

Between or within?

Joseph Schwartz, *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis in Europe and America*, Allen Lane and Penguin, London, 1999 and 2000. 352 pp., £20.00 hb., £9.99 pb., 0 71 3991 585 hb., 9 780140 236071 pb.

To see clearly requires distance, but during the last century Western intellectuals were too close to psychoanalysis to get a good view. Insider accounts, both friendly and antagonistic, predominated. The decline in analytic fortunes since the 1960s, along with the general shift in the *Zeitgeist*, has opened a path for historical perspective. *Cassandra's Daughter* is among the first of what will be a series of attempts to historicize psychoanalysis as a whole.

From contemporary indications, these attempts will sort themselves into three camps. One will surely arise from bashers and debunkers inspired by Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, Frederick Crews and Jeffrey Masson. The difficulty with their case is obvious. Freud asked his readers to believe in some fairly incredible ideas, such as infantile sexuality and unconscious thinking, but these are nothing compared to the suspension of disbelief the Freud-bashers exact. In their account, a dishonest and manipulative crank pulled the wool over the eyes of most of the Western world for about fifty years, including thousands of psychoanalysts, most of them medical doctors, hundreds of thousands of patients, most of them educated professionals, and huge numbers of intellectuals, among them Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland, Walter Lippman, Emma Goldman, Thomas Mann, Lewis Namier, Theodor Adorno, Frantz Fanon, Jane Harrison and Rebecca West. If the debunkers are right, the problem requiring explanation is not Freud's individual wizardry, but the West's collective delusion. And what better theory for explaining such a delusion than Freud's?

A second line of reasoning could follow Freud's own likely line of thought. There are many indications in Freud's letters and conversations that his personal fantasies revolved around the idea that psychoanalysis would decline soon after his death, only to be rediscovered a century or so later. This view has a family resemblance with another one, advanced by Russell Jacoby and others, according to which psychoanalysis disintegrated in the course of its history. The combination was nicely captured in the movie *Lovesick*

in which Alec Guinness played the ghost of Freud who haunts Dudley Moore, a New York psychoanalyst having an affair with his beautiful young patient. One day the ghost announces that he is moving to Mexico to study psychedelic mushrooms. 'What about psychoanalysis?' the bewildered analyst cries out. 'Analysis was an interesting experiment when I started it', the ghost responds, 'but I never expected it to become a big business.'

A third perspective comes from those who see themselves as Freud's successors. Here there are two variations. The Lacanians, especially outside of France, are poststructuralist literary scholars who regard their master as having rid psychoanalysis of its 'biologism': the phallus supplants the penis; the imaginary, symbolic and real orders supplant the ego, superego and id. Schwartz's book is aligned with the other group of successors: those who emphasize 'relational analysis', 'recognition', and a 'two-person' or dialogic analysis. Influenced by object-relations theory, by Sullivanian and interpersonal analysis, and by feminism, they argue that Freud thought of human beings as pleasure-seeking (tension-reducing) rather than relationship-seeking. By contrast, they see human beings as essentially relational, even in earliest infancy, and they see analysis as a complex, multidimensional interpersonal dialogue in which recognition of the other is the defining act. While for Freud's antagonists the history of psychoanalysis is a mystery, and for Freudians it is an irony, for Lacanians and relational theorists it is a success story in which today's practitioners are correcting the errors of a courageous if flawed pioneer.

Schwartz brings formidable resources to making this latter case. First, he is a trained physicist who spent fifteen years doing mental health research before becoming a psychoanalyst. Because the scientific education of most analysts was limited to clinical medicine, when it was not exclusively humanistic, few analysts had a feel for science. Hence, they were always intimidated by those who did. Schwartz, by

contrast, writes about science with confidence and authority. Among the most interesting parts of the book are his lengthy discussions of Freud's preanalytic neurological researches, the scientific background to Freud's death-drive hypothesis, and compelling summaries of recent child development research. Schwartz is also a political thinker. He situates analysis amid such great events as industrialization, the Russian and Hungarian Revolutions, changes in the family, the cold war, and the rise of dictatorships in Latin America. Although he has a strong point of view, he is non-sectarian, as shown by his efforts to find value in Adler's and Jung's thinking. His book is well-written, judicious and deeply felt. Nonetheless, for two reasons, I do not find its key argument – the progressive nature of the turn toward recognition – wholly convincing.

