

hoc corpore constituti refers, evidently to this body of flesh, not to the church!); his suggestions about the arrangement of the sanctuary strike me as rather bare and puritanical – he might, for instance, have mentioned the official recommendation of natural stone altars, and I think he is too ruthless in banishing all images of saints from the sanctuary. He is also mildly unsympathetic to the sacral, which is a pity – people are put off as much by secularised chumminess as by sacral remoteness, and the new rites, ideally,

offer a rehumanized sacralism as well as a new note of intimacy. But whatever quarrels one may have over details, the important point is that here is a clear, sensible book, which can help even those not instinctively turned on by liturgy to take part more fruitfully and prayerfully in the church's renewal of her worship.

I only hope that the discreetly veiled, but very telling, case against missalettes is noticed and taken to heart by those responsible!

SIMON TUGWELL, OP

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF BERNARD LONERGAN, by Hugo A. Meynell, *Library of Philosophy and Religion, Macmillan*, London, 1976. 201 pp. £10.00

NATURE AND SUPERNATURE, by E.L.Mascall, *DLT*, London, 1976. 94 pp. £1.50

BLESSED RAGE FOR ORDER: THE NEW PLURALISM IN THEOLOGY, by David Tracy, *Seabury*, New York, 1975. 271 pp. \$12.95

Whether philosophers, or even theologians, are likely to take seriously the claim that a well-known Catholic theologian is the author of "at a conservative estimate one of the half-dozen or so most important philosophical books to have appeared in the course of the present century", however eloquently the case for this thesis is made out, seems, in the present climate of thought, extremely doubtful, but this is the audacious claim which Hugo Meynell makes for Bernard Lonergan's *Insight*. Those whose minds have been marked indelibly by the philosophical lineage that descends from Kant through Hegel and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida and the rest, are not likely to budge. Others, however, whose starting-point is closer to British empiricism, should find themselves at home in Dr Meynell's skilful paraphrase of Lonergan's thought. The central contention that philosophy rests on a mistake when knowing is construed on the model of taking a look is radical and far-reaching in its implications. Many of Meynell's asides, for example on mental health and disease, not to mention his concluding chapters on natural theology and on problems of contemporary (British) philosophy, offer far more than skilful exposition of Lonergan. The importance of *Insight* may be judged, that is to say, by the way that a good philosopher is able to develop and appropriate it. The book concludes with an argument for Christian theism as "the most intelligent and reasonable world-view available for man". It is to be hoped that what is, for Meynell,

simply a matter of logic, will not be dismissed out of hand as mere apologetic, so that, despite this clear and masterly presentation, Lonergan as a philosopher will remain unread by theologians who have a distaste for logic and by philosophers who are afraid of Christian apologetics.

The St Michael's Lectures at Gonzaga University, Spokane, are so designed that the lecturer is obliged to "enter into dialogue with the immediately preceding lecturer", which means, in the case of *Nature and Supernature*, (that Dr Mascall has to comment on Bernard Lonergan's *Philosophy of God, and Theology*. Though "full of admiration" for this and "in full agreement" with that, it soon emerges that Mascall has "misgivings about taking cognitional theory as a starting-point", and, in the answers to questions at the end of his first lecture, it cannot be disguised that he rejects Lonergan's position altogether: "If you start inquiring how we can know, and whether or not we know, before we allow ourselves to know anything, it seems to me that you can never get going, that you cannot get away from the position in which Kant found himself" (page 36). Lonergan's "ultimate methodology" (page 10), though not Cartesian in its form, nevertheless rests upon granting privileged status to the human subject as perceiver, whereas Dr Mascall would rather say that the primary datum which we have is objects that are not ourselves (page 37).

His other two lectures deal with nature and grace and include a critical

survey of some recent theological writings. He has a find in Dr Thomas Boslooper who, in his book *The Virgin Birth*, published in 1962, having insisted that "the absence of the virgin birth in the contemporary Christian World Mission is unthinkable", apparently goes on to interpret it as meaning "that God acted in history and that monogamous marriage is civilization's most important social institution".

David Tracy is the author of a book on Bernard Lonergan and in *Blessed Rage for Order* (a phrase from Wallace Stevens) he frequently acknowledges his indebtedness, though the present text clearly owes far more to discussions with Paul Ricoeur and Norman Perrin and others who are associated with the University of Chicago Divinity School and the periodical *Journal of Religion*. In fact he quotes Lonergan's self-description (in *Method*) as "a Roman Catholic with quite conservative views on religion and church doctrines", and the whole trend of his book suggests that he cannot himself be so content. The first half of his study contains an analysis of the four main ways in which theology is practised today. The "orthodox" way, exemplified by Lonergan's *Divinarum Personarum*, would be the kind of doctrinal fundamentalism that has almost disappeared. The "neo-orthodox" theological programmes of Barth, Bultmann, Tillich and others, as well as early Rahner, Schillebeeckx and Lonergan, seem in the end abortive because they have not been able to cope with "the major task of the contemporary period in theology", which is to deal with the "liberal" way that started with Schleiermacher. The fourth type of modern theology is the "death of God" kind typified by Thomas Altizer, which Tracy labels "radical". All four ways need now to be bypassed in a fifth kind of theology, labelled "revisionist", of which promising signs are to be found in such theologians as Leslie Dewart, Gregory Baum, Michael Novak, Langdon Gilky, Gordon Kaufman, and some process thinkers (followers of Whitehead). It is clearly to the advancement of this fifth way of doing theology that David Tracy feels himself drawn. The "revisionist" theologian is committed to continuing the critical task of the classical "liberal" (what we perhaps more often call "modernist"), but in the light of the legitimate concerns and accomplishments of the neo-orthodox and the radical schools. In brief,

theological statements must be held accountable to public criteria and methods (as neo-orthodox theologians perhaps tended to forget), while it remains always Christian tradition that the theologian is primarily required to interpret in terms of contemporary experience (as perhaps the radical theologians forget).

