

Continental

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OVER the past eight years Richard Kearney, as editor of *The Crane Bag*, has through ceaseless hard work and unflinching commitment secured for that journal a central place in the Irish cultural scene. He has written extensively about Joyce, Beckett, and Yeats; analysed the symbolism of the Nationalist tradition (a symbolism he sees as built around a mythology of self-sacrifice); and argued for a joint authority solution to the Northern crisis at the Forum sessions in Dublin. He is, however, a philosopher by profession and has managed to find the time to write three substantial books in philosophy.

One of these, *Poétique du Possible*, published in French in Paris in 1984, is a development of his PhD dissertation written under the direction of the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur. This book argues that western philosophy has overvalued reason and undervalued imagination since the time of the ancient Greeks. The result has been an impoverishment of our vision of the world, a narrowing of horizons to focus exclusively on questions of actual fact, rather than opening up to the broader horizons of imaginative possibility.

To take but one example, much of traditional philosophy from Aquinas to Kant has been taken up with arguing about the actual

Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers: Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Herbert Marcuse, Stanislas Breton, Jacques Derrida. By Richard Kearney. Manchester University Press. £17.50 sterling (hardcover.)

existence of a supreme being, God. Believers say there is such a being; Marx, Nietzsche and others deny His existence. Yet perhaps the fault lies in not conceiving of this "being" adequately, perhaps we need to open up our vision and think of God in terms of possibility rather than actuality. God is now understood as wrapped up with the human horizon of hope, of longing for transcendence, of awaiting an end to history, and the coming of the Kingdom. This interpretation of God in fact brings this being back out of the clouds and into human life, a corrective to the metaphysical distortions of western philosophy, and a return to the vision of the divine in the Old Testament.

Richard's second book, *Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers*, published last December by Manchester Press, consists of a series of dialogues with leading European thinkers—including Richard's mentor, Ricoeur. Among the themes explored is this central theme which emerged in *Poétique du Possible*, and which is ultimately

traceable back to Nietzsche and Heidegger, that our western philosophical tradition took a wrong turn very early on in its interpretation of the nature of reality or being, and is now dying a slow death. Culture, value and morality are being effaced in an engulfing nihilism from which there appears to be little hope of escape.

Many of the thinkers Richard Kearney spoke to in this book are students of Heidegger (who died in 1976, the greatest philosopher of the 20th century) and are in agreement with Heidegger's central claim that western philosophy distorted both the Greek Enlightenment and the Hebraic Revelation by attempting to weld the two of them into the synthesis of Christian philosophy which sees being as founded on the supreme being, God.

One of the men interviewed, Levinas, is a Jew who is seeking to bring out the essential characteristics of the Jewish intellectual tradition which was systematically effaced from Christian thought through deliberate repression. He sees Jewish philosophy as based on a concern for the other person, a concern which takes us "beyond being". Ricoeur, on the other hand, feels that we need to re-appraise our own inheritance, our cultural "Eurocentrism" by a careful critique of our common symbolism and language. He is against all dogmatism, and all attempts to dominate others through cultural or even moral supremacy. Ricoeur is a preacher of tolerance and respect for others, supremely conscious of the appalling consequences of cultural deafness in the carnage of the 20th century.

Herbert Marcuse, who died shortly after this interview took place, was a student of Heidegger who went on to become a radical theorist of social revolution, and in particular of the upheavals of the Sixties. His writings inspired the American student activists as well as the Black power and feminist movements. Angela Davis was one of his students. In Richard's interview he comes across as a dignified, radical intellectual concerned to renew the Marxist critique of capitalism to fit the advanced technological consumer society of the present day.

For Marcuse, the present time is a time of alienation. A one-dimensional technocracy based on power and domination is in control. The only hope for human emancipation lies in small groups of resistance, small areas where freedom and imagination are still genuine realities. For Marcuse art has a liberating role here in overcoming repression and giving us new possibilities for human living.

