

of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity' (para 40).

I found this a nasty book, often painfully depressing to read. I hope very few people take the risk of having a similar experience.

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THE SENSE OF LANGUAGE, by Cyril Welch, *Martinus Nijhoff*, The Hague, 1973. 184 pp. Hfl. 31.50.

Those few authors who successfully make the journey to the centre of language where articulated meaning first emerges seldom bring back a coherent discursive account of their experiences. The rarified atmosphere seems to inflate their own language beyond recognition. Most authors, however, never manage to reach this centre. They get waylaid by any number of things: confused concepts, mirror reflections of the centre, mistaken avenues of approach, and so on.

Cyril Welch's *The Sense of Language* at first gives the impression that he has indeed made the journey and has returned to tell us about it. His own account, larded with epigrammatic observations and bloated concepts, points toward the experience of one who has witnessed to the origins of language and meaning. And the path he has chosen to reach the centre would seem to bear this out. Welch chose the notion of labour as his entry point, i.e., labour as the creative confrontation of man and world. Language and articulated meaning certainly do emerge in this confrontation and a careful account of this emergence is invaluable.

However, Welch's account grows hollow as his book proceeds, and the

hollowness cannot be explained by the mystifying powers that cloak the emergence of meaning. Rather, it becomes clear that, while Welch has found the entry into meaning, he has not followed it. He has lost hold of his notion of labour. While he is able to give a critique of Plato's elitist notion of the craftsman as the prototypical labourer, he fails to achieve any distance and critical perspective when speaking of our contemporary sense and problem of labour. He simply accepts the stock-in-trade sense of labour provided by his capitalist environment and its apologists. He attests to the alienation of industrialisation and the society it creates without pursuing the source of the alienation. As a result he never breaks out of the grasp of his culture and thus can only gaze down the path leading to the emergence of meaning through lenses his society has provided him. And it is this manner of gazing, not the immediate presence of emergent meaning, that accounts for his inflated language.

I can only say that, while Welch has more than his share of insights, his account falters. And this has happened not so much because he could not find the path, but because meaning mystified him too early in his journey.

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