

ical. On the other hand, some philosophers of religion seem to be working in complete isolation from what is going on at the growing points in other areas of philosophy – in connection, for example, with ‘varieties of reference’: a topic of obvious theological importance. The game is already lost if problems in philosophy of religion are not the same as problems everywhere else. The autonomy of philosophy of religion would certainly be a dead end.

So what did Wittgenstein mean by the phrase ‘form of life’? The best discussion is by John Hunter (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1968). The key remark runs as follows (par. 25): “Commanding, questioning, telling stories, chatting, belong to our natural history just as much as walking eating, drinking, playing”. Wittgenstein, throughout these early remarks in the *Investigations*, wants to get our minds back into our bodies. According to the picture of language which he is trying to destroy, we speak to one another because we have thoughts to exchange. We are inclined to say that animals do not speak because they lack the mental capacities. It is as if we argued: “Animals don’t think – therefore they don’t speak”. But Wittgenstein wants us to rediscover what is obvious – that speaking – conversation – is a biological or organic phenomenon. It is easy to imagine a language, he says (par. 19); but to imagine a language is inevitably to imagine a ‘form of life’ such as interactions like giving and obeying commands, asking and answering questions, etc. We have to recall the *function*, e.g. of commanding, in the practice of the language (par. 21). The *speaking* of the language is always a component part of some ‘form of life’ (par.

23). On this account, then, a ‘form of life’ is some reaction, or interaction, which is biologically organic as well as culturally refined. If we find it hard to get hold of this idea it is surely (as Hunter says) because our inclination is to say that what is learned, what is done at will, or what is intelligent, must ‘transcend’ the merely biological. Anything else seems to verge on behaviourism – precisely what Wittgenstein feared. Anyway, the phrase ‘form of life’, as it comes into the *Investigations*, is intended to restore commanding, questioning, etc. to the whole complex of reactions to their environment and to each other which compose the ‘natural history’ of human beings.

Thus it could never make sense to discuss the phenomenon of religion in terms of a ‘form of life’ in Wittgenstein’s sense. A ‘form of life’ is something ‘animal’ – ‘something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified’ (*On Certainty*, pars. 358–359). What he has in mind is the immense variety of instinctive reactions and relationships that constitute human life (*Zettel*, par. 545). Without some such primitive reactions the phenomenon of religion would no doubt be impossible. He listed ‘praying’ as a ‘language-game’ (par. 23). Religion thus depends on the fact of innumerable ‘forms of life’ – not many of which need to be overtly ‘religious’. That idea leads back to the point that D. Z. Phillips makes (e.g. p 72): philosophy of religion gets whatever life it has from the lives of the faithful. But if we no longer hear his word it does not follow that God has fallen silent.

FERGUS KERR O P

WOMEN, NATURE AND REASON by Carol McMillan
Basil Blackwell 1982. £12.50.

The author’s interesting project is to argue that traditionally feminine qualities and activities (intuition, emotion, nurturing) have been undervalued, and deemed to be less than human, because they lack that element of objective reasoning which some have thought to be the faculty that distinguishes us from the animals. McMillan shows that this distinction is a false

one; and equally false is the assumption that women who undertake nurturing in the private realm are somehow not a real part of human society, which has been identified with traditionally masculine engagement in the world of public affairs. Thus she argues that simply to press for women’s right to drop their responsibility for children and plunge into the ‘real’

world of employment on the same terms as men is not so much to attack the patriarchy, as to accept without question men's own valuation of the relative unimportance of what women have always done. So far, so good. McMillan has uncovered a crucial area of dualism to challenge, and made the valid point that true liberation for women requires not less than a total shift of values. As a mother, I appreciated her riposte to the charge that mothering is a mindless activity, and that maternal love is too uncritical to be genuinely moral. And as a feminist, I welcome her analysis thus far.

But here lies the problem. The book's serious project is marred by its embattled approach towards feminists, and the author seems at many points to be more concerned with scoring anti-feminist points than with achieving a re-evaluation of women's contribution to human society. In fact, much of her analysis could as well be argued from within a feminist framework as from outside it, and indeed it has been. But on the strength of a few writers only, mainly from works written ten or more years ago, McMillan characterizes all feminists as despising motherhood and nurturance, and anxious to have male-type careers – and thus she accuses them of accepting patriarchal values. While this criticism could legitimately be levelled at certain types of liberal feminism, it is quite inadequate as an overall critique. For one thing, the author does not even mention the well-established feminist concept of the 'woman-identified woman': for another, she does not appear to be aware of writers (like Rosemary Ruether) who have argued against precisely the philosophical dualism that McMillan herself identifies. Nor does she engage with the extensive feminist work in the last decade on child rearing practice (E. G. Dinnerstein). I found it especially perplexing, considering her thesis that in the area of nurturing it is not necessarily appropriate to propose scientific or abstract general theories, that she herself draws only on theoretical feminist work, ignoring the enormous range of recent empirical studies. Feminists, like McMillan, have questioned conventional academic contempt for the 'subjective'

approach, and have published the stories of individual women's lives and choices (e.g. in the collection, *Why Children?*).