First, psychoanalysis, as Freud formulated it, is an intersubjective process, but not one that aims at recognition alone. Rather, it aims at allowing the unconscious to reveal itself through free association, interpretation and insight. Its distinguishing characteristic is the inward relation that it allows to the self. Of course, the emphasis on recognition can broaden and deepen this relation, but it can also serve as a diversion from it. When Winnicott proposed his famous idea of a transitional object, he wrote that analysis tells us a lot about what goes on inside people, but not enough about what goes on between them. Recognition is a theory of the between. But the turn towards the between can obviate the interest in what goes on within. After all, the normal direction of the mind is towards others; introspection is unusual. When we emphasize intersubjectivity, and make recognition central, we tend to follow the normal direction of the mind, and thus risk losing critical hard-won insights that last century's Freudians struggled for.

What are these insights? The most important ones rest on the relative autonomy and complexity of inner psychological life. By this I mean that intra-psychic life does not map onto the culture in which the individual lives, nor onto any set of object relations, no matter how delicately and complexly they are limned. Paradoxically, recognizing the existence of an irreducible discontinuity between intra-psychic life and object relations could deepen the turn towards recognition. Let me explain. Schwartz criticizes Freud for his 'one-person' approach, according to which our need for others, beginning with the 'mother', arises from their role in satisfying instinctual aims. But Freud's perspective rests on a great truth about human beings: we are not born with predetermined instincts that lead us to objects. Rather, other human beings care for us

for a prolonged period; without them we would die. This biological fact means that our need for objects is actually more feverish, ambivalent and complex than it would be if we were born already oriented to objects, as the object-relational perspective supposes. It creates a series of danger situations, as well as a need to be loved, that is ultimately tied to narcissism and self-preservation, and not simply to object-love.

Those, like Schwartz, who advocate the relational approach claim that they preserve this insight into the unconscious and the intrapsychic. But their claims are belied by their insistence that they are providing an alternative to psychoanalysis: two-person, not one-person; relational, not monadic; dialogic, not uni-directional. In fact, a psychoanalysis built on the idea of recognition will not be easy to construct. Just as philosophies based on recognition may lose insight into moral autonomy, so psychologies based on recognition may lose insight into psychological autonomy. In Schwartz's case, the danger is exemplified when he praises Heinz Kohut for reviving the idea of the self, which, according to Schwartz 'had long been undertheorized within psychoanalysis and was often confused with the ego, which is only a part of the whole person. 'The self', Schwartz continues, 'is the whole human subject, as in "I am not myself today".' In part, Schwartz is wrong about Kohut; for Kohut, the self is a representation that is constructed within the ego. But this error is not so important as Schwartz's unpsychoanalytic assumption that there is a 'whole human subject' to be recognized. In this regard, the Lacanian emphasis on the 'split subject', especially when linked to the Lacanian sense of extending rather than replacing classical analysis, shows its advantages.

If my first objection to the relational turn is based on the danger of re-repressing the unconscious, the second is based on the danger of re-repressing sexuality. That this danger is real can be seen if we recall that the turn towards a two-person psychology occurred in the course of the integration of psychoanalysis into the post-World War II welfare states, an integration which turned it into an instrument of social control. The debates over female sexuality were the crucial moment in this transformation. Psychoanalysis began with the problem of hysteria, a problem that mixed together sexuality and 'femininity', or female psychology. In attempting to solve that problem, Freud insisted on the priority of sexuality while ignoring problems that might have arisen from Dora's gender; thus he described Dora's problem simply as her inability to choose between her love for a man and her

love for a woman. Sexuality, as Freud described it, was a disruptive force, a problem for the individual. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, a new generation of female analysts downplayed women's sexuality in order to emphasize gender difference, which they linked to women's mothering. The mother–infant relation, in turn, was the inspiration and model for the shift towards the relational or two-person psychology. Gender difference and the relational approach became central to the postwar integration of analysis with clinical psychology, psychiatric social work and other non-analytic approaches, as well as with its use in prisons, educational institutions, courts and other agencies of the Keynesian state.

