Latin American governments can show that priests are playing an active part in revolutionary movements, and that bishops are defending, if not encouraging such priests? There will undoubtedly be pressure on Rome to denounce the revolutionaries, warnings that the need for reform may excuse but not justify recourse to violence. The Church is relatively immune from persecution for historical and cultural reasons in Latin America, but the contradictions are sharpening and the day may not be far off when Rome, and European Catholics generally will have to decide what attitude to take.

The danger is that we shall either suppose that the revolutionaries are a tiny minority who can conveniently be sacrificed in order to preserve a reformist majority, or that the priests' attackers are exaggerating, that they cannot really be calling for armed revolution. Either view would be dangerously misleading.

Bodies and Other Minds: the Mind-Body Problem in the Last Twenty Years

by C. J. F. Williams

To the generation of philosophers brought up in England in the years immediately succeeding the Second World War it seemed as though the Mind-Body problem had been (in the current jargon) not solved but dissolved. Where the previous generation had toiled at the old Cartesian task of constructing a material world out of, or on the basis of, mental entities, our generation discovered that the mental entities themselves had been eliminated. The notion of *sense-data* used by Moore and Russell had been shown in Ryle's *Concept of Mind* to be incoherent. 'J. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*' appeared on the Oxford lecture list in Trinity Term 1948. Austin's principal target was just that dichotomy between sense-data and material objects from which the whole problem seemed to be derived. He directed attention to the variety of locutions in which 'look' can figure: 'He looks a good sport.' 'He looks as if he were going to faint.' 'They look like ants.' 'They *look* like Europeans.' It looked as if statements about how things look could not be the record of a sub-class of mental events called visual experiences.

Mental events as such were gradually being eliminated. Wittgenstein's views, already rumoured before the publication of *Philosophical Investigations* in 1953, seemed to require that, where Ryle had taken

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sense-data from us, we must now abandon sensations too. Pangs, twinges, aches, itches and flutters had been for Ryle the only honest citizens of the interior state. Much of the odium that he heaped on claimants to mental existence like acts of will, judgment, understanding or perceiving was aroused by the comparison of the latter to their notable disadvantage with the former, whose claim to be genuine occurrences was unchallenged. But here was Wittgenstein apparently challenging it. Was not sensation the beetle in the box, the thing that 'has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*; for the box might even be empty'? (*Philosophical Investigations* I, 293.) There are no such things, so it was generally said, as private experiences. Wittgenstein had purged the mind of its last inhabitants; it was now all swept and garnished and up for sale.

By the late 'fifties, however, a new note was heard in discussions of these questions. A phrase kept recurring which opened new and suggestive lines of thought: 'knowledge without observation'—a a phrase which I think originated in Elizabeth Anscombe's book, *Intention*. There are many things which happen to me which I can know about only by observing them, or by relying on someone else's observation of them. This is true, for example, about my knowledge of the fact that I am beginning to go grey. But not all facts about me are of this sort. I do not have to rely on my own or other people's observations to be able to say that I am feeling sick. It would be absurd to ask me how I came to know this; whereas it is perfectly sensible to ask whether I came to know about my greying hair by noticing grey hairs on my hairbrush or by seeing them in the mirror. Scruples were felt by some, prompted perhaps by remarks of Wittgenstein, about the propriety of saying that one *knows* facts about oneself like the fact that one is feeling sick. 'It cannot be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I *know* that I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean—except perhaps that I *am* in pain?' (*Ibid.* I, 246). But at least one says of oneself from time to time 'I've got a pain' or 'I'm feeling sick', and one has not had to go through the observational procedures that other people have to go through if they are to say this of one. Other people watch me, or listen to me, or even feel my pulse, to discover whether I am in pain. But it is ridiculous to suggest that these expedients should be adopted by me, the sufferer.

