

if we knew the answers to these questions we could not be expected to have any conception of what a secularized City of God would be (still less a mechanized one!) without a few words of explanation. But throughout Seliger treats the notion of a secularized religion as quite unproblematic.

It is in this chapter, too, and in the one before it, that the argument tends to shift quite illegitimately. From the fact, if it is a fact, that Marxism and Christianity have features in common and that Christianity was around before Marxism, it does not follow that the one is the descendant of the other. To establish this we need a lot of detailed evidence about, amongst other things, Marx's intellectual biography. Seliger offers us none. He seems to think it does follow and remains unaware, therefore, that all he has done is to allude to the barest similarity.

Thirdly, the book is described as a critical essay. What exactly are Seliger's criticisms of the Marxist theory? He makes the stock point that the theory has some difficulty accounting for its own position but after this it is impossible to say exactly what he thinks is wrong with it. We are not told that one Marxist doctrine contradicts another but that it "runs counter to" it. We are not told that an hypothesis is false but that "its validity is severely restricted". We are not told that a claim is empirically unfalsifiable but that it is "an empirical non-datum". The last sentence of the book concludes that the Marxist conception "falls to the ground" or "points beyond itself". We can infer from remarks like these that Seliger is not a supporter of the Marxist theory but not much more than that. Certainly our own critical understanding of Marx is not enhanced.

These three faults are all products of the fact that this book is not written in intelligible English. It is possible, however, to dredge some sense out of the tortuous phraseology. When this is done some pretty mundane observations emerge. The grandiose thesis of ideological pluralism consists in the observation that those of different ideological persuasions have more points of agreement than they, and others, may suppose. The claim that ideologies divide into "a fundamental and operative dimension of argumentation" amounts to the observation that Marxists, liberals and so on fluctuate between arguments on matters of principle and arguments on matters of policy. Once the thick coat of jargon is penetrated we can see that Seliger has very little new to tell us and that a great deal that is important to this topic is omitted. There is, for instance, no discussion of practical necessity, a concept which is central to Marx's account of ideology. Further, the thesis of the historical relativity of beliefs, which is Marx's thesis, is confused with the pseudo-psychological thesis of the conditioning of beliefs and ideas (a phrase Marx never but Seliger frequently uses).

I think this is a shockingly bad book. I mean that I am shocked by the fact that a book which is at once ill thought out, badly written, inaccurate and without originality, in short a book which has all the faults for which an undergraduate dissertation is rightly condemned, should pass the scrutiny which publication requires. Those who care about the careful exposition and criticism of philosophical ideas will throw it away in disgust, and those who are learning will read it to their detriment.

GORDON GRAHAM

*From Belief to Understanding.* By RICHARD CAMPBELL. (Australian National University. 1976. Pp. 229. Price \$A6.95.)

In this book Campbell sets out to revitalize Anselm's ontological argument. There is no doubt that he succeeds. He gives a new interpretation of the argument and argues that, thus interpreted, it is sound. The final part of the book assesses the significance of what has gone before. I shall discuss these three matters separately.

Anselm's argument, which occurs in chs. 2-3 of his *Proslogion*, has had a long history

of commentators. According to Campbell virtually all of them have got Anselm wrong. The correct interpretation is as follows: chs. 2-3 form one continuous argument with the dual conclusions (i) that there exists a being which cannot be thought not to exist, and (ii) that this being is God. The argument has three stages. The first is in ch. 2 and establishes that there exists (*in re*) a thing such that nothing greater can be thought. (I shall use 'B' as an abbreviation for 'something than which nothing greater can be thought'.) The second stage, which is in the first half of ch. 3, establishes that B cannot be thought not to exist. The third stage in the second half of the chapter establishes that God is B. Probably the most important point of Campbell's interpretation is that Anselm's argument is not supposed to start, as critics from Aquinas onwards have taken it, with the definition 'God is B'. This in fact is part of the conclusion. The argument starts with Anselm's "speech act", his saying "B".

Campbell's argument that this is the correct interpretation of Anselm is meticulous and cogent. Both his scholarship and his feeling for the text are obvious. He has no trouble in disposing of the Malcolm/Hartshorne line that the second stage is an independent argument for God's existence, nor in showing that the third stage is indeed an integral part of the whole argument. (It had previously been largely ignored.) When seen through Campbell's eyes, Anselm's text acquires a tightness and coherence it is difficult to dismiss.

I come now to the soundness of the argument. Campbell claims that Anselm's argument is indeed logically valid and its premises are true. To demonstrate the validity Campbell formalizes the proof. This is very useful: not only does it establish the validity of the argument beyond doubt (with one exception to which I shall come) but focuses a number of points in the interpretation. Campbell interprets 'B' as an indefinite, not a definite, description. Hence he uses a modal extension of Routley's system ND. To get round the problem of talking about (possibly) non-existent entities, Campbell interprets his quantifiers substitutionally and introduces a predicate 'Rx' for 'x exists'. (Kant is called as witness for the defence of this procedure!)