That no British theologian's name proves worthy of mention in Tracy's catalogue is, after all, not very surprising, though one might regard Don Cupitt and Maurice Wiles as no less promising revisionists than some of the names he cites. On the other hand, nothing in the working out of the second half of the book, in which he outlines, in a necessarily somewhat programmatic fashion, his post-liberal approach to the three principal questions in contemporary theological discussion (on his reckoning): those of the meaning of religion, of theism, and of Christology, arouses great expectations on the part of the reader that the contemporary American scene is about to produce works comparable with (for instance) Edward Schillebeeckx's recent magisterial book on Jesus, or Karl Lehmann's demonstration, in his study of the phrase "on the third day", of what can happen when a systematic theologian takes seriously to biblical scholarship.

Many important questions are raised in the course of Tracy's argument, though few seem to be at all adequately dealt with. For example, the place of imagination, and especially of narrative, in theological discourse, claims Tracy's attention at some length. He observes that, in the Christian story of Jesus, we are presented with a claim to *fact*, which certainly needs clarification, together with what is, precisely, a story – a *fiction* – which requires reinterpretation. Human beings need myth and fiction to open up certain possibilities for the transformation of existence which conceptual analysis and factual statement cannot adequately reach. It is by "supreme fictions" (another phrase from Wallace Stevens) that we are more deeply transformed and more radically reoriented than by careful analytical discussions. As Tracy says (page 205), a detour through a discussion of the nature of "fact" and "fiction" seems demanded "if the character of Christology, at once factual and fictional, is to find contemporary clarification". That a certain play of creative insight and imagination must be allowed for in the

development of early Christology seems clear enough. The recent work of exegetes like Norman Perrin bears that out. For all the thought that the notion of symbol has given rise to in the work (say) of Paul Ricoeur, however, the fact remains that we have very little theory of fiction from which a theologian might take bearings. It is not very encouraging to find Tracy citing the "new journalism" of Tom Wolfe (author of *the Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*), Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood*), and so on, as instances of the conflation of fact and fiction which might illuminate the exegete or the theologian. Biblical criticism, from the found-

ing fathers onwards, has worked with an unexamined distinction between fact and fiction which badly required to be exposed and assessed. Questions about the nature of narrative - of myth and of story - demand an answer. That these questions are raised perhaps shows how far David Tracy has moved away from Lonergan. In that area, as in others, there is work going on in Europe which he should not ignore. Roland Barthes is worth as much of a theologian's attention now as Karl Barth is, and perhaps in the end we shall have to get back to Kant and to Heidegger's study of Kant on imagination.

FERGUS KERR OP

**SAMUEL BECKETT, by John Pilling. *Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1976.*
246 pp. £5.75**

Mr Pilling's reason for writing yet another full-length book on Beckett is that he is able to give an account 'based on Beckett's own aesthetic thinking, and on the intellectual, historical and literary tradition and milieu that have sustained it'. I applaud the aim, and admit the value of such an enterprise. It is clear from the results that the author possesses, amply, the knowledge of Beckett's sources, influences and background for such a task. But I cannot honestly report that what emerges is as illuminating as I had hoped it would be.

My personal feeling is that the learning and the intellectual curiosity that flood every page of this book is insufficiently digested and too lacking in focus to throw much light on Beckett's work as a whole. The chapters on the intellectual background and the literary background read more like catalogues of quotations, often as recondite as Beckett's own, than accounts of what really matters for the understanding of Beckett's writing. Beckett is notoriously well read, a voracious user of his own 'mine of useless knowledge', a master of numerous languages and cultures. What I had hoped to find in Mr Pilling's work was a guide-book through this jungle. But what I found was a collection of bits of

information which, as a whole, left me in as much confusion as before. To judge from some of the remarks he makes at the end of his chapters, I suspect that Mr Pilling himself may feel the same. I feel duly humbled by the amount of work, and the depth of learning that are evident in these pages: but I am not much clearer as to how I should read Beckett, nor how I should evaluate him.

For my money, some of the most interesting parts of the book were those where biographical facts, to me unknown, were brought into play - for example those connected with Beckett's role in the Resistance during the war. There is also a useful chapter on the poetry which provides a commentary on the least discussed aspect of Beckett's oeuvre, though it left me with the same impression that it left upon the author: 'There is no point in pretending that Beckett is a great poet' (p. 180). The bibliography is also helpful, as being more up to date than most others easily accessible. The book is also interesting in that it shows the way personal interviews with Beckett, and familiarity with the Beckett archives at Reading University, can add to our appreciation of his work.

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