For myself, it was reading P. F. Strawson's book *Individuals* which made clear what was being said. Strawson there draws a distinction between two sorts of predicates, two sorts of things that can be said about other things: one sort he calls personal, or 'P-predicates'; the other he calls material-object, or 'M-predicates'. The distinction between these two types of predicate can perhaps best be indicated by naming a few paradigm examples of each type. Amongst P, predicates would be included things like being in a state of fright-feeling warm, looking at a crocus, tasting the taste of cauliflower or

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understanding what Bob is getting at. M-predicates are, for example, weighing twelve-stone, having a rough surface, being adapted for 240 volts, running to seed or covering a hole in the wall. It is clear that there are some things to which P-predicates can be meaningfully attached and some things to which they cannot. The problem about the man who says that a brick is in pain is a problem about what if anything he can be supposed to mean. Whether the things to which P-predicates can be attached can also have M-predicates attached to them is something which need not be settled at this point. Strawson believes that they can. What is clear from Strawson's account is that there is a logical feature the possession of which distinguishes P-predicates from M-predicates in a way that reinforces the intuitive distinction which lists of examples can convey. This logical feature is a consequence of the fact which I mentioned in my last paragraph. Some P-predicates are such that I can predicate them of myself without having to engage in any observational procedures. Other people, however, must look, listen or feel, or in some other way explore the world about them, if they are to put themselves in the position of being able to predicate these things of me. There is thus, in the case of these predicates, a disparity between their first-person use on the one hand and their second and third-person uses on the other. The grammatical distinction of person is here logically significant. It is not so in the case of an M-predicate like 'greying'. The way in which I attach the predicate 'greying' to myself is not significantly different from the way in which you attach the predicate 'greying' to me. Indeed you may be better placed than I am to attach this predicate to me if my grey hairs are to be found on the side of my head and I am not well provided with mirrors.

The class of predicates which is subject to this first-person/other-person asymmetry is the key to understanding the class of P-predicates as a whole. Not that all P-predicates are of this type. Anger is something which can only be predicated of persons: it cannot meaningfully be ascribed to a paint-brush. But other people do not necessarily have to take greater pains than I do myself to reach the conclusion that I am angry. To attribute anger to a person is in some measure to diagnose the symptoms presented by his behaviour and his feelings. And not every man is a good diagnostician of his own moods. The scene is familiar where the red-faced, fast-breathing old gentleman bangs the table shouting, 'I'm not angry'. But to be angry is only possible for beings who are capable of some feelings. It would be odd for someone to be thought capable of anger if he had never known that sensation which we attribute to the quickened beating of the heart, or the feeling of warmth mounting to the forehead. These are not anger; but, as Aristotle saw, bodily feelings of this sort enter into the definition of anger. And the predicates which ascribe feelings of this sort to a subject are predicates characterized by the first-person/other-person asymmetry about

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which we have been speaking. Such predicates are central amongst the class of P-predicates in that P-predicates in general can be ascribed only to those subjects to which predicates of this sort can be ascribed.

The recognition that there are predicates of this sort, predicates which involve this first-person/other-person asymmetry, leads philosophers by an easy route to a notorious philosophical problem. If other people are unable to make the assertion that I am feeling sick in the way that I can make it, namely in virtue of the fact that I am feeling sick, how are they able to make it at all? How can the facts about me that they observe entitle them to say that I am feeling sick—them, the people who have never felt the sensations of sickness that I feel, whatever sensations of sickness of their own they may at one time or another have endured? But how indeed do I know that they *have* endured them? Or anything at all? My supposed ability to ascribe P-predicates to them and their ability to to do the same to me rests, or is supposed to rest, on the fact that we observe that some M-predicates are ascribable by each of us to certain material objects, namely, human bodies. It is that green look about your face which makes me think that you are feeling sick. But what right have I to think so? What is the connection between looking green in the face and your feeling sick? It is possible, though perhaps improbable, that I may have established by experience a correlation between my own feelings of sickness and certain changes of colour in my face. But how can I extrapolate from the correlation I have established in one case and one case only, my own, to a similar correlation between the way faces look and the way people feel in general? For I have no immediate experience of any feelings, of sickness or of anything else, other than my own. 'How can I generalize the one case so irresponsibly?' (*Ibid.* I, 293).

