

the cool clear language with which the Puseyite would justify himself. Thomas lacks this ability, and Phillips does not recognise its worth.

What, however, of the 'concepts' said to be embedded? Still the case lacks conviction. The author asks 'Why should we expect to base belief in God on knowledge? ... Faith asks us to believe in a hidden God' (p. 115), and in the process questions get confused. The question as to God's existence is thrown together with faith in God's loving nature, a twentieth-century conflation better rejected. For Phillips will seek to assert the primacy of 'dance' over creeds and rationalisation (p. 150), yet it is only when we recognise the existence of a God whose nature is radically unknown will there be the space that Phillips wants in which to dance, rail, or curse. He gives no weight to the evidence for a Creator God that might allow people to trust their 'primitive reactions'. Neither does Phillips acknowledge Christianity's own avowal that what it preaches is to many a 'stumbling-block', and to others 'folly'. He does not discuss just what our reactions might be to that block. Am I to dance round it in pagan ritual? Or embrace it *quia incredibile*? For if it makes a difference, then it seems we have not gone so far from explanation and traditional philosophy of religion as Phillips would have us hold.

In conclusion, there is nothing here that philosophers will not find more fully treated in the author's other writings; there is little that literary critics will find other than exasperating.

RICHARD FINN OP

THE MYSTERIES OF RELIGION by Stephen R.L. Clark, *Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, Pp. x + 277, Hb. £25.00, Pb. £7.95*

This book appears in a new series of 'Philosophical Introductions', whose aim is to introduce beginners to philosophy through philosophising about issues on which the student may already be presumed to have views, though in the case of religion, I fear that the lamentable decline of proper religious education and practice in our schools makes this a somewhat forlorn hope. Professor Clark says that he first doubted that there was a need for an introduction to the philosophy of religion, but quickly persuaded himself that there was room 'for a study which took its start from ordinary experience of religion' rather than the conventional philosophic approach of examining a few 'abstruse' arguments about a being most religious people would not recognise as the object of their devotions. It would not be entirely unfair to say that Clark does not avoid only abstruse arguments in his book. He largely eschews argument altogether, preferring, as he puts it, to map the terrain which religion and religious experience occupies. His view appears to be that there is a genuine area of life and experience to which religion and only religion answers, and he combines this conviction with a strong sense of the limits of rational argument and discourse, and with a largely commendable suspicion of the dogmas of the progressive enlightenment (though some will find his constant sermonising tiresome).

In so far as he deploys an argument at all in favour of religion, it is the familiar *tu quoque* of the religious to the non-religious: that materialism and the pursuit of science stand in need of support and rational justification as much as religion. Even beliefs about existence of bodies and the reliability of our memories cannot be defended except by appeal to consensus, what men would normally say, and so on. Trust in the progress of science assumes a basic rationality in the universe. Without religion and religious piety it is hard to make sense of this assumption or its application in the practice of disinterested inquiry and it is even harder for the non-religious to make sense of the notion that one might be morally bound by obligations not of one's choosing. He also appeals at times to the paradoxes of modern physics as some defence of religious paradox and is attracted to the thought that science itself might be a kind of false religion, with initiations, hierarchies and authorities. If science and common sense require unjustifiable assumptions for their

pursuance, and if religion alone can deal with certain crucial aspects of existence and make our lives appear worth living and our obligations binding, why not wager for religion?

As an argument, I do not find this form of the *tu quoque* impressive. For one thing, I do not see that dogmatic materialism (or scientism) and religion are the only options. One could be much more agnostic about science (and should be, in my opinion), and more pragmatic about common sense, admitting its lack of foundations and appealing only to its indispensability for everyday life and predictive success, both of which are questionable in the case of religious belief. Further, acknowledging, if we must, that morality and life generally are problematic in the absence of religion is not in itself an argument in favour of religion. Surely we need some positive evidence or argument in favour of the existence of something, as remarkable and as distant from our ordinary experience as God or the Indestructible or the One before accepting the undoubted consolations religion has to offer.

In any case, which religion? Here, Professor Clark's wide erudition about all manner of religions, sympathy to their practices and determination to concentrate on religion as a phenomenon appears to me to undermine to a large extent his case in favour of religion. While one can acknowledge that both the Homeric gods (about which he writes movingly) and Hindu practice have things to teach us about our roles in life, that both Buddhism and Abrahamic thought may point to significant aspects of our experience, that animism, monotheism and pantheism may all contain important moral insights, one wonders how all this can be synthesised in any way if one is taking the claims of these various systems to be literally true. Clark claims to be a realist about the world and such things, but his eschewal of argument and dogmatics in favour of phenomenological approach to religious practice left me quite unclear as to what it was we were being asked to wager in favour of. One reality that all these things are pointers to, the divine being, reality itself, all of us and the whole heart being part of God, this life being our dream-history—these and others were answers given at various times in the book. The nearest I could get to categorising Clark's position is that it is a combination of Buddhism and process thought which is at the same time happy to worship in an Anglican Church, but I would not be surprised if this were wrong, because it is never clearly stated. For example, I could not tell whether Clark conceives God or the One in personal terms or not, or whether the world and God are really separate. He might say, in both cases both, for he appears to revel in paradox. Nor could I see how he arrives at his final identification of God and the Buddha-nature, nor what this nature is conceived to be. I am afraid that in the end I was left with the uncomfortable feeling that a position so unclear and so syncretic and so consistent with almost anything is no more capable of sustaining one's endeavours than is the atheistic individualism Clark so clearly abhors; certainly we have here nothing on which a rational person could rationally wager: one needs at least some idea of what one is putting one's money on.

ANTHONY O'HEAR

DEATH'S GIFT by Nicholas Peter Harvey. *Epworth Press, 1985, viii + 152 pp. £3.95.*

The basic insight of this book is that the experience of the disciples at the crucifixion was akin to one of bereavement. And bereavement is not something to be 'got over' more or less successfully, but is the opportunity for a new and richer relationship to be created—if only the bereaved will surrender certain aspects of the old relationship. The book is very largely for the bereaved, and could not but be a striking help to anyone who has suffered such a personal loss. One wonders why this is all so very real to the author, until a very late chapter when he reveals the searing effect which the suicide of a close and respected friend had upon him, and the time it took him to achieve growth through this experience. But the insights of the book are by no means confined to such circumstances. There is a fascinating little study of Peter, who was so strongly chastened by Jesus, continually rebuffed, and finally forced out of his

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