

THE FEBRUARY OPTIONAL BOOK

## TRADER TO THE STARS

by Poul Anderson

SFBC 8s 6d, post free (elsewhere 15s)

### OPTIONALS IN A HURRY

THERE is still some stock of *An Arthur C. Clarke Omnibus*, but, as always, orders are coming in very quickly. We expect the same to be true of *Trader to the Stars* too, Poul Anderson's collection of three short novels about the life and adventures of the buccaneer of the future, Nicholas Van Rijn, the trader between the stars.

In March there will be another Optional—*Spectrum IV*—a fourth sf anthology, edited by Robert Conquest and Kingsley Amis, and containing work by Kornbluth, Christopher Anvil, John Brunner, John Jakes, Howard Fast, Anthony Boucher, Allan Danzig, John Wyndham, Cordwainer Smith, Ron Goulart, Fritz Leiber, Damon Knight, Hal Clement and Wayland Young. The book is prefaced by a discussion between C. S. Lewis, Brian Aldiss and Kingsley Amis of 'Unreal Estates'. The price of *Spectrum IV* in SFBC will be 12s 6d, post free; its price elsewhere is 21s.

### SCIENCE FICTION AND PHILOSOPHY

by Richard Gordon

(The first half of this article appeared in the December 'SF News'. It is reprinted from 'Vector'.)

TO RETURN to the two opposite trends, it now seems obvious that there is little support for those who would believe that there is something worth while in the human race. One sees only the occasional cautious remark about human courage in having struggled out of the dust. There is the remark here and there which makes one think that either the author has his tongue in his cheek or that he has drunk rather too much of the milk of human kindness. One such example is the statement by Isaac Asimov in *The End of Eternity* that 'there are many happinesses, many goods, infinite variety . . . that is the basic state of mankind'. Just as one begins to think that here at last in sf is an author who has some belief in humanity, one reads *The Stars Like Dust*. Here we read that 'there is damned little good' in the universe! It would seem at the present that the glorifiers have suffered unconditional defeat!

However, in *The Joy Makers* by James Gunn, we come to a different sort of philosophizing, the kind that takes Man for granted be he good or bad, and instead presents him in relation to the universe he inhabits:

'The only road for Man is the hard road—up and out—the road of dissatisfaction, the road of anger . . . to look back is to die a little. To look forward is to live forever.'

And in *The Seed of Light*, Edmund Cooper observes, perhaps somewhat presumptuously:

'Man can never evade the intolerable burden and distinction