There is as I have said one awkward place in the formalization. The problem is how to treat Anselm's claim that if B exists only in the understanding, it can be thought that B exists also in reality, "which is greater". As Campbell points out, the logic of the argument requires that the 'which' should refer to B when it is in reality. Campbell uses an *ad hoc* subscripting device which is not in Routley's system and the rules for its use are not given by Campbell. Admittedly, he does say that this is in lieu of a fully-fledged theory of counterfactuals. However, the impression is that Campbell has fudged the issue at probably the most crucial point.

This brings me to the truth of the premises. All but one are in the text and all but two seem reasonably plausible. The textual premise that seems least plausible is that being *in re* is greater than being merely in the understanding. This has always been a sticky place for the argument and I find that Campbell does little to help the issue. He explains the notion of the Platonic hierarchy of being and the doctrine of creation, which were probably Anselm's justification for this premise. He then adds some observations of his own. However, I found it difficult to extract any cogent argument from them.

The second dubious premise is the one not in the text but which is certainly assumed by Anselm. The premise is  $F(\text{exFx})$  (i.e. a thing which is F, is F). Now certainly this is not true for every F (let 'Fx' be 'x=a & x≠a') and in fact it is equivalent to  $\exists \text{xFx}$  in the system Campbell is using. Now since Campbell is interpreting the quantifiers substitutionally, it would be the easiest of matters to show that ' $\exists \text{xFx}$ ' is true. All he needs to do is specify some term *a* such that 'Fa' is true. Unfortunately he does not do this. Clearly he cannot let *a* be 'exFx' without begging the question. There is a rhetorical suggestion (p. 190) to the effect that *a* might be "a necessary being", ("necessary" in the sense of "not causally dependent on anything else for its existence"). But

as Campbell points out (p. 77) "greater" is to be taken as "more worthy of respect". And why should something be worthy of respect merely because it does not depend on anything else for its existence? (The universe might be such a thing.)

I come now to the last topic: the significance of the argument. Campbell claims to have given a sound argument for the existence of God. However, he hedges his claim with qualifications due to the "personal" nature of the proof. The problem is that on his account the argument commences not with an *a priori* truth but with someone uttering words and someone else understanding them. As Campbell puts it, Anselm is not "deducing an existential truth from promises all logically true, but rather exploring the intelligibility of the language in which he finds himself expressing his belief".

I think that this is an unfortunate way of putting the matter. For it invites the reply that the argument shows not that God exists, but only that one cannot use this mode of language without committing oneself to God's existence. Campbell takes up precisely this objection but I do not think he answers it satisfactorily. He grants that using the language of the argument presupposes the existence of *B* and also that if a certain form of language is based on a false presupposition it should be given up. His problem is to show that Anselm's presupposition is not false. Comparing it with the parallel case of Gaunilo's lost island, he argues that the parallel argument ends in an absurdity. Hence Gaunilo's presupposition is false. However, the mere fact that Anselm's argument does not end up with an absurdity does not show, as Campbell seems to think (p. 195), that his presupposition is true.

Moreover, following this line of thought Campbell courts disaster. For someone who denies the existence of God and therefore *B*, denies a presupposition of what he himself is saying (!). Hence what he says is meaningless and therefore unintelligible. As Campbell puts it, "The whole realm of discourse which allows the believer to speak of God as *B* . . . rules out the possibility of denying with understanding the existence of God" (p. 195). The step from here to the claim that the fool, who does deny the existence of God, does not understand '*B*' is but a short one. And this, in effect, would show that one of the premises of Campbell's version of Anselm's argument is false. Campbell cordons off this disastrous last step with a none too happy distinction between "real" understanding and "mere verbal" understanding (p. 196).

Now many of the moves in this train of thought seem highly suspect. However, I shall not discuss them since it seems to me that the whole train is misguided, and arises from not taking the premises seriously enough. To get the argument off the ground, all that is necessary is that '*B*' is understood. And this is indeed true. It may be a *posteriori* true (as are some of the premises of Aquinas's 5 ways), but it is true nonetheless. And once this is granted, if the rest of the argument is sound, there is no way to deny the conclusion, which is that God exists, *not* that he cannot be talked about without committing oneself to his existence.

The bare truth of the matter, then, is that if Anselm's argument is sound an existential conclusion follows from the mere fact that certain words form a grammatically well-formed phrase of English/Latin. If this were true, as Campbell points out, Anselm's argument would have more than just a local significance for the philosophy of religion. For this possibility flies in the face of all modern philosophy, a cardinal tenet of which is that nothing can be inferred about how things are, merely from what it is possible to think or say. Thus Campbell sees the argument as a challenge to the whole of modern philosophy.

Altogether, then, Campbell's book is as original and stimulating as it is bound to be controversial. And I am sure that it will be the centre point of discussion of the ontological argument for many years to come.

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