

that constitutes the 'academic sin' of today, the 'Fallacy of the Uniform Method of Science'.

Passing from the physical sciences, the author goes on to consider two other branches of science, comparative religion and the historical. Both have an obvious bearing on the question of the transcendence of Christianity, and it is to this section that the general title of the book is most applicable.

The last, and most interesting, part of the book deals with the typically modern problem of man ('the Middle Ages studied the problems of man, but the modern world studies man as a problem'). The various humanist theories of man as a creature capable of indefinite progress and perfection by his own efforts have been abandoned, largely as a result of the experience of two wars. The modern version is that of 'frustrated man', who has within him 'some radical tension or dialectic—who is groaning for some kind of sublimation or deliverance'. It is here that Monsignor Sheen sees the possibility of a new argument for the necessity of religion, a new opportunity for the application of the principles of *philosophia perennis* to the most pressing of all modern problems. He points out that in the *Prima Secundae* of St Thomas we have the true philosophy of the 'frustrated man'. There St Thomas describes these tensions, but also assigns their cause: 'the separation of man from God and the consequent separation of man from himself. The cure therefore of man's frustration lies in his restoration to a knowledge of, and friendship with, God.'

Philosophy of Religion is a competent piece of work. The various currents of modern thought are described and criticised with sympathy and understanding: their inadequacies are exposed in terms of that insight into the nature of the relation between faith and reason which marks the achievement of St Thomas's philosophy.

EGBERT COLE, O.P.

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF MYSTICISM. By Herbert Thurston, S.J. Edited by J. H. Crehan, S.J. (Burns Oates; 35s.)

This book consists of a series of papers originally published in *The Month* and other periodicals, together with one hitherto unpublished lecture. It will be well to make clear the nature of these studies from the start. Father Thurston himself described his work as that of a *bureau de contestation*. He gives a series of case histories from the lives of saints and others, and those who remember Father Thurston's articles when they appeared will recognise with pleasure the admirable lucidity with which he sets out the evidence for the cases that he considers. It is obviously impossible to discuss the various phenomena in detail here, but it may be useful to distinguish between those, the majority, which are connected with living persons, and those

connected with dead bodies, such as incorruption, the absence of cadaveric rigidity, blood prodigies, and the so-called 'odour of sanctity' attaching to the dead.

Of the first kind, those associated with the living, levitation, stigmata, and the rest, it would seem true to say that most have been reproduced in persons for whom no claim to sanctity could be made, though it is true that there are differences in the circumstances, which, in the case of the evidence for levitation, for example, may be significant—the witnesses were *expecting* to see the medium, Home, raised in the air. It would perhaps be rash to draw conclusions when Father Thurston himself so carefully refrained from doing so, but one is tempted to think that any intense psychological experience—and this would of course include true mystical experience—might produce these phenomena in certain people, though how the professional medium can produce the experience at will is another matter. Any of these effects, therefore, might be the result of close union with God, and in a sense manifestations of it, but they might be the result of some intense emotional experience due to merely natural causes. If this is so, then it would seem that what are indeed truly mystical phenomena are not exactly miracles but simply the natural effects in the body of supernatural experiences in the soul, and this appears to be in keeping with the traditional teaching of writers on the spiritual life. They have always emphasised that any sort of physical phenomena were at best only by-products of spiritual experience, and they never tire of warning the recipients against attaching importance to them. The old writers, of course, considered any phenomena which were not divine in origin to be the work of the devil, but Father Thurston's researches would seem to prove at least that such phenomena are not in themselves necessarily manifestations of holiness.

In the case of phenomena connected with the body after death the situation is somewhat different. Although there may to a greater or lesser extent be an absence of decomposition apparently attributable to natural causes, very imperfectly understood, in any dead body, it would seem that the phenomenon of the body remaining fresh and supple, and sometimes noticeably fragrant, for a considerable period after death is only to be found in the case of persons of recognised holiness. One would like to think in these cases the body is already beginning to share in the glorification which it will enjoy when reunited to the soul in heaven, but there are difficulties. It is in fact no longer joined to the soul, and why does the phenomenon occur in the bodies of some holy persons and not in those of others apparently equally holy?

If some of the case histories here related are not free from morbidity, there are some very intriguing ones, as that of the

Italian girl, never likely to be a candidate for canonisation, who, when she lost the power of seeing with her eyes, saw as clearly as before with the tip of her nose and the lobe of her left ear, and whose sense of smell was later transferred to the insteps of her feet (p. 336), and the other who after going without food for many years fainted at the smell of a piece of toast (p. 127).

Father Crehan has performed his task of editing unobtrusively, and it is certainly valuable that these very dispassionate investigations should be brought together in book form and made readily available to the public.

GERARD SITWELL, O.S.B.

MEDIEVAL LOGIC. An outline of its development from 1250-1400. By Philotheus Boehner. (Manchester University Press; 12s. 6d.)

'Everything of importance has been said before by somebody who did not discover it.' Hutchinson Stirling said that before, though not so tersely as Whitehead; and he added that we should have found 'something quite else' in the earlier writer's words, before the insight of the real discoverer had made the discovery overt. Fr Boehner is among those who think that medieval logicians really did anticipate the discoveries of the last hundred years. His title is misleading; for what he is writing about, the new elements contributed to logic by medieval writers, is not in the tradition that survived, but was soon completely forgotten—it had to be rediscovered recently—and it left few traces.

These 'new elements' are discussions of certain points that began to be considered important in Fr Boehner's period. Those he treats most fully are *syncategoremata*, *suppositiones* and *consequentiae*. It is his contention that the development of these discussions marks the gradual discovery that logic should be and is completely 'formal', so abstract and generalised that it can be written entirely in symbols. To exhibit this he often writes symbols where his medievals had clumsy Latin; the wonder is that it was done at all, like a woman's preaching or a dog's standing on its hind legs.

A treatment of *suppositiones* still survives in scholastic logic with, so far as I know, no indication why it is thought important for logic; Fr Boehner offers no explanation either, though he does suggest a remote analogy with something in modern logic.

Others have already shown that the *consequentiae* were the forerunners of the tautologies studied in modern logic; Fr Boehner makes a good case for the discovery that the *syncategoremata* are constants expressing logical form. And he produces a mild climax in a Los Angeles MS where syllogistics are dethroned to make room for *consequentiae*.