REVIEWS

ONTOLOGICAL COMMITMENT. Edited by Richard H. Severns; Athens, Georgia U. S. A.; The University of Georgia Press. 1974 pp. X. 137. $ 4·50.

This small volume contains essays given at a 1970 Philosophy Conference sponsored by the University of Georgia Department of Philosophy. Although the general theme of the conference was Ontological Commitment, there is still no consensus as to the basic entity or entities constituting reality, the participants have arrived at no general agreement as to ' What there is. '

Richard H. Severens of the University of Georgia and Robert Vorsteg of Wake Forest University focus upon Quine's logically oriented dictum, approached through the channel of linguistic reference and framed within the context of the logic of quantification, that ' to be is to be the value of a variable. ' The discussion is ably and competently carried out, although Quine's position is not unreservedly adhered to, for he is accused of not penetrating through to an analysis of the ontological criterion in depth. Syntactical devices fail to reach the criterion itself, and the conclusion is that linguistic reference alone can never provide existential import; it is ' no sure guide to ontological commitment. '

A paper by Romane Clark of Indiana University, replied to by Scott A. Kleiner of the University of Georgia takes up the question of adverb modifiers. The claim is that modifiers attach to predicates rather than to subjects, it is suggested that there should be developed a new terminology in order to specify various types of modifier with its own special pattern of inference and without the need for any very extensive ontological commitment for the modifier or modifiers concerned. There would be no appeal to special entities, nor any commitment to an ontolgy of events either, what the authors in effect are saying is that, although they ostensibly are carrying out a search for an ontological criterion, they have not found it in their selected area of investigation.

Ths question of an ontological commitment to a deity is examined by Bowman L. Clarke of the University ofGeorgia with a critical reply by John Heintz of the University of Alberta. These two papers

more so than the others probably come closest to what might be termed a traditional ontology. Clearly argued with the aid of logical symbolism, the essays centre around the conditions required for one to be committed to some theory that establishes the truth of the existence of God. That God exists necessarily, however, seems to be equated with God's existence actually, but the issue as to whether it may first be required to assume Being in order to explain existence of any kind is not raised.

Charles S. Chihara of the University of California and Robert G. Durton of the University of Georgia return to Quine's criterion and his requirement that any theory of ontological commitment be a deductively closed system. Then the question is discussed as to whether a theory of this kind does, after all, need to be a closed theory. Something that does seem to be more certain, however, is that the object required by such a theory must be found to exist. But this viewpoint is surely an unnecessarily limited one to take, for in any theory it is exactly the object of the hypothesis that may not necessarily exist at all, we verify the hypothesis of a theory but not its object. Neither need the object exist in order to be the value of a variable, for variable terms could be adequately valued in the formal language of an epistemology simply according to the universal notions of affirmation and denial rather than according to objects otherwise existing.

Still another theme runs as follows : the language–linked ontological criterion of a theory is the range of values of the variables of the theory, although, the ontic commitment may be narrower than the language system in which the theory is expressed. This approach, which in general defends Quine's criterion, is given by James Willard Oliver of the University of South Carolina and James F. Harris Jr. of the College of William and Mary. Although Oliver's paper is well–documented, clearly presented and for the most part endorsed by Harris, here again we find essays on ' what there is ' clinging mainly to the logical approach as well as looking hard to pragmatic considerations in endeavouring to ascertain reality. The question of the assumption of the criterion properties (corresponding to the predicates of a statement) is thought to be of concern, but the issue could be made one of assuming not the properties, but of simply and necessarily assuming only a bare

assumption. The actual existence of a thing can hardly be said to be ontic or necessary, since in the existence of anything we already possess a proliferation to the extremes of its sufficiency much in excess of its strict necessity.

