

EDITORIAL

On an earlier occasion¹ there appeared in this journal a special section entitled 'Transcendence and Religious Experience'. It consisted of the main papers given at the first European conference of *The Christian Philosophers' Group*. Introducing this part of the journal I underlined the importance of renewing and extending appropriate contact between British and European philosophers. At one time, especially in the period of the blossoming of British idealism, the contact was close. It will be a great advantage if it is renewed and continued. This was a major reason for publishing the papers which reflected the helpful exchanges there had been between British philosophers and their counterparts from various European countries at the conference held at The Queen's College, Oxford in 1978. *Religious Studies* is not committed to publication of the proceedings of such meetings. It is hoped that arrangements can be made for the group concerned to arrange for the full publication of its own transactions in due course. But, in the meantime, the papers read at a further conference of this group of British and European philosophers at the University of Utrecht from 29 August to 1 September 1980, on the topic of 'Religion and Understanding', seemed of sufficient general interest, in the area of current discussion of major religious questions, to warrant their inclusion as a special part of this issue of *Religious Studies*. This begins at p. 215.

It is the fashion, and one that is well reflected in the papers to which I have alluded, to draw a sharp contrast between the attitudes and methods of Continental scholars, in philosophy and theology today, and the ways and views of British thinkers. For this there is much justification, although, as the opening observations of Dr Hugo Meynell show, it is by no means easy to find appropriate labels to designate this.

Anglo-Saxon philosophy, to adopt one of the labels mentioned, has taken a severely sceptical and cautious analytical course, with particular stress on clarity and on reflection on the modes of speech by which we express our thoughts. This was not as novel as some have supposed in our day. Plato was fully aware of 'the charm of words', and how misleading, and illuminating too, they can be. So, nearer to ourselves, was Hobbes. More recently, Dilthey, among notable European thinkers, made particular use of the help to be obtained from reflection on modes of expression. This was long before Schlick

¹ *Religious Studies* (June 1979), pp. 195-256.

and Waismann and Wittgenstein made their special impact on British and American philosophy.

Even so, a concern with language combined in many cases with both empiricism and close analysis, has been a major feature of philosophy in English-speaking countries for much of the middle part of this century, and its influence remains a formidable one. It is unfortunate, however, that the impression has been conveyed elsewhere, much encouraged by the confidence of the philosophical attitude just noted, that there has been little of note in British and related philosophy besides an acutely cautious, and sometimes severely sceptical analytic philosophy.

This impression does less than justice to linguistic and analytic philosophy itself. For this has broadened out a great deal over the years. But what is especially overlooked is that there has been a substantial body of clear constructive philosophical thinking in Britain as in other English-speaking countries in forms not restricted to the peculiar preoccupation with language, some of it boldly and very impressively speculative. This has also been marked by great clarity and distinction of philosophical style. The vaunted clarity has by no means been a monopoly of empiricist and linguistic philosophers in the sense those terms usually convey today.

Even in the work of notable thinkers like G. E. Moore, who came to be regarded as the pioneer of the philosophy of Common Sense and Analysis, there is much that falls outside the scope of strict empiricism, not only in ethics but also in the philosophy of mind. The same may be said of C. D. Broad whose *Mind and its place in Nature* is so indispensable an introduction to the subject for us today. In addition there are outstanding thinkers who have combined with ambitious constructive thinking some very pertinent criticism of empiricist and analytic philosophy – consider, for example C. A. Campbell's paper 'Ryle on the Intellect' and other papers in his magnificent *In Defence of Free Will*, and the papers in *Clarity is not Enough* (by H. H. Price and others) which I edited myself. The contact has certainly not been broken off by the two wings of British philosophy, although maintained more firmly perhaps by the less dominant side. Very noteworthy also is the extremely well-informed and well-documented 'A Critique of Linguistic Philosophy' by C. A. Mundle.

