

Kerr on Cartesianism in Catholic Thought: Right or Wrong?

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and
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In June we published the paper which Fergus Kerr had given at the Upholland Theological Consultation in April, "The Need for Philosophy in Theology Today" (p. 248—260). In it Father Kerr set out to establish his case by assembling examples of the neo-Cartesian presuppositions which he believes still pervade a lot of Western thinking, and Catholic theology especially, but are largely undiscerned. The paper has evoked many and varied reactions, ranging from enthusiastic praise to severe criticism. One of its critics, Father Illyd Trethowan, discusses it here, and Father Kerr replies.

Editor

I: ILLTYD TRETOWAN'S CRITICISM

The issue of *New Blackfriars* for June 1984 contains the text of Father Fergus Kerr's address to 'the gathering which founded the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain' in April 1984. A rough summary of his theme might go as follows. Catholic theology is profoundly imbued with 'a certain Cartesianism' from which we need to escape (pp. 248—9). Catholic Scholastic philosophy of 25 years ago, based on Aristotle, presents issues which are the subjects of current philosophical debate (although not of current interest to Catholic theologians) and resistance to Cartesianism would have the added advantage of contact with this philosophical debate (pp. 249—52). Catholic theology since Descartes was a struggle to resist Cartesianism, and Aristotelian Thomism was a weapon in the fight; but the battle was lost because the enemy had infiltrated too deeply (pp. 252—3). Examples of Cartesian influence in Catholic theology today are to be found in 'mentalism in prayer', 'interiorist volitionism in moral theology', a certain approach to human survival after death, Küng's presuppositions and Chirico's epistemology (pp. 253—7). A

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naive Cartesianism flourishes not only in Catholic theology but also in current philosophical debates about intelligence in machines (pp. 257–9). To practise an anti-Cartesian therapy would be to join others in remembering ‘the corporate and bodily dimensions of human life’ (p. 260).

I am grateful for the opportunity to express here some dissatisfactions with what Father Kerr has to say. A good deal of his matter emerges gradually (no doubt this suited the occasion of an oral delivery), so some jumping about his text will be needed. But by way of preliminary I shall first sketch in bare outline a view of the human individual which I hold, and explicate in various ways in what I have to say later on. A human individual’s awareness of the physical sensations caused by external objects’ impinging upon him is, I wish to say, an awareness of those objects in the effects they produce upon him. In being so aware, he is aware both of his body as the recipient of the sensory stimuli and of his awareness as something more than just physical sensations—and thus he is aware of his mind as different from his body. The relation between body and mind can, of course, be misunderstood (a crude separation of the two is not here proposed) and it cannot be adequately *described* because it is unique; but, I assert, it is the plain fact of experience that body and mind are distinguishable as different from each other. Further, while it seems that the development of the human mind as we know it requires the awareness of external objects through sensation, yet the mind is not limited to awareness of physical sensation: we can also (for example) perform reasonings, apprehend values and effect volitions. It is true of these operations, as well as of our awareness of external objects, that we know by direct experience that they cannot be regarded as just a matter of our bodies because in these operations too the individual is aware of his own mental existence, both inescapably and also (because only *in* his mental operations) obscurely.

Cartesianism

What, then, is the Cartesianism to which Fr Kerr objects? His first footnote explains it as ‘the conception of the mind according to which thoughts are essentially private to the person who is having them—what we might call the mentalist-individualistic conception of knowledge...’ An explanation does not immediately follow of why thoughts are not ‘essentially private’. The reader might wonder if the thesis being adopted is that of the late Professor Gilbert Ryle, according to which ‘private access’ to the contents of one’s own mind could make it impossible for me to know anything at all about any other mind. That is a thesis that has been contested not only by religious persons with a possible vested interest in minds but also by academics with no such interest. I should wish to say that thoughts

are, in a sense, 'private'; that is, we have an access to our own thoughts which is *ours* and can be nobody else's. At page 251, Fr Kerr tells us that 'Cartesian dualism in the usual sense... is the idea of constructing or justifying the reality of the world of external objects (including other minds) from some initial deliverance or datum of private and inward and absolutely certain experience—*cogito ergo sum*'. He adds 'This is where students of Catholic theology remain most vulnerable to Cartesianism...' I should have said that 'Cartesian dualism' as the expression is usually understood means the sort of distinction made by Descartes between mind and body, splitting man (as is commonly, but unfairly, said) in two. But this view is closely connected with Descartes' opinion about 'ideas' to which Fr Kerr is here referring, so the point is of little importance.