It is reasonable to point out, as the author does, that, because of the physical facts of pregnancy, birth, and lactation, women's relationships to their children is different from men's; and that for women to emulate the majority of men in the minimal amount of time they devote to children is neither congenial to most women, nor in the interests of the children. But is the author really intending to suggest that women's lives and expectations should therefore be defined solely in terms of primary maternal preoccupation with infants? Her largely uncritical admiration for Rousseau (untinged by any consideration of recent feminist scholarship on his 'Sophie' and 'Emile'), and her failure to consider the choices open to women whose children are no longer infants, imply that she is.

McMillan's anti-feminism finally leads her into absurdity. Throughout the course of the book, she takes as the focus of her attack on feminists the eccentric work of Shulamith Firestone, whose fantasies about technological substitutes for pregnancy and childbirth she regards as typical. McMillan contends that feminists are not so much engaged in struggle against patriarchy (a social institution) as against the existence of biological differences as such, and therefore envisage no liberation for women until these (and not the social constraints) are eliminated. Feminist writers whose perspective is rather different from Firestone's are, it is here suggested, simply not being quite candid. For instance, McMillan tries to make a couple of observations by Simone de Beauvoir, on the relative painfulness of human childbirth among mammalian species, carry the astonishing conclusion that de Beauvoir (who wrote the classic text on the social construction of femininity) is *really* complaining about the oppression of biology itself. Having misrepresented mainstream feminist analysis as preposterously anti-nature – not to mention philosophically naive – the author then enjoys demolishing it.

What the author never confronts in this book is the issue which feminists

probably *are* united in considering central, and that is the reality of power. Where society values the distinctive contribution of one group over another, the group that is deemed subordinate will not be given a voice or a means of valuing itself on its own terms. And that is why even Carol McMillan has not found it sufficient as a

woman to devote herself to motherhood, and to doing it well. She has needed to publish a theoretical and philosophical work in its defence, precisely because the public arena, and the theoretical model, are the only terms on which, under patriarchy, she will be heard at all.

JANET MORLEY

OSCAR ROMERO, BISHOP AND MARTYR by James Brockman S J
Sheed & Ward, London. £7.50.

Who in 1972 attacked the Jesuits of El Salvador for preaching 'false liberation'? Who chose an Opus Dei priest as his confessor and urged the Pope to beatify Mgr Escrivà de Balaguer? Who attacked Jon Sobrino's *Christology at the Crossroads* as leading to confusion? Who thought the seminary professors lax because they allowed their charges to doff their soutanes for sport? Answer: Oscar Romero. He doesn't sound like a 'progressive'.

Of course it will be said that he was 'converted' and 'radicalized'. So he was, out of obedience to Vatican II and Medellín and as a response to the oppression of his people. But he saw continuity in his life. He wrote to Pope John Paul II to defend himself: 'From the beginning of my ministry in the archdiocese, I believed in conscience that God asked of me and gave me a pastoral strength that contrasted with my "conservative" temperament'.

He trod a lonely path, despite the crowds. Among the bishops, Romero could count on the support only of Rivera y Damas, who succeeded him after an unaccountable delay of three years. The remaining four were in league with the Nuncio, Emmanuele Gerarda, and Cardinal Mario Casariego in nearby Guatemala. They all believed in giving governments the 'benefit of the doubt', a generous attitude, but there was no end to it.

They also thought that Romero had fallen into the clutches of the *marxisant* Jesuits and – it came to the same thing – had gone off his head. They bombarded Rome with memoranda urging his removal. Archbishop Quarracino of Argentina (now President of CELAM) made a visitation of the archdiocese. He recommended that an apostolic administrator should be named, while Romero would keep merely the title

of archbishop. He was killed before this catastrophic scheme could be put into effect.

Not esteemed by his ecclesiastical peer-group, Romero had, however, the support of the people and most of his priests. But that merely led his critics to talk of 'demagoguery' and 'personality cult'. He was a dangerous man because of the simplicity of his insights.

Here are two. In El Salvador 'the conflict is not between the government and the Church; it is between the government and the people. The Church is with the people and the people are with the Church, thanks be to God'. And he told Pope John Paul II: 'In my country it is very difficult to speak of anti-communism, because anti-communism is what the right preaches, not out of love for Christian sentiments, but out of a selfish concern to preserve its own interests'.

Just before the papal visit to El Salvador last March the second quotation was used on a poster showing Romero and John Paul together. The posters mysteriously vanished; no one would say who gave the orders for their removal. The Pope, having prayed at Romero's tomb, later pleaded with the crowd that 'no ideological interest should exploit his sacrifice as pastor'. Who was that aimed at? Clearly not the government: it wants Romero forgotten, buried once and for all. The remark was addressed to 'the left' or – since there is a civil war on – to the guerrillas.

Fr Brockman's admirable book is dry and unemotional in tone. He reaches the parts other episcopal biographers have never reached. Romero's father had a number of illegitimate children. On becoming archbishop, Romero had to pay the Congregation of Bishops \$750 for