Kearney's dialogues are well-structured and penetrating interviews with major European intellectuals, which offer us both an accessible introduction to modern continental philosophy, and also a basis for understanding the thought of Kearney himself, a thinker who is very anxious to transform theoretical insights into tools for understanding the complexities of Irish culture and society. He recently edited a book, *The Irish Mind* (Wolfhound Press, 1984), which makes an attempt at assessing the Irish intellectual inheritance.

Modern Movements in European Philosophy due out from Manchester later this year. Already his work has had an impact in Ireland. His progress will be eagerly watched.

DERMOT MORAN

Cúlra dáin ina chuidiú lena mheas

Éigse na hIarmhí, le Pádraig Ó Fágáin. Mapa agus fótagraif. 179 lech. 77 Bealach ar an tOchair, Ráth Fearnáin, BÁC. 14. £6.00

IS státseirbhíseach i mBaile Átha Cliath Pádraig Ó Fágáin, a rugadh taobh amuigh den Mhuileann gCearr i gContae na hIarmhí. Tá gearrscéalta, drámaí agus dátaí foilsithe aige cheana.

Leabhar é seo faoi fhíil agus faoi fhíilocht. Dar leis an údar is mó ár suim i ndán eolais a bheith againn ar chúla an dáin, nó ar shaoil an fhíle féin, an fáth ar scríobhadh é agus no heachtraí ba chúis leis. Rinne sé amhlaidh sin é féin agus is fearde an leabhar é.

Tá ceithre chaibidil déag ann. I dtús gach caibidil tá aiste faoi shaoil agus faoi shaothar an fhíle, nó na filí, atá faoi thrácht. Tá téacsanna na ndátaí i nGaeilge agus ansin, de ghnáth, aistriúcháin go Béarla, nó leagan Béarla de le fáil.

Pádraig Ó Fágáin a rinne cuid mhór de na haistriúcháin. Ach son cheana a bhí aistriúche cheana, nó a raibh leagan Béarla de le fáil, ghlac sé leis an saothar sin. D'fhéadfa é rá gur leabhar dátheangach é. Mar shampla Lord Longford a rinne an leagan Béarla de "Multyfarnham".

Déarfainn go gcuirfeadh daoine as an dúiche spéis mhór ann ó thaobh na staire de agus gur mhaith leo cóip a bheith acu.

Is cosúil nár labhraíodh an Ghaeilge go forleathan sa chontae tar éis 1780, tuairim. Pléitear i i gcaibidil faoi leith, agus labhraítear ar lámhscríbhinní, agus gnéithe

eile den cheist a bhaineann le muintir an chontae.

Leabhar don léitheoir nach scoláire teanga é, agus roghnaigh an t-údar an 32 dhán ann a cumadh idir tuairimí 1600-1900, leis an intinn sin, mar aon le thart faoin líon céanna leaganacha Béarla agus aistí próis.

Seo é an chéad véarsa as an gcéad dán.

Dursan mar taoi, a Dhún na Sciath,
Dursan do thriath cen bheith beo,

ardrigh Midhe n múr slím
a bhás a chuir sinn dár seol.

Seo é an t-aistriú air sin a rinne John O'Donovan in Ordnance Survey Letters for Co. Westmeath

agus atá in Éigse na hIarmhí

Alas for thy sad state, O Dún na Sciath,

Alas that thy lord no longer liveth,

The Arch King of Meath of fair walls

Whose death has put us out of our course.

Don tréimhse atá faoi thrácht ná a lan raite faoi imeachtaí stairiúla,

faoin nGabháil Normannach agus an bhaint a bhí ag no clanna móra

leis an scéal: Na Dálaigh, na Nuinsceannaigh agus mar sin de.

Áit mor le rá lár na hÉireann san stair chuile lá riamh. Chuireann an leabhar seo lenár gcuid eolais ar no

himeachtaí agus is treoir a fhoilsíú don méid ab fhéidir a dhéanamh i gceantar, ach duine a mbead suim

aige san ábhar a bheith sásta aithris a dhéanamh ar shaothar Pádraig

UI Fhágáin.

SEOSAMH Ó DUIBHGINN