I shall spend a little time on "private and inward and absolutely certain experience". Dualism as here described by Fr Kerr is indeed deplorable: we cannot rightly argue to the existence of an external world simply on the basis of some modification of consciousness for which we can offer no definite reason, and we should not need to argue for it at all unless, like Descartes, we had got ourselves already into a pretty complete muddle. But there is normally, I would say, an absolutely certain experience of an external world, though not necessarily verbalized as such. This is an awareness at one and the same time of one's surroundings (of something 'out there') and of oneself; what is happening is that I am aware of being acted upon in some part of my body and of the source of the activity in its effects on my body, for it is found present there as *another* body. What is called 'sense-knowledge' (as in the Thomist-Aristotelian tradition) is the awareness (the basic function of mind) of my body as affected in certain ways. This is likely to be so much gibberish to many of those brought up on British academic philosophy, but without it what I want to say later would be certainly gibberish. For those for whom this makes sense I would urge a reading of D.J.B. Hawkins in *Crucial Problems of Modern Philosophy*, first published in 1957, chapter ten (he would be much better known if he had not refused to desert his original Catholic publisher).

What is Fr Kerr's attitude to this? He will not, I think, like talk of personal 'experience', which seems to be disregarded by Wittgensteinians. But he talks about certainty towards the end of his article: 'Much of the best effort of analytical philosophy since Wittgenstein returned to Cambridge in 1929 has been concentrated on trying to persuade us that this certainty of one's consciousness, far from being the initial datum, is the product of one's certainty of a whole variety of things, such as that you will not fall through the floor when you open the bedroom door and the like' (p.257). But it seems to me that while people will not say 'I am certain of my own

consciousness' in normal circumstances, nevertheless, they have 'lived' the fact of it. What I mean by 'certainty', however, is not the same as what (I suppose) Fr Kerr means by it. What I take Wittgenstein to mean by it in his *On Certainty* is an inability to deny things because they are so much bound up with the whole culture in which one lives (there is a touch of 'behaviourism', it might seem, in his appeals to 'nature', and I am also reminded of Hume's difficulty about believing in what he as a philosopher, thought about causality). On the other hand, I am talking of a positive awareness of physical contact. From my point of view, being certain that there is a sound floor outside my door is especially not on, because I live in a house where bits of floor are nearly always being upheaved somewhere.

What of the objection to 'private and inward' certainty? It seems to me that if we are to make a distinction, adequate to the known facts, between conscious and unconscious states, between mind and matter, we must 'point' to the former by such language. To reject the view that human awareness is itself just a bodily affair, I say that it is 'inner'. But, on this view, it is not, to speak strictly, *in space* at all.

Current philosophical debates

I shall now go back to the passages early in Fr Kerr's article where he gives a brief account of what scholastic philosophy was like for students of Catholic theology 25 years ago (on which, in principle, I am happy to agree with him) and connects it with current philosophical debate. Discussing Hume on causality, he refers to Professor Elizabeth Anscombe's inaugural lecture at Cambridge in 1971, and writes: 'She conceives herself... as making a first attempt to break the hold that the Humean notion of cause has on the minds of people in our culture' (p. 250). This can at least suggest that no one had been talking any sense about it before (not Austin Farrer, Hywel Lewis or Eric Mascall?). Wittgensteinians can show an *insouciance*.... There are several more references to Professor Anscombe in Fr Kerr's article. The next one I must quote at some length:

To mention Anscombe again, her lecture on 'The First Person given in Oxford in 1974, has set off a vigorous argument. She argues that the word 'I' cannot be a referring expression at all because the only thing that the word could refer to would be the 'Cartesian ego'. She insists, against the Cartesian tradition, that self-knowledge is knowledge of the human animal that one is, and introspection is but one method of gaining such knowledge and a pretty dubious one at that.... The self of which people think they have direct and interior consciousness, particularly by way of introspection, remains in the centre of philosophical debate...' (p. 251).