This is the problem of Other Minds, the problem that lent its name to a series of articles by John Wisdom, published first in *Mind* during the war, and thus just outside our period, but published since by Basil Blackwell as a book. This book does more than any other I know to drive home to one the deep problems behind the Mind-Body debate. Wisdom provides, to my mind, no solution in his book; but he makes sure that no one who has read his book and understood it will put up with a facile solution to the problem.

To feel the agony of the other minds problem is in a sense to have got back to Descartes. For the situation from which one is at this point unable to escape is the situation reached by Descartes at the end of the Second Meditation. It is very near to the solipsist position. The insight that lies behind all these positions is the realization of the peculiar status of first-person ascription of present experience. What struck Descartes about these statements which ascribe to oneself what he would have called a 'thought' is their incorrigibility. But incorrigibility is not the only feature philosophers have found interesting about these self-ascriptions of present experience. It is also true that any claim to have seen, heard, smelt, or otherwise

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observed a public object presupposes the ability to ascribe to oneself an experience of this sort. It is easy to move to the Cartesian position of taking these experiences as having in some way an epistemological priority. And it is easy from this point to move to the position of doubting whether one is in any way entitled to move beyond these primary objects of knowledge, which are essentially private, to the public objects the knowledge of which is supposed to be in some way based upon them. With this scepticism the full solipsistic position has been reached.

The mention of Solipsism recalls Wittgenstein: not, immediately, the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations*, but the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. It has been pointed out by Miss Anscombe that the philosopher whose name is most closely associated with the solipsistic position, Schopenhauer, was one of the few earlier philosophers whom Wittgenstein read as a young man and found interesting. The solipsistic element in the *Tractatus* is well enough known. 'The world is my world' (5.62). 'The limits of my language indicate the limits of my world' (5.6). 'What solipsism means is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but shews itself' (5.62). Wittgenstein it seems always felt the pull of Solipsism. It may well be, therefore, that the way in which I lumped together Ryle, Wittgenstein and Austin at the beginning of my paper misrepresented Wittgenstein at least. Did he really hold that there were no such things as sensations, no such things as experiences which only I have, and only I could have?

The picture of Wittgenstein which I sketched earlier undoubtedly misrepresents his thought, though I think that it is a picture which has some currency. It is a picture which I believe I myself held before I went back to Wittgenstein in the clearer light that was shed on the topic for me by Strawson.

Strawson's solution of the 'Other Minds' problem, given in Chapter 3 of *Individuals*, rests fairly and squarely on a doctrine that has been referred to as 'the contrast theory of meaning'. This is the view, roughly, that if I am to be said to possess a concept, I must be able, not only to recognize the state of affairs which permits application of the concept, but also to recognize the contrasting state of affairs which does *not* admit of application of the concept. Thus, I cannot be said to possess the concept of rain unless I am able, not only to say 'It's raining' when it is raining, but also 'It's not raining' when it's not raining. To know what 'red' means is, amongst other things, to be able to distinguish things that are not red from things which are red. To be sure, this theory has limits: to know what '$2+2=4$' means it is not necessary to know what state of affairs would justify the assertion that $2 + 2 \neq 4$; for there is no such state of affairs, nor could there be. Nevertheless, the theory has pretty wide application, and Strawson's appeal to it is, I think, legitimate.[1]

[1]This theory is substantially the same as the Aristotelian doctrine '*eadem potentia est oppositorum*'. Aristotle takes a dim view of theories which would imply that a given faculty was capable of discerning, for example, heat but not cold (cf. *De Anima* 427 a 26, sqq.).

