

Black's 'interaction view' of metaphor would have us go. Loisy's Newmanic emphasis on our appreciating revealed religion as 'a life, an active organism, a fruitful institution' is now to be interpreted as exemplifying Black's thesis about 'focus' and 'frame'. Next, Paul Ricoeur is enlisted to show that Loisy's expression of the Church as the root of a tree whose top is the Kingdom, and his attendant talk of 'acorn' and 'budding' and 'growth' is all absurd literally but makes metaphoric sense. Only when assured by such scientific backing does Dr Talar feel ready to consider the polysemy of 'life' in Loisy's writing. None of the curiosities of 'nature' metaphors discussed by Polixenes and Perdita is given place in Dr Talar's meditation. Only certain sorts of language expert count. Shakespeare is not one of them. From the 'tensive metaphor' in Loisy's sentences, Dr Talar would have us assist at the kind of hermeneutical exploration of narrative suggested by Hayden White.

Before we can investigate *L'Evangile et l'Eglise* however, we must be made aware that White's thought has been characterised as 'close to a genetic structuralism' and so 'some clarification of its roots in structural linguistics will likely prove helpful'. So far as these things are clear to me, White is proffering something akin to the old tag: *quidquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur*; the relationships between events are understood by historians in ways which confirm the propriety of the kind of narrative they have already in mind. Dr Talar, having identified Loisy's 'tropological prefiguration' as synecdochal, and having accepted White's proposal that the 'methodological projection' of synecdoche is 'that Organicism which modern historians of historical thought have identified as Historicism', feels warranted to assure us that 'Loisy's organismic metaphors have the effect of strongly embedding historical personages, ideas and events in their environment'. We should now see how it is that Loisy should be the one to declare that 'orthodoxy is only unchangeable in the imagination of those who believe it to be so'. Dr Talar says nothing of this very sentence's anticipating the work of Hayden White. Rather, to prove 'relevance', Dr Talar makes quick nods to *Humani Generis* and *Dei Verbum*, so that at the close I am not much the wiser about what I was doing when I signed the anti-modernist oath. I was better served by the old priest who instructed me to take all such things *cum grano salis*.

Some readers will grumble at Dr Talar's own linguistic uses; talk of a learned Jesuit's 'input to Cardinal Richard' and a reference to *Pascendi Domenici Gregis* seems reproachable. But everything, even the abuse of a verb as a noun, must be forgiven the thesis-writer who admits 'I am unable to retrieve the source of this quote from my notes'.

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**FAITH AFTER FOUNDATIONALISM** by D.Z. Phillips. *Routledge*, London 1988. Pp. xviii + 341. £40.

In the first part of this book Phillips is concerned with the philosophical doctrine known as foundationalism. This is the doctrine which divides all propositions into two kinds: those which are basic and those which are dependent on basic propositions. True basic propositions do not stand in any need of any evidence or other support in order to establish them, whereas all other propositions do, and they are supported ultimately by

basic propositions. It is irrational to believe non-basic propositions not so supported. Basic propositions are either propositions of mathematics or logic or sense-datum statements. This doctrine has large consequences for the philosophy of religion, for the proposition that God exists is not itself a proposition of logic or mathematics, nor a sense-datum statement, nor is it apparently derivable from any combination of such statements; at least, attempts so to derive it are deemed to have failed. Hence that God exists cannot be established and it is irrational to believe that God exists.

A group of Calvinist philosophers in America, headed by Alvin Plantinga, attacks this foundationalist position. According to them, it is by no means self-evident that only mathematical and logical propositions and sense-datum statements can qualify as basic. On its own terms, this foundationalist principle is not basic, neither is it apparently derivable from any basic propositions. The foundationalist challenge to the rationality of religious belief can be met by saying that the believer includes the existence of God in his set of basic propositions. He can offer no justification for this inclusion, but then no justification can be given for the inclusion of *any* propositions in that set—including those cherished by the foundationalists.

The task to which Phillips devotes most labour in this book is not a direct fight against the foundationalists, but the rebuttal of the position of these Reformed philosophers. He deploys a whole range of arguments, many of them detailed criticisms of positions adopted by the Reformed thinkers. But he also has a general argument against them. Broadly, this argument has two stages. First, he argues that the Reformed philosophers turn out to have embraced a version of the very foundationalism they were combatting. They accept the foundationalist division of propositions into basic propositions and the rest, and they accept too the foundational character of the basic propositions: they stand as the base of an edifice of belief which depends on them for its rationality. The stability and security of the edifice is a function of the solidity of its foundations. The only difference the Calvinists introduce is to point out the right of the Christian believer to put his belief in the existence of God among the foundations rather than try and fit it in somewhere near the top floor, where the classical foundationalists assumed it must go. And this right is a rather thin affair. It consists merely in its being impossible to show that the believer may not do so. The inclusion among the foundations of the proposition that God exists is as arbitrary as the inclusion of any other propositions.

Second, Phillips opposes to this view that of Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*. According to Wittgenstein the relationship between basic propositions and the rest is roughly the opposite of what the foundationalists, and the Reformed philosophers following them, think it is. Rather than being inherently self-evident, those propositions that we think of as obvious and unquestionable have that status for us because of the part they play in our lives, our practices and formal and informal belief systems. And they do not justify our beliefs and practices. Far from standing at the foundation of our belief systems and giving them stability, they themselves are held in place by other things that we unhesitatingly say and do. That there are physical objects, for instance, *might* be described as one of my basic beliefs. But it is not an assumption that justifies my sitting on chairs or eating peanuts. On the contrary, it is from my performing activities like this

that the belief that there are physical objects gets its sense and its obviousness. It is because I live like this, do these things and myriads of others like them, that I cannot doubt that there are physical objects. I swallow this belief whole with my peanuts. The belief is not what holds my life in place; it is itself held in place by the life that goes on around it. The appropriate picture is not the building resting firm on its foundations, but the still axis of a spinning globe.