L. B. Cebik of the University of Tennesee and John Beversluis of Butler University branch out into a somewhat different field, examining the ontological status of events in contradistinction to objects. But a more penetrating analysis could have found far more similarities between event and object, ontologically speaking, than the authors have chosen to project. For example, objects have observable and predicable attributes and so do observable events; we select the relevant data for objects and try to interpret this data and we do much the same for events,

The main issue of this series of essays, having turned upon just what is meant by ' the value of a variable ', could have brought into sharper focus the question of whether we should be thinking in terms exclusively of reference or in terms of meaning. Exactly what the ' objects ' of a theory should be is haradly made clear. For the most part, the essayists insist upon reaching their ontic criterion by means of a linguistic approach, through the schemata of logic, through the values of a variable and at the same time are convinced that the variable must be associated with and satisfied by objects that exist. It is difficult to shake loose the *existing* or sometimes even the physical object from epistemological and ontological thinking. Nowhere in the pages of this book on ontology do we find a full discussion of being as the criterion or object of reality. Nowhere do we find Aristotle's concept of being as being, which should hold a central place in any approach to metaphysics, touched upon.

In all, then, we have a considerable amount of relevant information contained in six essays, each with its reply, whether the accounts concerning the ontic criterion reveal more truth than they conceal is another matter. Many of the references in the bibliographies are of comparatively recent date, having been published within, say, the last thirty years. Only Clarke and Heintz in essay number three pretend to be at all historical in their research.

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Paul Tillich : *An Essay on the Role of Ontology in his Philosophical Theology*. By Alistair M. Macleod. London, England : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Agincourt Ontario, Canada : Methuen. 1973. pp. 157. $ 6.50.

Paul Johannes Tillich grew up in Prussia where his father was an Evangelical minister, but emigrated from Nazi Germany in 1933 at the age of 47. Tillich is described as a Christian Existentialist, a constractive thinker and an innovator, and as a theologian in the United states in the years remaining to him he not only spoke to the modern world but spoke to it so that it would listen.

Tillich devoted a large part of his life to philosophical theology and was especially concerned to point out the contributions that philosophy is able to make to theology. An admirer of Parmenidean thought his main interest appears to center on the endeavour to answer the ontological question wich may be taken as common to both disciplines, i. e., What is the nature and meaning of being? Professor Macleod of Queen's University singles out and critically analyses this aspect of Tillich's work. Gathering relevant material from Tillich's writings in a closely argued presentation and with a strenuous pursuit of fine detail he carries out a well-rounded and sometimes almost a laboured discussion. It is a serious attempt to expose both the strengths and weaknesses of Tillich's system.

Always strong on ontology, Tiilich clings to an interdependence between ontology and theology, but it may be that in surrendering a personal God to an impersonal metaphysics he has sacrificed too much. Being-itself is identified with reality or God, God is simply the religious name for that which concerns man ultimately. Tillich relies on his ontological approach to the extent of employing a philosophical interpretation of reality as a basis for his criticism of the traditional theistic proofs for the existence of God, and rather than accept a revelatory answer to the basic questions about God and being, he shows preference for the ontological solution.

Although being-itself is the same as God for Tillich, being never seems to be considered absolutely apart from something or other that goes with it. There is much talk of being-itself, being as such being, as being,the power of beings and we also hear abont the elements of being, being that has being, being derived from being and the structu-

res common to all things that have being. As well, there comes into view the typical Existentialist misapprehension that somehow being discloses itself in immediate experience, in short being seems to be indistinguishable from the being of existence. Tillich's ontology never succeeds in depicting being as ulterly unpredicated even from itself, being without mention even of being-itself, or being where God is the name of a reality that has only worship for its meaning. Tillich insists on assigning some kind of structures to a being in which every being participates, whereas pure being should never be thought of as a commonable entity at all and should have no structure to share whatsoever. There is God as Godhead in purity of being and God in existence who creates, a distinction that meister Eckart, the thirteenth century Dominican would have made, but one which Tillich very much blurs over and appears never to make.