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Strawson then assumes that if I am meaningfully to refer to certain experiences or states of consciousness as 'mine', I must be able to refer to other such states or experiences as not mine, i.e. as belonging to someone else. Scepticism about other minds is, therefore, bound to be incoherent. For it questions the possibility of ascribing experiences to others and infers that the only experiences whose existence I am in any way entitled to affirm are my own. But the ascription of experiences to myself is meaningless unless I have, or could have, at least in principle, grounds for ascribing such experiences to others. The sceptic's conclusion is, therefore, meaningless if his original doubt is justified. Solipsism is a theory which cannot be stated, since the conditions for its being stated involve the falsity of the premisses on which it is based.

Strawson's demonstration that the sceptical attitude to the 'Other Minds' problem cannot be right is a *reductio ad absurdum*. It shows that the sceptic's rejection of the possibility of ascribing experiences to others must be wrong: it does not show that the sceptic is wrong in rejecting any particular account of this possibility. In particular, it does not justify the familiar attempt to meet the sceptic's doubt by an argument from analogy. It has often enough been claimed that although we cannot in the nature of the case *have* anyone else's experience we can infer that he has it by analogy with our own case. When a flea bites me, my skin rises and reddens and I exhibit a certain sort of behaviour, notably scratching, while feeling a particularly tormenting itch. When a flea bites someone else I do not experience, mercifully, the itch which torments *him*, but I infer that he has an itch from the similarity between his behaviour and my own in these circumstances, from the appearance of his skin, and, possibly, from my knowledge of the similarity between the physical and chemical constitution of his body—skin, blood, nervous system, etc.—and that of my own. And this type of inference, it is maintained, can be generalized: certain data of what Kant called my 'outer sense' connected with my body are constantly conjoined with certain data of my inner sense: when I receive similar data of outer sense connected with another person's body I am entitled to conclude to the existence of similar data in *his* inner sense. This is the only way in which I can come to know that he has an inner sense at all.

Strawson shows that in this generalized form, at least, the argument will not do. It purports to prove that experiences and states of consciousness can be ascribed to other people. It is not legitimate therefore for it to use premisses which assume that this is in fact possible. The argument proceeds by appealing to a constant conjunction of conditions and behaviour of *this* body with states of consciousness and experiences which it persists in describing as 'mine'. But the contrast theory of meaning prohibits talk about feelings, experiences, etc., as *mine* unless it is already possible to ascribe such things to other people. All that the premisses of the

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argument are entitled to assert is that certain patterns of behaviour and physical states of a particular body are associated with experiences or states of consciousness *tout court*—not *my* experiences or *my* states of consciousness. All that we are entitled to say is that when the flea bites this bit of flesh an itch occurs. But at this stage of the argument the occurrence of an itch cannot be ascribed to a person, not even to myself, any more than the occurrence of frost or a thunderstorm. 'It itched this morning' like 'It froze last night' will record a fact, and no doubt an unpleasant fact; but a fact which has no more relevance to me than to anyone else: for the distinction between myself and other people is one which I am not at this stage entitled to make. To make this distinction by talking of *my* itch, or *my* auditory experience, in the course of an argument which is designed to prove that experiences can be ascribed to other people as well as to myself is to beg the question. Only if I already have good reason to say that some pangs are not mine can I meaningfully say that some are mine. The argument which proceeds by analogy to establish the existence of other minds is thus guilty of *petitio principii*.

What then is Strawson's own solution of the problem of how we are able to ascribe sensations to other people? He holds that it is possible to ascribe these 'P-predicates' to other people on the basis of their observed behaviour or their bodily condition, not inferentially, but immediately, since observable phenomena of this sort are the logically adequate criteria for the ascription of these predicates to other people. Not that to say that someone is in pain is to *say* that he is groaning and writhing and generally behaving in the appropriate way. For what I say of my neighbour when I say that he is in pain is the same as what I say of myself when I say that I am in pain; and I do not, when I do this, describe my own behaviour. The truth of the matter according to Strawson is that P-predicates are primitive terms which are essentially ascribed in one way to other people and in another way to myself. They are not derived in some way from concepts which are purely behavioural on the one hand and concepts that I learn purely from my own experience on the other. For them to be applied at all they must be applicable in both these ways. I must so to speak have solved the 'Other Minds' problem before I can begin to talk of experiences and those who have them at all. The concepts which I need in order to state the problem are concepts which in themselves bridge the gap between the mental and the physical. One might almost say that our concept of soul is the concept of something which is the form of a material substance.