In regard to the 'vigorous argument', it may be remarked that philosophers of various persuasions have complained that, in this lecture, the plain deliverances of human experience are overlooked. 'I' is not condemned to refer to Descartes' self, which is thought of as having only a contingent connection with a body. It can refer to the self which is the subject of activities, mental (including willing and sensing) and physical, and so to the mind (or soul) as that which makes the body a human one, the determining factor (as it were) of human personality. The suggestion that, on any view except Fr Kerr's, self-knowledge is gained, originally or otherwise, by introspection astonishes me. On my view, it requires only attention in order to be made explicit. St Thomas's view that we become aware of our souls *in* being aware of our surroundings is a commonsense on which is no worse for being that. It seems sometimes as though Professor Anscombe supposed self-knowledge to be only the acquisition of psychological facts about this or that person which have no philosophical relevance, only a knowledge-that, not a direct knowledge-of. Knowledge-of in the form of an 'intentional union', as the scholastics called it, a union of subject and object, 'seeing' in the intellectual sense, is foreign to her mind (the best approach to it, for anyone interested, is perhaps aesthetics, where the fact of 'union' is especially apparent). To speak of a direct consciousness of self is not to speak of some esoteric form of experience. In self-knowledge, which is, normally at least, concurrent with knowledge of one's own surroundings, the self is both subject and object of knowledge, a state of affairs which is only verbally contradictory. It can be both vague (it is not in the 'foreground' of consciousness) and certain, perhaps becoming most obvious for most people when a moral obligation arises. The mind is recognized as standing in a unique relationship with the body from which it has 'emerged' and which it raises to human status (that is not, however, its sole business).

In connection with contemporary moral philosophy, Fr Kerr mentions Professor Anscombe's well-known paper about the present state of moral philosophy, published in 1958, which 'signalled the beginning of the modern reaction against Kantianism'. It would have been helpful to hear something about 'the modern reaction'. How different was it from the reactions of many philosophers who had been criticizing Kant's moral philosophy for so long? I hope not to underrate Professor Anscombe's formidable abilities and gladly recognize the usefulness of her paper; it was a fine piece of demolition work. But I wish that she were more constructive in this area. That too is what I should have wished of Fr Kerr's paper. It consists largely of rejections. It seems to me that there are many positive things that Catholics should be well qualified to say in the present state of philosophy in this country.

Catholic Theology

'The history of Catholic theology since Descartes', Fr Kerr writes at the beginning of his next section, 'may be read as the history of resistance to Cartesianism' (p. 252). It would be a rather selective reading. Even so, I wonder how many of the disastrous philosophical errors in the centuries which followed can be laid directly at Descartes' door. And it is not as though he wantonly destroyed a garden where everything had been just lovely. What matters more than all this, however, is the conclusion of the section: 'We prepared students of Catholic theology to refute other people's Cartesianism; we failed to identify the latent Cartesianism in every pious western Catholic's mind' (p. 253). I must quote at length the first example which is then offered of Cartesianism in Catholic theology, under the heading of 'Mentalism in prayer':

'Very often, when devout Catholics say that they do not pray, it turns out after some discussion that mental prayer is the only real prayer which they recognize—and their idea of mental prayer is tied to the picture of a steady stream of pious images passing before the mind's eye. When they are reminded of the plain fact with which they are of course perfectly familiar that there are ways of praying in which what is going on inside the head may be of little or no importance—they are relieved to be delivered from this Cartesian picture of the mind at prayer. They come back into their bodies, so to speak. They remember that praying in the sacramental liturgical Catholic tradition, whatever it may be elsewhere, is essentially corporeal and corporate—*incarnate*. Solitary meditation is as dependent upon physical participation in common prayer as private reflection is upon language.

It is not so much what Fr Kerr and his philosophical associates say as what they do not say about the mind's functions that is so disquieting. Certainly 'a steady stream of pious images passing before the mind's eye' is no sort of prayer. Indeed the liturgy is the heart of the matter. But 'physical participation' in the liturgy does not exclude everything else except physical presence and physical activity. The business of the exercise to which everything about it is supposed to be leading is traditionally called 'raising the heart and mind to God'—'mind or heart, if you prefer' I should say, in certain company. It should not need to be added that we are doing this properly only if we are recognizing ourselves as members of a society and trying to identify our interests with those of others in our life as a whole. This raising of the mind to God in the liturgy is done primarily in terms of—not necessarily holdings-forth about—thanksgiving for God's gifts to us in Christ—a sufficiently wide and rich field to engage us indefinitely, but