This book is a carefully written work; Macleod spares no effort to probe the depths of those distinctive features of Tillich's system that he has elected to examine. Although the study of reality may be considered to be philosophical one, it also lies along a borderline with theology, and whether or not one fully agrees with ontology as a profitable pursuit, it is a discipline that indisputably attempts to deal with basic issues and with a subject matter that is fundamental to any discourse about the nature of the world of which we form a part. If one's interests lie within this area of philosophy the book can be rewarding. Professor Macleod has done well with an abstruse topic which Tillich never did succeed in making completely clear.

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Mishra, K. P. : *Principle in Contemporary Moral Philosophy* : Cuttack Students' Store, 1977, Cuttack, Orissa, India; pp. viii + 164 : Rs. 40/–

The work, as stated in the Preface, is the ' published version ' of the author's doctoral thesis of 1967. The topic it deals with is broadly the nature, role and scope of ' principle ' in moral discourse as discussed by three eminent contemporary moral philosophers— R. M. Hare, K. Baier, and M. G. Singer. The sub-title of the book reads – " An Enquiry into the Concept of Principle in the Moral Philosophy of .." these philosophers. Evidently, this topic is of utmost importance from the point of view of both normative ethics and meta-ethics. Indirectly, it is also concerned with the problem of the place of Reason and Feeling in moral life. The author discusses and criticizes ' universalizability ' and ' prescriptivity ' of Hare, ' moral point of view ' of Baier, and ' generalization principle ' and ' generalization argument ' of Singer. His main thesis is negative. As he says, " My thesis mainly will be critical as I shall try to show the *insufficiency* of the principles given by these authors as justificatory principles or as descriptive criteria of morality." (p. vi) (italics mine).

Bringing out the difference between Emotivism and the positions of these three philosophers, the author rightly observes that " these three post-emotive moral philosophers differ from the emotivists in emphasising the necessary relationship between moral judgements and moral reasons or moral rules." (p. 12). It is true that these thinkers have tried to state and defend cognitivity or rationality of moral discourse. Naturally, ' moral reasoning ' is the chief object of enquiry. The author holds that all the three—Hare, Baier and Singer– advocate the deductive model of moral reasoning. As he says, " Moral reasoning is a kind of deductive reasoning where a rule serves as the major premise, facts... as the minor premise and the conclusion, a particular moral judgement, is derived from them." (p. 13) This the author calls " the doctrine of rules in ethics."

The whole discussion in fact centres round three important questions – namely, (a) Is moral discourse rational ? (b) If it is,

then what is the nature of this rationality ? and (c) What is the nature and function of moral rules or principles in moral reasoning ? All the three thinkers – Hare, Baier and Singer—answer (a) in the affirmative. As for (b), the author holds that all of them consider rationality of morals to consist in their universality on the one hand and in the deductive model of moral reasoning on the other. With regard to (c), Hare holds that moral principles or rules are universal – imperatives or prescriptions and function in moral reasoning as major premises. (p. 15). Baier has a wider notion of moral rules which contain both individual and social rules of reason (p. 25) and ascribes them the function of justifying moral judgements and consequent choices of actions in moral deliberation. Singer distinguishes between ' rules ' and ' principles ' which are more general, more fundamental and sources of ' rules ' (p. 35). Both these function as justifications of moral judgements.

Now, as the author rightly points out, deducative model of reasoning appeals to one or more ultimate principles to justify moral rules (p. 49). In fact it involves a pyramidical structure of rules with particular actions in the base and some highest principle at the apex. Generalization principle and generalization argument, as suggested by Singer, are two such important principles. Hare's ' universalizability ' and Baier's ' moral point of view are broadly covered by these. The author claims to show that " universalizability as advocated by these philosophers is a combination of the logical thesis of supervenience and moral principle like equality, impartiality etc. " (p. 50) He further argues that " it is not unique in the case of moral judgements, " and as for the moral principles, " they are not common to all moral evaluation. " Supervenience means, far the author, that " if two things are alike in all respect then they are alike in value. " (p. 53)

The general observation of the author that " a moral situation is more complicated than and particular moral rule " (p. 23) is to be borne in mind while understanding the function of ' rule ' in moral reasoning.