The success of Strawson's solution of the problem has of course been disputed, notably by Ayer in the essay which gives the title to the collection *The Concept of a Person*. I myself have not been shaken in my view that Strawson's solution, though still obscure in some

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details and presented in a somewhat schematic form, is the correct solution to this problem. But it is not the problem of Other Minds which I want principally to discuss in this paper. The conclusion I wish to draw is that recent philosophers, by the very interest which they have shown in the problem, have committed themselves to a fundamental distinction between the mental and the physical, between P-predicates and M-predicates—call it what you will—which seemed twenty years ago in danger of being obliterated.

We can see now what Wittgenstein's real purpose was in pointing out the difficulties in the unconsidered remarks philosophers had been making about sensations. He was not denying the existence of such things as sensations: he was in fact anticipating Strawson's own doctrine. What he was concerned to do was to refute a current view of the way in which words for sensations are learnt; and, in so far as the language of sensations was in some circles supposed to be the language to which all our talk of the material world could be reduced, this view about the way in which we learn the words for sensations implied a false picture of the way in which we come to be able to talk about the world as a whole. According to this view the names of different sorts of sensation are learnt by a sort of ostensive definition which connects the word with experiences which I myself have. 'I know what pain is only from my own case' (*Ibid.* I, 295). 'Pain' on this view is a word which has a private meaning: since it is logically impossible for anyone else to have my pains it is logically impossible for them to mean by 'pain' just what I mean by it. It is this account of how we come to know the meaning of 'pain' which Wittgenstein is rejecting. When he denies that a sensation is a 'something', he is saying something about the properties of the concept of *sensation*, not about sensations themselves. That he should have been misunderstood in this way is not for lack of attempts on his part to make his meaning clear:

> 'But you will surely admit that there is a difference between pain-behaviour accompanied by pain and pain-behaviour without any pain?'—Admit it? What greater difference could there be? 'And yet you again and again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a *nothing*.' Not at all. It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! The condition was only that a nothing would serve just as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here. (*Ibid.* I, 304.)

Wittgenstein's insistence on the existence of public criteria for the ascription of P-predicates was dictated by the need to attack the view which had been prevalent at least since Locke—the view that such words obtain their meaning by becoming the names of what Locke was pleased to call 'ideas'. Since 'ideas', or sensations, or sense-data, or whatever else were supposed to stand in this relation to sensation words, were supposed to be things which were essentially private, the

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meanings of the words thus defined were supposed to be private too. It was one of Wittgenstein's chief aims to show that this conception of meaning was radically incoherent. To do so he had to stress the ways in which publicly observable phenomena provide us with criteria for the ascription of such predicates. That this is the whole story about the use of words of this sort is not part of his doctrine. No doubt the unsystematic character of his writing helps to give the impression that the conceptual features of sensation words which he stressed represented, on his view, the whole truth about this part of language. But this picture cannot survive a more thorough examination of the text. It might almost be said that Wittgenstein was more concerned to emphasize the differences between P-predicates and M-predicates then to reduce the former to the latter.

The picture that now emerges as the current way of thinking of the difference between Mind and Body involves a distinction as clear as that to be found in Descartes. Mental attributes on this view are not entirely disconnected, as on the Cartesian view, from physical attributes: they have at times to be ascribed on the basis of the possession of physical attributes, and these physical attributes are logically adequate criteria for their ascription. What could be further from Descartes' preconceptions than that? But there is nevertheless a way of ascribing such attributes which is totally foreign to the ways of physical attributes. This is the way of first-person ascription. It is this glaring asymmetry between first-person ascription and other-person ascription in the case of mental attributes which justifies the sharp dichotomy between them and physical attributes.