there may come a time in which we can stay with a synoptic view of it which deepens rather than widens and which can concentrate itself into just the worship of God in which there is nothing further to be said. And it is obviously desirable that this should be gone on with at other times when circumstances allow. A contemplative vocation, I suggest, may consist in the realization that such circumstances are on offer. It was this sort of theology, presumably, that led to the practice of a 'private' thanksgiving after Mass, now a thing of the past, but needed more than ever now that the liturgy has largely ceased to be a thing of beauty or even an opportunity for a little quiet. What, then, is to be said when people tell one that they do not pray because they cannot conjure up (or fail to see the point of) 'a steady stream of pious images passing before the mind's eye'? These people, we are told, have forgotten that liturgy is for prayer and are delighted to find that they need not bother about anything else, 'what is going on inside the head', in particular—would they identify with that 'raising the heart or mind to God'? Should they not be given some instruction about liturgical *worship* on the lines indicated above? Prayer can be expressed through the body, and this may help to deepen it, but it is a function not of the body as such but of the mind as such. Fr Kerr apparently denies such a distinction: prayer is 'essentially corporeal'—that would appear to mean that a non-corporeal element in prayer is, if it exists at all, something dispensable, an epiphenomenon. He may say that he is not regarding solitary meditation as unimportant any more than he regards private reflection as unimportant. In that case, what is it important *for*? Why should not these devout Catholics be told something about that? It is this persistent silence which gives the impression of a *dismissal* of the Catholic contemplative tradition. I read the passage quoted with consternation.

The second example given of 'latent Cartesianism' (pp.253—254) is called 'interiorist volitionism in moral theology'. Here we return to Professor Anscombe, this time on abuses of 'the principle of double effect'. There have been indeed such abuses. But I am unable to see that this has anything to do with the question about 'interior' acts of will, whether there are such events at all. Fr Kerr has referred earlier (pp. 251—2) to 'the highly original and imaginative exposure of "interior volitionism"' by Brian O'Shaughnessy, in his two-volume work, *The Will*. If this means that I delude myself when I experience the making of a decision to do something tomorrow as an event which has a non-bodily character about it, an event undiscoverable by anyone unless I let on about it, then there is a deadlock. Perhaps it means something else, but this is an opportunity for making myself clear on what I take to be the important issue.

The third example (pp. 254—256) is a letter issued by the Holy

Office in 1979, referring to the 'subsistence, after death, of the spiritual element, endowed with consciousness and will in such a way that...the "human I" ("humanum ego") itself subsists...', although without its own body. Fr Kerr's reaction to this is to quote St Thomas's remarks 'that the soul...is not the whole man' and that 'my soul is not I' (ego). But then it would be rather a truncated 'I' than no 'I' at all. But in any case', he continues, 'why the "human I"—as opposed to what other "I"? The non-human "I"? Angels, perhaps. Fr Kerr's audience might have been more interested to consider what seems now to be a tolerated theological opinion, that there is no *gap* between death and the general judgement in which the soul finds itself separated from its body. (Rahner, *Theological Investigations XVII*, p. 115). Then we have another reference to Professor Anscombe on 'The First Person': 'It is easy, as she suggests, to imagine a language without any first person inflexions. We could each use his or her own name.... A sense of one's identity would then come, not from any supposed developing "I"-consciousness, but from the impact upon one, day after day, of an endless variety of stimulations, caresses, threats, schooling, civilisation etc. The temptation to say that one's identity springs from some inner private deliverance withers away'. I should prefer to say that it springs from whatever you like to call it that turned certain animals into human beings by enabling them to know and love God. The answer to that was, if I remember rightly (it is some thirty years since I took part in a debate on this matter with Wittgensteinians), that it is a matter not for philosophers but for theologians (who, I suppose, take it 'on faith'). An appeal to experience is thus ruled out as made only by people who have yielded to a 'temptation'.

The fourth and fifth examples (pp. 256—257) are Hans Küng and Peter Chirico. It is amazing, I agree, that Küng should claim certainty of his own consciousness and urge people to *trust* in the existence of God, to make a decision about it, because they can only *trust* in the existence of an external world. But it is the fact that people who think about these things at all are very often in this sceptical state of mind, absurd as it is. What they need is not just rebuke, but an analysis of human experience which does not leave out or underplay our specifically human powers. Fr Kerr suggests that an unwillingness to accept 'the anti-Cartesian programme' which 'Wittgenstein and other philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition... have been conducting for nearly fifty years now' may be due to the fact that 'we are inclined to resist the idea that we depend so radically upon others'. No sane person could deny that we do depend radically on others, though not to the extent that we can see nothing to be true for ourselves. I also agree that Chirico is wrong to say: 'We never recognize or see another being in itself, we only recognize directly the effects of its activity