On the constructive side the names that come most readily to mind include C. A. Campbell, mentioned already, A. C. Ewing, H. H. Price, H. J. Paton, J. N. Findlay who, along with his extensive work in the rehabilitation of Hegel and other Continental thinkers has produced very powerful and exciting flights of metaphysical speculation in his *The Discipline of the Cave* and *The Transcendence of the Cave*, and F. C. Copleston. The latter is best known as one of the finest of our historians of philosophy and this perhaps obscures his considerable attainments as an independent metaphysical thinker. In the

work of G. C. Stead (*Divine Substance*) we have a British theologian of the highest skill who is also a splendid philosopher.

It is not surprising that problems concerning the nature of the self have been prominent in all these writings, including those of the more fashionable schools of philosophy. Indeed, no topic has been more central in the work of the latter recently or discussed with more vigour. For those who are concerned to maintain the genuineness of 'inner' experience and the reality of an abiding subject, the work on this theme of the philosophers mentioned already will be found peculiarly relevant. I would like to draw attention particularly to the somewhat neglected, but fine reassessment of his own position by A. C. Ewing in his posthumous *Value and Reality*.

If these considerations were extended to other English-speaking areas, we would have a many-sided tale to unfold. It would certainly have to include modified versions of idealism in America (the work of Brand Blanshard for example), Whiteheadian Studies and Process Philosophy, and, especially in connection with the problem of Selfhood, the Personalist School the work of whose founder, Borden Parker Bowne, has been very skilfully presented in *Idealistic Studies* for September 1980 by the most distinguished representative of this School in our time, Peter Bertocci. There is also the important work in this context of Roderick Chisholm at Brown University.

I make these observations in correction of the impression which is sometimes left that the centrality of self-identity among philosophical topics, and especially the vindication of views of the self as an abiding subject, has been left entirely to notable Continental thinkers. They have certainly earned the tribute paid to them by Dr Meynell for their persistence in keeping this issue to the fore in our time, and for much they have done to illumine it. But even here there is sometimes failure to do proper justice to their concern or to present it with the clarity which so strikingly characterizes discussions of the self by recent 'Anglo-Saxon' philosophers, a complaint that goes a long way to justify Dr Meynell's strictures.

Even Dilthey, concerned especially with 'lived experience' etc. tended to reduce this to an exhibition of the psychic connectedness or 'psychic nexus' derived in a way not very far removed from the main lines of Kant's transcendental unity etc. Marcell, so much concerned in some ways with inner experience and the mystery of the self, was much inclined to merge this in the very different mystery and elusiveness of ultimate transcendent existence, and Sartre, notwithstanding his effectiveness, in fiction as much as in philosophy, in bringing questions of personal existence so much to the centre of our thinking, was apt to merge the unity of consciousness in a constitutive consciousness of the 'world of objects' themselves, an 'immanent' view in which it is sometimes explicitly said, especially in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, that the self has disappeared – 'I am nothing' – and it is not

surprising that Professor Peter Caws sums up the position somewhat sharply in these words: 'The Sartrean Ego has the elusiveness of a burst bubble, and the outcome of the analysis is an empty I, the correlative to a Me reduced to nothingness, together maintaining a spontaneous unity of states and actions.'¹

We have, therefore, to be careful, in our concern to sharpen issues and bring controversies to a head, not to lapse into a polarization which can well defeat the purpose of establishing a fair and lively contact again between philosophers who may be properly accused of not taking enough note of one another. I readily agree with Dr Meynell's concern that the procedures of clarification and analysis so effectively followed by British philosophers, and others following their lead, should be extended to the more boldly metaphysical work of outstanding European thinkers of our time, and that the wide-ranging speculative purpose of European philosophers should in turn be emulated by those who excel in close analysis. But to achieve this in a comprehensive way we have also to note where the boundaries are crossed already, and not condemn ourselves to too rigid demarcations of opposing schools.

¹ Peter Caws, *Sartre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), chapter iv.