The absolute character of the distinction is thoroughly Cartesian. The distinction itself is to some extent different. For Descartes drew a distinction between minds and bodies. He assumed, or at least inferred, that to the absolute distinction between mental attributes and physical attributes there corresponded an equally absolute distinction between the sorts of things to which these sorts of attributes could be said to belong. There was, for him, no possibility of ascribing to a material substance the sort of predicate which could be ascribed to a mental substance. What these substances are was another matter. Descartes thought that he knew the answer, an answer which could be given in terms of extension and thought, respectively. Locke thought that he did not know the answer. The physical attributes, like the mental attributes, had to 'inhere' in something: this something, from this function alone, could be called a '*substratum*', something capable of affording the attributes its support. For the rest all that could be said of it was that it was a 'something I know not what'—and one of Locke's points is that our ignorance of the nature of material substance is quite as profound as our ignorance of the nature of spiritual substance. He is thus in the Cartesian tradition of refusing to allow that the mind is more problematic than the body. But although that in which physical

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attributes inhere is as much a 'something I know not what' as that in which mental attributes inhere, Locke seems to indicate that he knows at least this much about them, namely that the *substratum* of physical attributes cannot also support mental attributes. There are two different sorts of 'somethings I know not what'. What mind is and what body is are questions he cannot answer. But that mind and body are distinct is taken for granted on the strength of the distinction between mental and physical attributes.

More modern philosophers, like their predecessors in the ancient and medieval worlds, are less certain of this. Strawson, in *Individuals*, assumes at the beginning of his discussion that persons are things to which both 'M'-predicates' and 'P-predicates' can be ascribed. The question whether mental attributes and physical attributes can belong to the same thing is at least a different question from the question whether mental attributes are themselves a different sort of thing from physical attributes. I do not propose to pursue the former question here. The point I wish to make is that recent philosophers have produced excellent reasons for answering the second question affirmatively. In this they are at one with the Cartesian tradition; but they have been able to improve on the merely intuitive basis which is all that Descartes and his successors seem to have had for making the distinction. Their emphasis on the first-person/other-person asymmetry has enabled them to show that we are dealing with a distinction which can be demonstrated by the methods of conceptual analysis.

I should like, in conclusion, to discuss the complaint that the distinction to which Strawson and his friends have pointed is drawn in the wrong place. Professor Geach, for one, holds this view. It needs of course to be made clear, if possible, what is wrong about the place at which the distinction is drawn. If it is complained that the place is not right, what is it supposed to be not right *for*? Well, what did Descartes want the distinction for? Primarily, I think, to do the job which was the chief aim of his philosophy as expounded in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*, namely, to defend the truth of religion. And amongst these truths, second only to the existence of God, he would I think have placed the survival of the soul after the death of the body. His insistence on the absolute distinction between mind and body, between thinking and extended substance, is designed to show that this survival is at least possible. *Sum, et sum res cogitans*: and as a thinking being there is no necessity that my existence should be terminated just because quite another thing, an extended being, namely my body, should happen to perish. For Descartes the mind was the same as what theologians talk about, and *need* to talk about, as a spiritual soul.

So it seems as though Geach's complaint that the Strawsonian distinction is drawn in the wrong place will not unduly alarm Strawson. For one does not suppose that Strawson cares greatly

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what consequences his doctrines have for the belief in survival after death. The belief in survival is something in which he is, indeed, interested enough to devote to it a short note at the end of one of his chapters. But the interest is directed to the question how much of the survival doctrine can survive the Strawsonian discoveries about the nature of a person. The answer seems to be, not much. And what does survive is not very consoling. Strawson's conclusion would be, not that he has drawn the wrong distinction, but that Descartes is wrong in thinking that the distinction will serve to bolster up Christian doctrine.