Certainly, there is no necessary connection between the relational or recognition approach and the extension of social control. But the depth of the historical connection supports the view that in rejecting what Schwartz calls a one-person psychology, the critical dimension of psychoanalysis can be lost. Because such a loss is not inevitable, historians have an important role to play. They can bring to light the turning points, unrecognized opportunities and simple mistakes that are inevitably occluded to participants. In *Cassandra's Daughter*, Schwartz has done so in many respects.

But he presents the turn towards recognition in a one-sidedly positive light that fails to capture its blind spots and lacunae. Let me conclude by raising three other points which follow from his perspective.

First, reflecting its clinical focus, Schwartz's book contains a detailed and thoughtful chapter on transference, but none on the unconscious or on sexuality. Second, the interpersonal psychology associated with Harry Stack Sullivan is discussed at great length, but ego psychology is almost wholly dismissed. Yet the idea of the ego is critical for a relational psychoanalysis that would give due weight to the intrapsychic. Finally, much of the history is organized by nations. This misses the chance to identify the great, overarching themes – those of the unconscious and sexuality, the ego and gender, and group psychology – that ran through all of psychoanalysis. It misses the enormous significance of the fact that a genuinely transnational dialogue ended when American analysts gained hegemony over the field after World War II. Like so many important intellectual departures of the early twentieth century, the promise of psychoanalysis was destroyed during the Cold War and is only slowly being rebuilt in its aftermath.

Eli Zaretsky

A Hegelian history of affect

Paul Redding, *The Logic of Affect*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne and Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1999. x + 204 pp., A\$45.00, £25.95 hb., 0 522 84875 3 and 0 801 43591 9.

How should we conceptualize the difference between reasons of the heart and reasons of the head? Although Paul Redding raises this question in the introductory paragraph of *The Logic of Affect*, the issue is not tackled directly. Instead the overall concern is to track the history of a view of feeling that is at odds with the cognitivist account of affect that has been dominant in the late twentieth century. According to Redding, cognitivists claim that emotions should not be thought of as mute feelings, but as being intertwined with 'cognitive' elements such as ideas, concepts, beliefs and interpretations. Redding, by contrast, is interested in the view that there can be a kind of logic of the emotions, a logic 'of the heart', that is not recognized by the mind and that eludes the logic of belief.

In Chapter 1 Redding provides a brief – much too brief – history of the treatment of 'affect' in the twentieth century. The author moves us speedily through summaries of functionalist theories of emotion and

of philosophical models that treat emotional states in terms of propositional attitudes. Redding dwells – also much too sketchily – on some of the opponents of cognitivism, such as the Harvard Medical School psychologist, Sylvan Tomkins. Tomkins – who died in 1991 – makes several guest appearances in Redding's book. Here, on this first occasion, we learn that Tomkins links the differing emotions to particular physiological states, and rejects the notion that specific emotions are to be distinguished via reference to different mental interpretations of bodily 'arousals'. The theories of the neurologist Antonio R. Damasio and the experimental physiologist Joseph LeDoux, both writing in the 1990s, are also linked with anti-cognitivism and to the thesis – ascribed to William James – that 'the felt-center of emotion consists of informational feedback from states of the body'.

This summary of recent developments provides a background for Chapter 2, which seeks to defend

James against the cognitivists' claim that he allows no place for reason in his account of emotion. For Redding, James is not an introspectionist: he is not arguing that we have an immediate knowledge of our own private mental contents based on 'feelings'. Nor does he simply define emotions in terms of 'how they feel'. Instead, James bridges 'the somatic-cognitive divide', positioning emotional states as both bodily and cognitive. Thus, to experience disgust in the presence of carrion involves a 'turning of the stomach', and the visceral bodily response is 'an integral part of knowing that the carrion is revolting'. It is not that there is not a logic of emotion, but that this logic is not based on 'the logic of belief' or other representational, cognitive states. Instead what is posited – but, according to Redding left insufficiently developed in James – is the notion of a logic of bodily energies, drives and responses as the necessary grounding for a 'logic of the heart' that cannot be reduced to a 'logic of belief'.