towards us...'. What is wrong with this, for anyone who accepts the rough analysis of perception which I have offered above, is that we do know directly a body which is acting upon us—in its effects, although all we know of it is that it is present there as their cause (and that is all that we need to know about it). Thus, according to a tradition almost unknown to British academic philosophers but flourishing on the *other side of the Channel*, God can be known as active in the world around us and (especially) in our own mental or 'spiritual' activity. This is perhaps the thesis that causes most offence to Wittgensteinians. Anyone interested might try to get hold of Cardinal de Lubac's *Sur les chemins de Dieu* (English translation: *The Discovery of God*).

Machines

The final topic in Fr Kerr's article is the significance of 'Cognitive Science', the reduction of human minds to computer states, which has been called the 'New Cartesianism'. Fr Kerr allows that 'it is unjust to Descartes' to place such notions 'under his shade', adding that 'he may have disembodied the mind but at least it was the mind that he disembodied'. But he suggests that the ambitions of 'Cognitive Science', which involve doing without bodies of flesh and blood, are part of 'the continuing attractions of this Cartesian view of the mind'. He goes on: 'Isn't this the ancient dream that intelligence is superhuman?... The desire to think away the corporeal and the corporate—the deplorable incarnate plight—remains as powerful in our culture as ever'. The desire is certainly a shocking one, but I wonder how widespread in fact it is, and it seems to me that the desire to get rid of the 'spiritual element' is a rather more obvious and dangerous one. It is greatly to my regret that I find so much in Fr Kerr's paper to disagree with. Writing what seems likely to cause annoyance is not enjoyable. If he can show me that I have misconstrued him, I shall do my best to make amends. It seemed to me that I had an opportunity, not to be missed, of suggesting that there is more than one way in which an English Catholic may philosophize.

I should like to indicate in conclusion why I consider the issues I raise above to be important. It is because Fr Kerr's apparent exclusion or at least disregarding of the spiritual element in man might seem to have disastrous theological consequences. This will be clear in part from what I have said above about worship and prayer. I propose now to develop what I have said about an awareness of God.

Our awareness of the 'self', though mediate, is *direct*. It is found only *in* its activities, just as the bodies around us are found only *in* their activities as directed upon us (the cause *in* the effect). So this is not only a mediate knowledge but a tenuous one. And there is an awareness of God *in the medium* of this knowledge of the 'self' which

is easier to overlook and requires more attention. It is an awareness of God in so far as acting on the 'self', actuating and attracting it, doubly mediate, then, and limited, but still direct; this experience (described by St Augustine, for instance, in his *Confessions*) can be convincing. That God can be found 'in the soul' has been taken for granted by innumerable Christians down the ages.

It may be said that this is not a philosophical matter but a theological one: a philosopher is *concerned with natural activities, not with supernatural ones*. A Christian thinker, however, will be expected to integrate what he accepts as a theologian with what he accepts as a philosopher. In the Catholic tradition at least, it has been normal to conclude that there must be in the natural a 'point of insertion' for the supernatural. It must be something to do with man's mind or soul, which must mean that it is capable of contact with God. Nature is *for* grace: grace is being offered us all the time; we are supernaturalized in so far as we accept it. That seems to be widely agreed nowadays. It follows that there is a natural knowledge of God (necessary, sometime and somehow, not the mere possibility of it), for otherwise we could not know that this offer was being made and that everything depended on our decision. Then we are still 'in the natural order', although we know that we are summoned by the Good, the Absolute.

It may be useful to compare with this what is said by the 'transcendental Thomists', Rahner in particular. Despite its alarming name, this school (deriving from Maréchal) is making a proposal which can be summed up quite simply. It is that the 'drive' of the intellect, its going on from one thing to another without being ever satisfied, is unintelligible unless it is destined for the Infinite. This seems to me *pointing* to the truth but in a way which is not really convincing (no logical argument for God, in itself, ever is). Sometimes the argument seems to turn into a claim that God is described 'on the horizon' or 'in the corner of the eye', although there can be no hope of focussing on him. There are many who regard the discovery of God to which I have been alluding as capable of producing absolute conviction and as more consonant with the character of religious awareness, which can always develop—it is not *stuck* 'on the horizon' or 'in the corner of the eye'. To those convinced by argument we can suggest that they go on attending to the possibility of God's presence in the soul and that it may declare itself in time. 'Transcendental Thomists' often say that they are only asking us to recognize what we are already doing. But this seems to be saying that being in God's presence and knowing that this is so are all one. When Rahner tells us (repeating Blondel and so many others) that the acceptance of absolute moral obligation is the acceptance of God, I am in complete agreement if this means that what is *actually known* in each case is