Geach's complaint does not show that the Strawsonian distinction is drawn in the wrong place for Strawson; but it is sufficiently obvious that it is in the wrong place for Christians, including Geach himself. To put the issue in Aristotelian terms, Strawson has shown that there is an absolute distinction between what can be said of beings informed by a sensitive soul, on the one hand, and what can be said of beings without a soul, or with only a vegetative soul, on the other. What the theologian needs, however, is an absolute distinction between beings informed by a rational soul and the rest. This may serve to emphasize the fact that Strawson's use of the word 'person' is very definitely not that of the Scholastic theologian: a person is for Strawson an *individua substantia in sensitiva,* not *in rationali, natura.* The theologian would not be willing to call a dog, let alone a worm, a person. Strawson, given the commonsense view that worms have feelings, would. This commonsense view, if so it be, was of course challenged by Descartes; and challenged in the case, not only of worms, but of dogs also. For Descartes there was no problem about the feelings of brutes. The class of sentient, but irrational, beings was prevented from troubling him by his ruling that it was in fact empty. Below human beings there was nothing on the scale of being incapable, on Descartes' view, of being adequately described in purely mechanical terms. Descartes therefore could afford to draw the great distinction at the point which divides the sentient from the insentient, since sentience was for him, as we have seen, a mode of 'thought'. For Descartes the extension, if not the comprehension, of the Strawsonian term 'person' would coincide with that of the term '*suppositum in natura rationali*'.

It may nevertheless be the case that the Strawsonian distinction has importance for Christian belief—the place where it is drawn may not be as wrong as *all that.* For, in a climate of opinion in which the distinction between the material and the spiritual is denied altogether, directing people's attention to the division between sentient and insentient beings may have a therapeutic effect. The Mind-Body problem has then to be faced even at this low level where Mind is represented by a stab of pain, a feeling of warmth, an itch. It is as well to achieve some sort of clarity in this sphere, where the phenomena are not too difficult to discern, before advancing to

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tackle the theologically more crucial, but philosophically more intractable, problem of the distinction between the rational and the irrational creation.

Christ and His Angels
by Rob van der Hart, O.P.

There is much more in this paper about angels than about Christ; but I am sure that you will forgive me this disproportion. Christ, so it seems, is already well known to us: we can take him for granted. But angels are new—there is news in talking about angels: they excite our curiosity.

At our disposal are numerous scholary treatises in which Christ's personality is analysed and this nature is dissected in its several components. About Christ we may think we know almost everything there is to know. But angels. . .?

Of course, we know they have not really got wings like birds, and that in fact they must be quite different from the naked babies that tumble from the skies in our baroque paintings. But what else is there to say?

To be fair only in the past century and a half have angels suffered a leakage of meaning ending in the present debilitated condition. Before that they were the objects of much serious speculation. Were they material or pure spirits; what sort of knowledge did they have; could they have intercourse; how many of them were there; etc.? Indeed, angels were dissected too: Fr Cipolla (Brother Onion) treasured in a box a 'penna dell'àgnolo Gabriello' which was left behind on the occasion of the archangel's visit to the Blessed Virgin (*Il Decamerone* VI 10, 370)—supposing, of course, that Boccaccio is a reliable witness.

But alas, for us this wealth of information is buried in the past, unavailable because we do not even know how to make it appear relevant. The break with the past is pretty well complete: angels have been lost definitively in a welter of tinsel and feathers.

Let me therefore be realistic and presume that most of you will approach our subject in an attitude of the utmost scepticism—sympathetic, no doubt, if my efforts lead to making angelology into an issue of a certain poetic and romantic interest, but otherwise quite confident that I will never succeed in convincing you that angels are real things.

Yet, if we are to speak of 'Christ and his angels' we will have to take into consideration the strong statements about them throughout the Bible. And then it appears to verge on blasphemy to suppose

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