As the book moves forward this logic of the heart (or stomach) is linked with modes of bodily response that elude consciousness and need to be understood in terms of the Freudian preconscious or unconscious. In Chapter 3 Redding's already sinuous historical argument becomes even more complex in that he wants to link both James and Freud back to the tradition of German Idealism that runs from Kant through Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. But is it the Freudian 'unconscious' or the Freudian 'pre-conscious' that matters most in the account of affect as *both* a somatic and a cognitive response? Because Redding wishes to trace the Freudian account of the unconscious emotion back to a series of Idealist precursors, the two Freudian terms are not adequately distinguished. Freud's 'unconscious' is structurally inaccessible to consciousness in a way that sharply marks it off from his pre-conscious and from earlier Romantic account of the unconscious. Redding's historical trajectory obscures this divide.

What is puzzling, historically speaking, is the apparent assumption that it was only the German Romantics who possessed any notion of the pre-conscious or unconscious prior to Freud. Thus, for example, the psychometric experiments of Francis Galton in 1907 are described in terms that link them to 'the earlier romantic interest in unconscious thought processes such as dreams'. But not only do the Galton experiments read more like an interest in the pre-conscious (as opposed to unconscious) elements of thought, but the emphasis on repetition ties Galton back to the associationist school of psychology. Many of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century associationists

(such as William Duff or Alexander Gerard) were also interested in dreams, non-conscious processes and in the role of repetition in generating apparently irrational and spontaneous thoughts and emotions. Even Hume's account of the struggle between conscious beliefs and not-yet-conscious sensations and passions is relevant here. Galton – and arguably also Freud (who translated essays of John Stuart Mill, including Mill's essay on Plato's theory of reminiscence) – needs to be understood against this context. Or at least, Redding needs to explain why the historical interpretation that he supplies misses out these salient details, as well as omitting Freud's well-known indebtedness to Schopenhauer's account of the fiction of the 'ego' and the primacy of bodily drives linked to energy, force or 'will' (*Wille*).

Instead of providing this missing background, Redding allows himself to get caught up in the debate about cognitivist and anti-cognitivist readings of Kant. This is the focus of Chapter 4, which pits Patricia Kitcher's cognitivist interpretation (1990) against the equally influential, but anti-psychologistic analysis offered by P.F. Strawson (1966). Although there are many points of interest in Redding's argument here, the enterprise seems a distraction in that he wants neither the anti-psychologism of Strawson nor the type of psychologism offered by Kitcher, who reads Kant as asserting that 'We can know an object only if we can represent it.' For Kitcher's Kant the subject emerges out of a psychological process of synthesis in a way that means that it is not an 'act' of the subject, but a subpersonal process that brings the subject into existence. But Kitcher is able to make this move only by reading *Vorstellung* – usually translated as 'representation' in English versions of Kant – as 'cognitive state'. Clearly unhappy with any such account, Redding moves instead to Henry Allison's account that reads self-consciousness in terms not of an act of synthesis, but as the capacity of the 'I' to unify its representations in a single consciousness. Allison's interpretation seems to point to details concerning the type of synthesis implicated in non-empirical self-consciousness that are missing in Kant. It is these missing details that set Redding off on a further historical quest, in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, of showing how the dispute between Allison and Kitcher was prefigured in the disputes that broke out amongst Kant's followers and critics about the nature of self-awareness.

Chapter 5 is largely devoted to Fichte, who pushes Kant's account of apperception in the direction of self-awareness. Redding then goes on to offer a sympathetic – and very unusual – reading of Fichte

as implicitly advocating the phenomenological thesis that all consciousness is consciousness of something. Redding uses Fichte to stage a ‘muted return to the body and its states’ via an account of the emphasis that he placed on non-representational forms of self-awareness and ‘feelings’ in particular. The late Fichte, it seems, implicitly posited the body and its drives as the ‘cause’ of the feelings reflected on by the self. But the argument moves too quickly again here. There is inadequate discussion of the difference between the object of a feeling and its cause: what it is directed towards and what produces it.

