

circumstances one not only may, but must be a conscientious objector. It is strange that most Catholics are so reluctant to preach this doctrine, particularly in time of war when it is particularly relevant. It is a bit ironical that many Catholics hesitate to discuss the right of the human conscience to review the morality of a war, while the United States Government does recognise this right at least in some form by making provision for the exemption of conscientious objectors." We might recommend this to those in this country who have stated pontifically that "a Catholic *cannot* be a conscientious objector" or, in other words, that a Catholic can have an objection but not a conscience.

The above, however, are small instances of the dynamic of Fr. Furfey's writing and the balance of his judgment. I would like to have copies of page 62 on Christ, the social agitator, (though He was a social agitator of a very particular sort, the Redeemer of Mankind) in every church in this country. We recommend the book without reserve, but especially to writers and publishers of Catholic sociology in England, and to all who hitherto have thought blanc-mange to be fit food for the famishing. J. F. T. PRINCE.

PHILOSOPHY

THE NATURE OF METAPHYSICAL THINKING. By Dorothy M. Emmet. (Macmillan; 10s. 6d.).

Miss Emmet brings to her task a ready interest in widely varying views and great honesty in facing difficulties. Perhaps for these reasons this most interesting book leaves one with more problems than answers.

Her theme is that metaphysical thinking is analogical in character. Experience, she holds, is the "creation of form arising out of an initial situation of interrelated processes. The experiencing subject is a responsive centre within this nexus of relationships" (p. 189) being in *rappont* with the 'transcendent' or 'other'. There is a fatal vagueness in the author's use of "situations of interrelatedness". The symbolic forms of experience are themselves patterns of relational structure and correspond systematically to what most often seems to be the relation of the experiencing subject to the transcendent; but at times it seems to be rather a relational structure within the transcendent itself. Why we draw attention to this will shortly appear. The investigation of the patterns of our symbolic forms in their internal relations is the task of science; but metaphysics has to "elucidate the situations of relatedness both in respect of the character of the relations themselves, and in respect of what can be conjectured through these as to the nature of (the transcendent)". Here the vagueness already mentioned makes it difficult to determine whether the relations referred to are the internal relations again of the experiential symbols (whereupon metaphysics would be largely a generalised, synthetic science) or

rather the various relations between the transcendent and the subject in different experiences (making metaphysics exclusively the interpretation of the transcendent). But whichever it is it is obvious that one of Miss Emmet's main concerns must be to establish the case for a transcendent and for our being in relation with it.

Her first, and as it were frontal attack seems to us to fail. She suggests that the phenomenalist theory of knowledge, which she prefers to idealism or realism, must refer for the interpretation of its 'possible sense-data' to the constructive activity of the observer and to communications received in social intercourse, in a word therefore to 'interrelated activities'; and that from this relation it is "no great step" to go and posit "relation to some external world". Now the interrelated activities are presumably discovered at the phenomenal level; the external world is, *in hypothesis*, beyond it; the advance therefore is no mere step within, but the terrible plunge out of the world of appearances. Miss Emmet here too seems not to have considered the directions of her relations. Indeed, she seems to be herself dissatisfied with this argument, for she returns to the problem in each new context,—and with such increasing hesitancy that we are left uncertain in the end whether she affirms the reality of the transcendent or not. After notable chapters on perception and science we are introduced to a section of the book that deals with religious symbols, faith and theology. We are in fact back at the central problem. Religious symbols claim above all others to be a response to 'other', and "we have still to ask whether these are more than forms of inner experience . . . Do they in any real sense give us knowledge of the transcendent?" (104). The answer is deferred to the next chapter; meantime religious symbols are analysed, and we are told how they tell their own inadequacy, but not how they are significant, nor how we are to ground our judgment of value that the Transcendent is holy and not merely a physical object. When the next chapter comes we are again baulked. Faith, in Miss Emmet's view (and it will be seen that she writes in the traditions of the Englishman Pelagius) is a "yes" of total conviction, a commitment of oneself, a gift of God only in the sense that, thrust upon us by our own antecedent preparation, it admits in the moment of its impact no denial. Theology, with certain *caveats* against Deism and against Barthianism, must translate this experience into intellectual language. But none of this answers our insistent question, repeated in the chapter, "Is there in fact some real relation to the Transcendent . . . or . . . only symbolic forms expressive of certain feeling states?" And in ultimate analysis Miss Emmet has no answer. When the philosopher seeks to justify his belief in a transcendent he can appeal only to "the conviction that some particular form of spiritual experience has given him insight" (blessed word!) (p. 205), and that experience *may* arise out of a relation to that which transcends the subject; "It might be a reflection, for instance, upon moments of

awareness such as Buber has described in terms of his 'I-Thou' relation" (p. 211). Perhaps—but equally perhaps not; and with this the book and its thesis seem to collapse. A last dispirited chapter movingly surveys the contemporary breakdown in community and communication, and suggests as the interpretative analogue needed the symbol of 'Word'. But no analogue will stand where analogy is not established.

Of the reality of 'the problem of communication' Miss Emmet provides us with a bitter object lesson. She devotes a chapter to Thomism, at once generously appreciative and critical. But with the best will in the world and evident pains to have read Thomist writers, she arrives at an account misleading in almost every particular; and it is solely because our language is not hers. No Thomist would hold that existence is prior to essence quite in her sense, nor essence conceptual; nor that the 'transcendentals' are univocally predicated of all that is, nor that they are the only informative predicates that can be made of God by way of the analogy of proportionality. But one could almost point to the sentences in Gilson, in St. Thomas, in Pénido that have been so interpreted by Miss Emmet. Even her conception of analogy, for which she professes indebtedness, is far from the technical instrument of the *philosophia perennis*. We say this only with a view to that accuracy and fairness that is Miss Emmet's outstanding ideal throughout her book. Of the interest and the value of her discussion there can be no question. It is, besides, a challenge to English-speaking Thomists to dare as much from their side as has Miss Emmet from hers.

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. By Hans Meyer. Translated by Rev. F. Eckhoff. (Herder; n.p.).

This is a very disappointing book. The author, a professor at the University of Wurzburg, is a well-known Catholic philosopher, who has given much attention to the doctrinal currents of antiquity and the middle-ages; but he has been badly served by his translator. The work of the latter is often slipshod and misleading; and the number of statements in which he clearly betrays the author's meaning leads one to infer the possibility that many other unacceptable statements do not really express that meaning, but are the result of faulty translation. It is consequently difficult to assess the value of the original work; but it would seem that it is far from reliable as a guide to the thought of St Thomas; there are definite statements which conflict with his teaching. Moreover, the ordinary reader, or even the philosopher, unacquainted with that teaching would often have difficulty in understanding what St Thomas did teach, even were this always correctly expounded, for the exposition is obscure. Further, on points on which the author takes issue with St Thomas (and some of them are among the most fundamental points of Thomistic philosophy), the reasons brought