The author rightly points out that Singer's generalization principle is a formal rational principle while his generalizations argument contains contingent factors like ' desirability ' and ' consequences '.

The author claims to show that this argument is fallacious and that it is not relevant in every moral situation as Singer claims. (p. 96)

The consideration of Singer's generalization argument naturally leads the author to the discussion of utilitarian principle as ' consequence ' are basic to both of them. The net upshot of the discussion of utilitarianism is that the author on the whole, agrees " with most of the criticisms of utilitarianism made by Hare, Baier and Singer which were intended to show that the utilitarian principle could not be taken as the supreme justificatory princple. " (p. 138)

So far the author's job has been neen negative, that of bringing out the inadequacy of ' universality ' and ' utility ' as justificatory principles of morality. In the last-fifth-chapter he puts forth his positive views by way of conclusions. The author rejects impossibility of normative ethics; he also rejects its non-congitivity, and accepts the importance of ' principle ' or ' rule ' in ethics. What, however, he is anxious to show is that ' principle ', e.g., of equality is necessary, but not a sufficient condition of morality, that moral principle cannot be taken as major premise and moral reasoning can not be deductive. Further, ' Rule ' does not explain the morality of ' saints ' and ' heroe s' (p. 141). I think he is right in this. His further contention is that no one principle is sufficient; there is plurality of principles. He accepts ' universality ', ' equality ', ' justice ', ' impartiality ' etc. (p. 140), as also ' pleasure ', though " there are many other things which a rational man wants as intrinsically good besides pleasure. " (p. 143) He accepts the utilitarian formula keeping it open by saying that " a man's wants – not only his wants for pleasure—should be satisfied " and calls it the principle of satisfaction which is really a collection of principles. Adding ' equality ' to this, he concludes, " there are two most fundamental principles of morality the principle of equality and the principle of satisfaction. " (p 143) Later, he sums both these into one called ' universal satisfaction ' (p. 148). It seems that the author unwillingly has made a circular journey from ethical ' monism ' – through ' pluralism ' and ' dualism ' back to ' monism ' again ! ' Universal satisfaction ' looks like an attempt to combine ' universality ' and ' satisfaction ' into one. But it can not change its utilitarian face.

There is a claim made by the author which seems to be unacceptable Hs says that both the principles of equality and saticfaction

" spring from the very concept of rationatity when applied to conduct. " (p. 148) I think, we can say this, at the most, of ' equality ', but never of ' satisfaction. ' As Kant has shown conclusively what we can derive from mere conception of rationality is ' universality ' including equality and nothing else. Again, not all wants deserve to be satisfied. This means that the principle of satisfaction needs to be governed by some other principle enabling us to decide what wants may be satisfied and what may not be. The author's answer to the problem of conflict, of these principles also seems to be some what unsatisfactory. He say that conflict between different fundamental principles will always remain there as no single principle can be found to synthesize them. (p. 145). If this is accepted then we are left with a plurality of basic principle without any kind of organization. This is not a happy situation and a normative ethical theory may be said to have failed in so far as it lacks in the syntematic unity of its principles. Logically this brings us back to ethical monism as against pluralism.

The book is, on the whole, a welcome addition to the vast literature on moral philosophy as the topic it discusses is of great importance. The points raised by the author by way of criticisms of the views of Hare, Baire and Singer on the subject are significant. But his positive views expressed in the last chapter need much more elaboration than is accorded to them before any remarks are passed on them. They seem to be rather incomplete and raise more questions than answer. The language is loose at places–e. g. " Man *desires* many *goals* or *values* " (p. 138) or " some *pleasures* are bad for example *revenge, rage, lust* (p. 142). There are even inconsistent statements, e. g. on page 144, speaking about fundamental principles, the auther says " So if one intends to apply them on each occassion then he *can do that*. But he need not, and perhaps in practi *it is not possible to do it*. " (Italics mine.) These are of course minor points. But I feel that a detailed presentation of his positive views would have enhanced the value of the book very much.

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