This attack on the foundationalist position from a Wittgensteinian perspective seems to me essentially correct. But one might ask why Phillips takes the Calvinists as his main enemy. Plantinga writes against those who say that belief in God is irrational if it is not grounded. His aim is to justify the groundlessness of Christian belief. Surely Phillips's main enemy are the foundationalists themselves. Wittgenstein's views on certainty may provide a more radical refutation of the foundationalists, but basically Phillips and Plantinga are on the same side, not only religiously but philosophically. Phillips thinks the Calvinists fall into the same trap as the foundationalists, but that is not the main point at issue here. Phillips's attack would also do well with being more closely argued. In particular, a clearer and more systematic exposition of Wittgenstein's views would have been welcome. For example, the notion of a world-picture remains somewhat obscure; a world-picture is simply said to be 'the way (basic) propositions hang together' (p. 41).

More worryingly, elements of relativism surface in Phillips's argument on occasion. Phillips explicitly sets himself against relativism, and many pages later on in the book are devoted to combatting various forms of it, such as the hermeneutic theory of Rorty and the sociological relativism of Berger. Yet he says, for example: 'in stressing the naturalness of our world-picture Wittgenstein is not establishing it as the *right* one' (p. 63). This is right; Wittgenstein, as Phillips points out, is concerned only with what it is to have a particular world-picture, not with establishing a particular one as right. But Phillips immediately adds: 'No world-picture is the *right* one'. This sounds as if he is saying, unlike Wittgenstein, that one world-picture, one set of basic beliefs, is as good as another. That cannot be right. Phillips, like everybody else, has basic beliefs. To have basic beliefs is to hold them to be true, unquestionably right. If I have a world-picture, I must believe it to be right. So there is a right world-picture, namely mine; and Phillips's too, if his does not contradict mine. Given his generally anti-relativist stance, his words here may merely be a slip. But in this context it is a dangerous one. It is one of the attractions of the foundationalism he is attacking that it at any rate appears to provide a space for objective truth; it puts forward criteria for rational belief which are supposedly scientific, independent of dogma and culture. This is religiously attractive because a Christianity which makes use of it has a claim to being objectively true, rather than a manifestation of a particular culture. Abandoning these criteria looks like opening the door to subjectivism and relativism, and Phillips looks as if he has gone through it. The impression is strengthened by a comment like this, on the views of Lindbeck: 'He is saying that we misunderstand the logic of theological doctrines if we think of them as descriptions of an object, a phenomenon, given independently of them. I think he is absolutely right' (p. 202). We could be forgiven for thinking that Phillips does not believe that God exists

independently of what we say about him.

Towards the end Phillips has important things to say about concept formation in religion. He stresses the importance in philosophy of actually looking to see how religious people use their religious expressions, what place they have in their life. To assume we know *a priori* is a recipe for misunderstanding. In particular, he says some fine things about the place of mystery in religious belief. The mysteriousness of God, he reminds us, is not a matter of a limitation on our knowledge, an epistemological defect; it is not what prevents us from knowing God. God is rather *known as* mysterious, and that God is mysterious is an important element of Christian belief.

The material in this book is quite disparate, and it is not clear that all of it should have been included within the covers of a single volume. But there are plenty of good things in it, as well as some disconcerting ones. It certainly deserves study. The publisher's price seems designed to prevent anybody buying it, which is a pity.

GARETH MOORE OP

**ÉTUDES ERIGENIENNES** by Édouard Jeuneau. *Études Augustiniennes*, 1987. Paris. p. 749. 2.650.0 Belgian francs.

The studies collected in this volume consist of writings composed between 1969 and 1985 on the work, milieu and influence of John Scottus (also known as Eriugena). Two articles are published here for the first time. The other pieces have been photo-reproduced, and the collection is equipped with additions and corrections as well as indices of names, manuscripts and subjects. Fr Jeuneau is without doubt the doyen of Eriugenian studies, and this collection, as well as being a useful resource, affords an opportunity to take stock of his methods and achievements.

Considering the writings as a whole, I was struck by the assiduity and integrity of Jeuneau's work on Eriugena. His method involves diligent, patient and detailed study, and a total absorption into the text. Jeuneau is a student of the material aspect of medieval scholarship: of codicology, of manuscripts and their transmission and so on. But he is also a student of the *content* of these manuscripts and of medieval thought and ideas.

Jeuneau's treatment of the thought of Eriugena is of two kinds. On the one hand there is the study of themes and images, which is almost a special form of literary criticism. I have in mind here an article on the symbolism of the sea in John's writings, and the *Quatre thèmes érigéniens*, a book that is reproduced here in its entirety. The themes in question are: *le caché et l'obscur; l'effort, le labeur; le plaisir de l'esprit; la prudence et la lenteur*. All but the first epithet might be applied to Jeuneau's own study of John Scottus. On the other hand there is the analytical study that involves detailed exegesis of philosophical and theological arguments. While the author applies a prodigious knowledge of philology and sources, the result is invariably lucid and readable; there is nothing of *le caché et l'obscur* here.

Jeuneau manifests a characteristically French love of ideas for their own sake; but this intellectual aestheticism is coloured with a certain discrete piety. For this reason his study of ideas is never 'merely historical' even though the author rarely inquires as to the 'truth value' of John's