identical in all but name (people just do not realize that what they have encountered *is* the God of religion). It must be remembered that in *Maréchal's time an intellectual union with God*, however inchoate, would have been identified with 'intuition' or 'immediate knowledge' and therefore charged with unorthodoxy.

It is my submission that the distinction between 'direct' and 'immediate' is the clue to the solution of the main problem in this area.

Author's note:

I am most grateful to my friend Rex Tomlinson for a reorganization of this article which has made it much easier to follow.

I.T.

II: FERGUS KERR'S REPLY

No doubt, as Fr Trethowan says, "there is more than one way in which an English Catholic may philosophize"—but, to my mind, we do best to start where we are. To concede that what one says "is likely to be so much gibberish to many of those brought up on British academic philosophy" seems to admit from the outset that we cannot do philosophy in ways that make sense in the culture to which we belong and in which we seek the truth. The theme of my paper—to a gathering intent on founding a theological association—was (provocatively!) that the interesting problems in theology today are often rooted in the underlying *philosophy*. And we were intent on founding a theological society in Britain—which is why I referred to certain well-known papers by Elizabeth Anscombe: everybody regards her as one of the finest British philosophers of her generation. These papers, as I tried to suggest, set an agenda that would guide critical reflection in Catholic theology today, as well as connect it with issues of wider intellectual concern in this country. One may rail about 'fashion', but it is really no use telling people that it has all been said before by philosophers who are, no doubt unjustly, entirely neglected: the discussion would never begin. It seemed an advantage, on this occasion, that she is herself a devout Catholic. I could as easily have taken Michael Dummett's much-discussed work, as Donald MacKinnon did in the Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society in 1976: the agenda would have had a more distinctly 'metaphysical' turn. I am not unaware of existing work of the sort that I desire: *A Theology of Speech*, by Ian Davie, comes to mind (published in 1973).

Objections to 'Cartesian psychology' need not be framed in Wittgensteinian terms. Fr Trethowan's penchant for Continental philosophy is congenial to me. The difference between us, as I

understand it, may best be defined with reference to the writings of Martin Heidegger, the most taboo of all the Continentals in the British philosophical scene.

The view of the human individual which Fr Trethowan outlines as a preliminary to his criticisms of my paper neatly exemplifies the kind of Cartesianism which Heidegger sought to correct in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). It is appropriate, so Fr Trethowan assumes, to *begin* with the human individual's *awareness* of the physical sensations caused by the impingement upon him of external objects. In Heideggerian terms, Fr Trethowan takes as basic and foundational something that is in fact a relatively sophisticated experience. Heidegger's view of the human individual is, to my mind, both fair to the facts and remarkably 'Wittgensteinian'. Instead of the bare perceptual cognition of what is 'just there' we have to start from the manifold practical immersion in things as they come to hand, in the various ways in which they help or hinder in the shaping of our human world. To feel the rain on one's skin, or to isolate sensory stimuli, is already to practise a fairly advanced technique of disengagement from the hurly-burly which is one's native element as an agent in conversation with others of one's kind. The development of the human mind requires training in the multiple skills that coping with life in the company of others always involves—and awareness of external objects through sheer physical sensation comes quite far down the line, after walking, talking, hammering, and much else. The mind is certainly not 'limited to awareness of physical sensation'—that is already quite an achievement. Such awareness is a relatively specialised response, characteristic of artists and (in a different way) physiologists. It is much easier for us to reason, appreciate, and decide—which does not mean that we easily do so *well*. But the relationship that we have to the things among which we find ourselves is *coping with them—seeing to them, rather than simply seeing them, let alone having an awareness of them as the cause of physical sensations*. Seeing things as mere objects that impinge upon us is a relatively rare and sophisticated way of dealing with them. To be aware of things in detachment from the pragmatically construed and purposively coloured context in which we deal with them is possible at all, as Heidegger would say, only because there can be an interruption in the way in which we ordinarily treat them. Awareness of objects in this way is possible only when we have mastered a great number of other skills. Fr Trethowan must be very familiar with all this. With his starting with the human individual's sheer awareness of value-neutral objects, "the road is completely blocked to seeing the derivative character of all sensory and intellectual awareness" (*Sein und Zeit*, page 98).