The return to the body and to ‘feelings’ is emphasized further in Chapter 6, which positions Schelling as ‘enlarging’ Fichte whilst both pre-visioning Freud and also correcting and adding in details missing in the Kantian system. As elsewhere in the volume, much of the justification for the historical links is done through secondary sources, and the evidence is not fully rehearsed in a way that allows checking. Even given this caveat, however, it is certainly interesting to see Schelling positioned as ‘positively implicated in the most significant theoretical shift in neuroscientific conceptualization’ in the early nineteenth century: the move from a ‘top-down’ conception of neural structure and function to a ‘bottom-up’ approach. What Redding has in mind here is the emergence of a view of the brain as a complex arrangement of functional units or ganglia that operate relatively automatically and in a way that is not under the control of ‘higher’ operations of the brain.

The absence of any discussion of Schopenhauer is particularly bothersome at this point – as Schopen-

hauer goes even further than Schelling when he treats the brain as the ‘parasite’ of the body. But Schopenhauer would certainly not go along with Schelling’s emphasis on a sense of feeling (*Gefühlsinn*) as integral to animate forms of life. What characterizes this ‘feeling-sense’ in the case of non-complex (primitive) animals, according to Schelling, is that it is not brought under concepts and the processes of apperception. For Schopenhauer, by contrast, the differing ‘grades’ of plants, animals and humans need to be understood in terms of three differing exemplifications of force or ‘will’. Schopenhauer also remains within the Kantian frame whilst disturbing the primacy given to representation and ‘higher’ cognition. But it is Schelling’s – and not Schopenhauer’s importantly different – account of the ‘functioning of the “vegetative” or autonomous nervous system’ that is positioned as central to Freud’s system and as underlying concepts such as ‘primal repression’ or ‘splitting’.

Redding’s account of Schelling is fascinating (if, once again, too curtailed), but he fails to convince me that there is a straight line of influence that runs from Schelling to Freud. Schopenhauer’s ‘will’ is tied to the body – particularly to the male genitals – and seems to bridge the somatic/cognitive divide in much the same way as does the Freudian account of the unconscious as explicated here. Nor was I persuaded that it is Schelling who produces ‘the underlying schema of romantic psychiatry stretching from Schubert to Jung’.

Redding’s omission of Schopenhauer needs to be understood in terms of the Hegelian account of reason and the sciences that emerges in the two final chapters



of this book. Hegel is read as distancing himself from Schelling with regard to the immediacy of feeling – but without rejecting the role of ‘feeling’, ‘subjectivity’ and immediacy in thought *per se*. Hegel, we are told, takes feeling as a ‘demand for an interpretative, conceptualizing response’. It is via Hegel and Tomkins – now described as thoroughly Hegelian in the way that he combines evolutionary theory with Freud – that Redding moves on to conclude that it is a mistake to oppose evolutionary naturalism to post-Kantian idealism in any simple and antithetical sense.

Although sympathetic to this as a conclusion, the historical route that Redding pursues to get there is both meandering and puzzling. Matters are not helped by some final, fairly bewildering moves that are supposed to establish the relevance of this historical account to contemporary debates regarding evolution, and that link the work of the neurobiologist Gerald Edelman with Hegelianism. What is particularly curious here is the emphasis on the role of representation in Edelman, and the concern with showing how he provides an account of the process whereby ‘perceptual mental contents are reinterpreted or “re-represented” within higher order consciousness’. Why this is particularly perplexing in terms of the thesis of the book as a whole is that, although Edelman does have an account of ‘representation’, his ‘materialism’ involves a rejection of the thesis that the way in which we map the body needs to be understood in terms of traditional models of representation or of an ‘apperception’ model of the unity of the self (either logically or psychologically conceived).

