty of psychology." Alan Paton in "Instrument of Thy Peace" Seabury Press, \$3.50 comes to an identical conclusion, though he proceeds through religious charity, compassion and grace, words which must be quite unfamiliar to some of the modern writers.

IT WAS WITH "The Act of Creation" that Koestler emerged as a thinker in his own right. His earlier works, barring "Darkness At Noon" which arose out of personal experience, were compendiums, on yoga, on Zen Buddhism, on the place of intellectual in society, in which he largely played the role of an editor. But in "The Act of Creation," published in 1964, Koestler reviewed the achievement of man in the creative arts with a note of hope and promise which was original.

In "The Ghost in the Machine," Koestler concentrates on the other side of the medal and again comes forward with an original point of view. He explores here man's limitations are the result of blind mutation. Man, he repeatedly asserts, is not a "conditioned reflex automata"; or is at least not just that. Koestler agrees with biology and psychology that a man's personality is the result

C.L. Nahal, reader in English at the University of Delhi, India, is now visiting fellow at Princeton University. He was born in Sialkot (now in West Pakistan) in 1927. He was educated at Hindu College in Delhi and at the University of Nottingham, England, where he received a Ph. D. in English. His column will appear here once a month.

of conditioning, but maintains that that conditioning and behavior pattern can be altered and changed. Changed not through another futile mutation brought about by drugs or similar escape mechanism but through man's intuition, through his optimism in life, through his trust in life, through his unyielding will.

Alan Paton in "Instrument of Thy Peace" is not as erudite and technical as Koestler, but he speaks a gentler language. It is the language of Christian love, of turning the other cheek, of humility. The compassionate nature of Alan Paton was only too apparent in his creative writings, his novels and his short stories. In "Instrument of Thy Peace" he gives a more cogent expression to that compassion. Taking up St. Francis of Assisi as his symbol of humility, he relates the meditations of St. Francis to the Bible and also to what he himself had discovered in life. (Mr. Paton was for years superintendent of a penitentiary for delinquent children.)

THE GREATEST PITY of our times, according to Alan Paton, is that each person has by choice cut himself off from his fellow human beings. Even the turning-on and turning-off of the psychedelic world is an experience in isolation and separation. Whereas, Christ and his Church stood for man in the plural. One of Alan Paton's chapters — chapter 13, oddly — concerns the Hippie movement, in England and in the United States, and what angers Paton is the misuse of Biblical terminology by these misguided people. For when did Jesus mean by love the carnal lust?

Desmond Morris concluded recently in "The Naked Ape" that man was no more than a biological freak. Psychologists would dismiss him as a random sum in inhibitions. Koestler and Alan Paton reject this nihilistic attitude and restore to man the spirit which undoubtedly is his most important legacy.

Even in medical therapy, it is doubtful what good conventional psychology has done. Treatment is long, results minimal, phraseology, forcing them to spend vast sums of money. Louise Wilson's "This Stranger, My Son" to be published this month by Putnam (\$5.95) is the story of one such unfortunate family.