The primary phenomenon, for Heidegger, is that we dwell together in a single world, collaborating with each other physically

and culturally in the ways of acting which include, at a certain fairly late point, the techniques of disengagement with which Fr Trethowan (and Descartes) begin. Such Heideggerian considerations link up very easily with Wittgenstein's insistence on our coming to understand that thought depends on language, and language depends on a way of behaving: a language-game is based upon a way of *relating* (Zettel, n^o 541), speech did not issue from any kind of *ratiocination* (*On Certainty*, n^o 475), etc. In his recent J.R. Jones Memorial Lecture (Swansea, 1981), Norman Malcolm shows how the persistent desire to make language, and all meaningful behaviour, rest upon and emerge from mental states or attitudes that would be as they are even if we were not animals, is precisely the 'rationalism', as he calls it, that Wittgenstein sought to expose, particularly in *On Certainty*.

Given that (as it seems to me) Fr Trethowan's preliminary view of the human individual aligns him with the residual Cartesianism which Heidegger sought to undermine so long ago, his objections to my paper become intelligible, but hardly answerable.

I will not defend Professor Anscombe's writings. They were chosen to exemplify an agenda, and in any case, as I mentioned, I cannot always follow her. Fr Trethowan would have to deal with the Holy Office censures from the late 17th century onwards before he concludes that my proposed reading of the propagation of Thomism as a defence against Cartesianism is absurd.

That there is an individualism that works against common prayer in western-European Catholicism is surely a platitude. That it is connected with a spirituality that has long disregarded posture, breathing, etc., or been severely repressive about such matters, is equally obvious—particularly when one notes the enthusiasm with which people who have 'given up prayer' turn to certain other traditions in which body and mind are not split apart. To say that prayer is "a function not of the body as such but of the mind as such" does indeed seem to me a harmful utterance. As far as 'raising the heart and mind to God' is concerned, it seems to me (for instance) that singing in church, chanting the psalms, and the like is raising the mind and heart to God. I mean: singing, in the appropriate circumstances, isn't simply *showing to outsiders* that one's mind and heart are internally raised to God—it is *actually raising them*. Of course, one may be pretending; one may be mouthing the words but secretly working out *The Times* crossword or indulging in lascivious or gluttonous desires and daydreams. Such possibilities make the split between mind and body plausible—but the sooner we get back to the human being, living and whole, and leave behind the philosopher's construct of the embodied soul, the more sensibly we shall be able to talk about these matters.

There is certainly deadlock if Fr Trethowan believes that his keeping to himself, in his head, a decision to do something tomorrow makes it an

event which has a non-bodily character about it in some way that is radically different from what he might have achieved by noting it down in his private diary. As Wittgenstein keeps asking: why are the thoughts that I keep in my head supposed to be so much more important metaphysically than the ones that you can read on my face? (It is surely not that the secret thoughts or desires of a man's heart are always or even often more sinful than the ones that anybody can see in what he does.)

Whatever Wittgensteinians were saying thirty years ago, I should be inclined to say that certain animals were turned into human beings by ways of interacting that eventually developed the music to praise God. In his well-known paper on Wittgenstein (in *The Philosophical Review*, 1962), Stanley Cavell puts it much more beautifully: it is, he writes, "a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of significance and fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation.... Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying".

To 'rebuke' people for being in the sceptical state of mind upon which (it seems to me) Hans Küng's argument for the existence of God relies would indeed be cruelly pointless. I had hoped that my paper outlined an agenda for Catholic theologians that included a 'therapy' that would take such scepticism as seriously and sympathetically as necessary.

Fr Trethowan must know that Wittgensteinians are not the only ones who have problems about knowing God as active in our own mental activity—Thomists, of the non-transcendental sort, have problems also.

Finally, my paper certainly "consists largely of rejections". To my mind, theology today is often undermined by unadmitted philosophical prejudices that are in fact incompatible with it. There is much work to be done. It will often have to be critical before it becomes constructive. But that is why it is exciting and worthwhile to be doing theology now—and why it is good that the Catholic community in Britain has moved towards creating a new forum for theological exchange.