

MAÎTRE ECKHART: METAPHYSIQUE DU VERBE ET THÉOLOGIE NÉGATIVE, by Émilie zum Brunn and Alain de Libera. Beauchesne, Paris, 1984. pp. 249. 150 FF.

Interpretations of Eckhart are as many and as various as interpretations of Heraclitus; but the present authors are unusually well qualified to comment on Eckhart's philosophical beliefs. Both are well versed in patristic and medieval thought and both are currently engaged in the Cerf edition of Eckhart's Latin works. A. de Libera is, in addition, editing Ulrich of Strasbourg for the *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi* and, also in 1984, he published a very useful introduction to the German Dominican school beginning with St Albert. The underlying conviction of the authors, and it is surely correct, is that it is meaningless to try to divide Eckhart into a 'philosopher' (especially in the Latin works) and a 'mystic' (especially in the German works). He is a philosopher in the classical sense: seeking to find and teach the way to the *beata vita* (p. 28). And, as is typical of the 'Cologne school', he draws on a wide range of philosophical and theological traditions, taking it for granted that there is a radical harmony between physics, metaphysics, logic, theology and spirituality. The authors claim that, for Eckhart, the Incarnation and, to a lesser extent, the doctrine of the Trinity, provide an essential key to metaphysics. There is a great deal that is fascinating and illuminating in their book, and they certainly show that Eckhart's 'spirituality' is scarcely intelligible without reference to his philosophy; for instance, his doctrine of birth in the Word rests on the Aristotelian-Thomist theory of substantial change. However some parts of the exposition are not entirely convincing: for instance, the proposed link between Trinitarian theology and transcendentals (p. 135). And it is not entirely clear what the relationship is between the 'metaphysics of the Logos' and negative theology (which both receive extended, but largely unrelated treatment). This lack of clarity is partly due to a rather surprising failure to relate the interpretation of Eckhart to the appropriation of Proclus which is, as Libera himself has pointed out elsewhere, so characteristic of the German Dominicans. The authors also never make it quite clear what they mean by 'mystical'; in spite of a passing comment on p. 185 which suggests a classic, Dionysian, interpretation, elsewhere they seem to presuppose much more modern usage, with its focus on 'experience', and they do not, to my mind, succeed in substantiating the claim that 'experience' is important in Eckhart. But then they never make it clear what they mean by 'experience' either. And, though their few references to earlier 'mystics' like Hadewijk and Mechthild are useful, the authors are clearly much more at home with Eckhart's philosophical context than with his ascetical context. The authors are occasionally somewhat careless in their discussion of particular texts: for instance, they try to make Eckhart more palatable to feminists by juxtaposing his noble 'man in the soul' with the even higher nobility ascribed to 'la femme' (p. 208); but in the passage referred to *wip* is not being contrasted with 'man', but with 'virgin': Eckhart is, rather mischievously, making 'wife' a more distinguished title than 'virgin'. But, in spite of a few irritants of this kind, this is a book to be commended; it is not definitive, obviously, and the authors themselves are engaged in work which will no doubt facilitate a more authoritative exposition later. But, as a provisional interpretation, it is interesting and will have to be taken seriously.

SIMON TUGWELL OP

THE COGNITIVITY OF RELIGION: THREE PERSPECTIVES by J. Kellenberger. Macmillan, 1982. Basingstoke and London. pp x + 214, £25.00.

This work, which is often colloquial in expression, could have benefited from more revision so as to allay the impression of composition by dictation. It could also have benefited from more thorough proof-reading.

Kellenberger first depicts two Perspectives concerning the roles of rationality and cognitivism in religion. The First Perspective is prone to deny that religion can have external

grounds or propositional content, or embrace knowledge, but stresses inwardness and commitment, and claims a strong conceptual link in religious matters between belief and understanding. The Second Perspective countenances external grounds and knowledge, gives a cognitive and ultimately propositional account of belief, and allows there to be some understanding of religion in the absence of commitment.

Each perspective has its Strengths; contentiously, and despite his own ultimately cognitivist account, Kellenberger claims that it is a strength of the first Perspective that it 'sees that holding beliefs to be true ... may not be necessary for true faith or a significant religious life' (36). He also claims in his Final Comments that 'the Second Perspective slights the non-cognitive values of religion' (185), a claim without any apparent justification.

Kellenberger also presents a Third Perspective, traced in the Psalms and Bonaventura, which, while tacitly rejecting in religion the kind of rationality which can involve enquiry, hypothesis and doubt, presupposes or affirms the rationality of discovery or realisation. This Perspective, by allowing for the Strengths of the other two, is held capable of softening the conflict between them, and offering a middle way. For example, the objection of the First Perspective to enquiry-rationality may be married to the requirement of the Second Perspective for rationality of some sort by the recognition that religion can have rationality of another type, that of discovery, when it consists in a realisation of the Divine in the world of familiar events and experiences.