Thus, for example, on Edelman’s model the body is not mapped or ‘copied’ in a single area of the brain. Instead, our experience of our bodies is coded at a variety of levels via dynamic processes of interpretation drawn from various body areas, and in a way that can change gradually – but also radically – depending on what areas of the skin are stimulated and ‘mapped’. Of course, sensation is important to Edelman’s account of the way this mapping of the body evolves relationally over time, but these sensations are not ‘feelings’ and neither is the issue of bringing sensations under a unitary consciousness central to the way in which he differentiates the boundaries of self and not-self.

Thus, this excursus into neurobiology brings out both the ambiguities and the suspect nature of the project. The book closes with the sentences: ‘Reason must navigate on a sea of biological and other natural forces that do not belong to it, but without which

it could go nowhere. Affect is our most immediate awareness of the fact that we sail on such a sea.’ What does ‘affect’ mean here? Sensations? Emotions? Kantian ‘intuitions’? Passions? All involve a differing relationship to ‘immediacy’. Furthermore, saying that it is reason – and not, say, Kantian ‘understanding’, Humean ‘imagination’ or Schopenhauerian ‘will’ – that must navigate on the sea of biological and natural forces also privileges a particular faculty (reason) in a way that reveals that this excursus into the origins of twentieth-century anti-cognitivism has been approached through a (Hegelian) model that upholds *Geist* as prime, even when registering that ‘representation’ and ‘feeling’ do not necessarily function in a top-down way.

However Hegelian the underlying frame, this does, however, seem in some ways like a return of eighteenth-century empiricism. I’m thinking here of Hume and the way that he uses ‘impression’ to cover what we would now discriminate as ‘sensations’, ‘emotions’, ‘passions’, ‘feelings’, ‘dispositions’ and ‘moods’. For Hume these were held together as ‘impressions’ through the assumption that the mind is passive in all of these states. But German Idealism undermines the passivity of ‘impressions’ as a starting point. Should this not mean that an undifferentiated ‘logic of affect’ is a logical impossibility? Exploring some of the differing accounts of ‘affect’ in the phenomenological tradition or in Nietzsche would also have cast doubt on the underlying premiss and ultimate conclusion of the book.

Redding’s account of *The Logic of Affect* provides unusual background for current controversies in cognitive psychology and in regard to recent (and past) interpretations of Kant. It also throws interesting light on the debates that marked thinking about biology and the natural sciences in the nineteenth century. However, this reader ended up by feeling – in a non-immediate way – that the cognitivists’ account of emotion has been ill-treated. Indeed, some of the questions posed about cognitivism at the start of the book are made to disappear via a process of gradual substitution, whereby the question of a non-cognitive ‘logic of the heart’ is gradually displaced by that of the ‘logic of affect’ and then further eclipsed by the ‘logic of bodily sensation’. *The Logic of Affect* is, however, a brave attempt to link contemporary debates in analytic philosophy to an obscured history of German Idealism.

Christine Battersby

Tempting relevancies

Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, Blackwell, Oxford and Malden MA, 2000. 156 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0631 21965 X hb., 0631 21966 8 pb.

Francis Mulhern, *Culture/Metaculture*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000. xxi + 198 pp., £30.00 hb., £8.99 pb., 0 415 10229 4 hb., 0 415 10230 8 pb.

The Idea of Culture inaugurates Blackwell's series of 'Manifestos', in which 'major critics make timely interventions to address important concepts and subjects' – an enviable brief, but rather nebulous. Anyone writing about 'culture' risks dispersing their observations over what George Eliot referred to as 'that tempting range of relevancies called the universe'. In the substance of his argument, if not in its rather loose-limbed manner, Terry Eagleton sets himself against such vagueness. The inflation of the term 'culture', he contends, has led to a blurring of necessary distinctions, and critics need to 'put culture back in its place'. He shows how this might be done by contesting some fashionable errors: the postmodern tendency to reduce nature to culture; the view that high art is invariably a prop to bourgeois hegemony; the sentimental presumption that all forms of cultural identity are to be cherished.

