

HISTORY, ETHICS AND EMERGENT PROBABILITY by Kenneth R. Melchin.
Lanham, Maryland. *University of America Press*. 1987. Pp xiv + 281.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is being forced on us by the great moral crises of the present day; yet there is no agreement on the right basic framework upon which to mount such collaboration. How are we to proceed in order to discover moral criteria for the guidance of society? How are we to relate scientific discoveries to the direction of economic, social and political life? The author is convinced that the problem of ethical foundations is connected with that of collaboration between disciplines. It is often said that ethics differs in kind from other inquiries; but rather less often does anyone make a suggestion as to exactly *what* kind of difference this is.

The author hopes to traverse this quagmire of intellectual problems by the use of Lonergan's conception of emergent probability. He remarks, and I believe rightly, that expositors of Lonergan have given insufficient attention to the connection between what this writer has to say about emergent probability on the one hand, and his work on ethics and the structure of history on the other. The book begins with a sketch of a number of conceptions of the nature of social ethics, relating them to the world-views with which they are associated. The second chapter further sets the scene for discussion of Lonergan's thought by treating the ideas of determinism, chance, and the roles of religion and tradition as they appear in the works of Immanuel Kant and Jacques Monod. So much by way of introduction; after an exposition of Lonergan's notion of emergent probability in chapters three and four, the author applies it to a consideration of practical and moral action, and to the philosophy of history. Chapter seven attempts an outline of the structure of historical development, and introduces the problem of historical evil. An epilogue draws the whole discussion together.

The style is not particularly graceful; but it is worth persevering with, given the importance of the problems with which the author is concerned, and the intelligence and resource with which he approaches them.

HUGO MEYNELL

MEISTER ECKHART — THE MAN FROM WHOM GOD HID NOTHING edited by Ursula Fleming. *Collins (Fount)*, London. 1988. Pp. 160. £2.95 Pb.

Ursula Fleming's recent anthology of citations from the German sermons and treatises of Meister Eckhart ostensibly represents a labour of love. She came to know Eckhart in 1951 from the two-volume 1924/1931 translation by Miss C. de B. Evans of Franz Pfeiffer's 1857 edition of Eckhart's German works. Understandably, she prefers the Evans translation and chose to utilize it even though her decision could 'rouse the ire of some academics'. But her anthology, she forewarns any rampant Eckhart scholars, is not meant for them or for 'the hippy fringe in the States who have adopted Eckhart as some sort of mystic guru'. It is meant, rather, for 'ordinary, intelligent people whose wish is to strengthen their knowledge of the Christian faith and to discover the truth ...' (pp. 13—14).

Such pre-emptive apologetics will not, I fear, quell the ire of academics or even ease the angst of the 'hippies' in the States (whose fringe is quite grey by now, but not from reading Eckhart, who has been adopted as a mystic guru mainly by New Age Christians not very unlike Ms. Fleming in her 1951 period). The ire at stake will rise not from dissatisfaction over Evans' poetic style, or even her occasionally wooden style, nor perhaps because of inaccuracies in translation, which in Evans' case were much fewer than in Blakney's 1941 edition still being promoted by Harper and Row. Rather, the scholars' dismay will stem from the use of a dated translation which, because it lacks the context of another seventy years of careful textual scrutiny and interpretation, can be misleading philosophically, theologically, and spiritually. To retreat to an inevitably inadequate presentation of Eckhart's teaching,