The Third Perspective soon turns out to have a logical grammar of its own, requiring the shunning of the irrationalities of self-deception and blindness. It is also supplied with a Framework which allows the Perspective to adopt stances on the various issues which divide the First and Second Perspectives; thus if 'the religious discovery' can be made, there must also be religious propositions and knowledge. Other stances of the Third Perspective, however, such as the claim that religion construed as discovery involves commitment and having an abiding relationship with the Divine, seem rather to express Kellenberger's own view about how to resolve these issues than to follow from the model of discovery or realisation as originally introduced. A further example is the claim that religion can be understood without belief, but that *true* understanding does after all require the kind of belief which corresponds to the commitment of the heart, and is lost when belief is lost.

One difficulty for the Third Perspective consists in deciding whether 'discover' and 'realise' are to be used as success-verbs or not. Only if they were not thus used could non-believers accept this Perspective as an acceptable account of rationality in religion; otherwise they can at most accept that this is an acceptable account if and only if religious discoveries were to take place. Without assuming that there has been such a discovery, Kellenberger opts for the success-verb use, and represents the Third Perspective as affirming that there is a religious discovery to be made. Thus the Third Perspective, unlike the Second, is not one which sceptics can share; indeed sceptics, including devout ones, turn out, according to this perspective, to suffer from the irrationality of blindness, and to forfeit whatever rationality they might have had if 'enquiry-rationality' (136) had been an allowable approach instead. (There is, however, no problem about the scepticism of adherents of one religion about the claims of another: for the realisation-discoveries of all religions all involve 'the religious discovery' (118, 128, etc.) and maybe the same Reality (116f.), despite the differences between their conceptions of it.)

But the basic trouble with the Third Perspective is that discovery-rationality is not a distinctive type of rationality at all, just as discovery is merely one of a number of cognitive acts, processes or conditions (alongside recognition, discrimination, learning, interpretation, detection and others). Discovery is certainly an evocation experience (about which I used once to preach), but, as discoveries (in the neutral sense) may be mistaken, bitter or both, some basis independent of the putative discovery has to be available if

veridical discoveries are to be identifiable. And if the grounds of even veridical discoveries are those instanced by Kellenberger (familiar events and experiences), few specific religious discoveries will thereby be rational, unless more could in principle be said to show how these grounds favour one belief rather than another.

Kellenberger sometimes writes as if, in the absence of the irrationality of blindness (the unwillingness to make a religious discovery on the basis of familiar experience) and of self-deception, the beliefs arrived at will probably be rational discoveries; but this tendency exhibits rather the distorted account of rationality which his discovery-model requires him to employ. He also suggests that there is no way beyond, any more than within, 'the logic of the religious discovery' by which whether a religious discovery has been made can be settled; but, without a detailed discussion of the alternatives, this is to beg the question of whether this is all there is to rationality in religion.

This is not to suggest that all rationality should be assimilated to that of enquiry, or of the testing of hypotheses; though even in religion this does happen, as Kellenberger sometimes allows. Rationality can also lie in reasoning backwards from beliefs to presuppositions, and sometimes in activities such as interpretation and drawing analogies, and in others besides. But it is to maintain that, as discovery is just one of the several activities sustained by a variety of such rational practices, it does not constitute the core of a distinctive Perspective on the various issues concerning rationality and cognitivity. Certainly by the time that Kellenberger has annexed to 'the logic of religious discovery' a Framework embodying stances on these issues, a possible Perspective has begun to emerge; but the tenuous foundations on which it is supposedly based are insufficient to maintain its separate identity. The strengths of this Framework are mostly those borrowed from the First or (more often) the Second Perspective, and its weaknesses correspond to the author's earnest attempts to accommodate insights such as Kierkegaard's requirement that the object of faith must be the absolute paradox.

The book has its brighter moments, concerning self-deception and how it can affect either the sceptic or the believer (118–128), and the relation of belief and understanding (36–49 and 154–162), hard as it is to accept the conclusion drawn about loss of belief. But the reconciling project which it professes to undertake is unlikely to be brought off by any attempt to locate a delimited but general type of rationality unobjectionable even to those who consider religion to be above reason or to have a rationality peculiar only to itself.

ROBIN ATTFIELD

THE WORLD OF JOHN OF SALISBURY, edited by Michael Wilks. Studies in Church History, Subsidia 3. Oxford 1984. £25.00. Pp 469.

A conference was held at Salisbury and Wells Theological College in July, 1980 to commemorate the eighth centenary of John of Salisbury, one of the most distinguished Englishmen of the twelfth century. A clerk but not a monk, a pupil in Paris of schoolmen such as Abelard, William of Conches, Robert of Melun, contemporary and friend of Becket, sharing his views on church and state, author of distinguished books, John represents all that is meant by 'humanism' in the twelfth century. A European by choice and aptitude, he was honoured not in his own country but in France and died as Bishop of Chartres on October 25th; he is buried in the abbey church of Notre-Dame-de-Josaphat.

The selection of papers now published from the proceedings of the conference reflect the cosmopolitan aspect of John's life, both in content and in the nationalities of those delivering them, less than half being by British scholars. Moreover, the interest still shown in John of Salisbury's life and writings by European scholars is further reflected in the admirable bibliography of the literature connected with him, from 1953 to 1982, and in the paper which analyses it, 'John of Salisbury in Recent Scholarship', both by David