These points are well taken. However, the exercise sometimes feels like a deconstruction of straw persons. We can all agree (for instance) that hypothetical celebrations of 'police canteen culture' or of the 'Alabama Mothers for Moral Purity' would be silly if anyone were ever to produce them. If Eagleton wants to show that an academic cult of 'identity' has gone to foolish lengths, he would do better to offer a full discussion of real examples. If he wants to address rather than evade the difficulty that often must arise in pronouncing critical-political judgement on matters of cultural identity, why not invite us to consider a complex real-life case: say, that of the British citizens who publicly burned copies of *The Satanic Verses* – on which, moreover, readers might be referred to engaged scholarly writings from diverse positions? There are other instances of this tendency to make life easy by offering chatty simplification instead of grounded consequential reasoning. To call film a 'genre', rather than a medium, is worse than careless in a work of cultural analysis, as is the pseudo-argument licensed by this solecism: 'The boundary between "high" and "low" culture has also been eroded by such genres as film, which has managed to chalk up an impressive array of masterpieces while appealing to almost everyone.' The 'boundary' may have become more porous, but the point is not substantiated or even illustrated by

the question-begging generalization, undeveloped as it is in any further discussion. Eagleton would surely acknowledge that witty fluency is insufficient compensation, in the end, for this kind of laziness. One is sorry that a distinguished critic, who is perhaps the best-known public intellectual of the cultural Left, and whose position allows him time and opportunities enjoyed by few of its academic representatives in Britain, has not pushed himself harder here.

Francis Mulhern's theme, in a more sharply focused series which sets out to elucidate literary-critical concepts, is "culture" as a topic in twentieth-century debate, in Europe and particularly in Britain'. Mulhern examines what he calls metacultural discourse, 'discourse in which culture addresses its own generality and conditions of existence'. Part one consists of a survey of continental influences and precursors, which surprisingly lacks any systematic account of the Frankfurt School, though these thinkers are surely 'European' in their formation and concerns; and some discussion of Orwell and Woolf, here given their due as engaged intellectuals working outside the university. Part two, the core of the book, traces the evolution of British academic cultural criticism from Leavis via Hoggart and Williams and Hall into today's 'cultural studies': a tale too often told, we may feel, but perhaps never better than in Mulhern's forceful and concise prose. Though it meets well enough the needs of exposition, especially in the sympathetic discussion of Williams, this is a fully critical account, and not (as Mulhern makes clear, in sentences his editor may have blanched at) a substitute for the works it deals with.

Mulhern argues that despite their apparent contrast, old *Kulturkritik* and new cultural studies alike place more weight upon the 'cultural principle' than it can bear. *Kulturkritik*, in a continental tradition that includes Thomas Mann and Karl Mannheim, and whose British approximation is found in Leavisism, seeks to 'assert the cultural principle as a sovereign moral authority'. Cultural studies comes into being partly as an assault on such assertions: the 'utopianism of the present' that allows some academics to discern resistance and self-realization in the act of shopping seems antithetical to the defence of inherited minority

culture mounted by their precursors. Now as then, however, the sphere of culture is made to function as a ‘higher moral tribunal before which the lower claims of politics must submit to arbitration’. While acknowledging that the excess of the ideal-cultural over the political has a utopian aspect, as the register of ‘a heterogeneous mass of possibilities old and new’, Mulhern (like Eagleton) concludes by urging a more modest critical practice that would make less of ‘culture’ and allow politics its proper space.

The most interesting discussions of individual thinkers come where Mulhern is able to pursue this larger argument, as he does in questioning Stuart Hall’s claim that at Birmingham there was an intention to produce Gramscian ‘organic intellectuals’. This, says Mulhern, reflects a symptomatically important misreading of Gramsci. The wish to take partisan positions feeds the mistaken idea that professional academics and popular social movements could ever be in anything like an ‘organic’ relation. The entire project, Mulhern goes on to claim, pursued a ‘political break’ within a domain, that of cultural critique, which precisely does not acknowledge the political. One may recognize the force of the criticism, while registering Mulhern’s recurrent tendency to rebuke others for failing to think their way out of contradictions that cannot be overcome in thought. His arguments implicitly enjoin us to take political action if the ends we seek are political. If the definition of political action excludes even the kinds of engaged intellectual work done at Birmingham, then this could be mistaken for an injunction not so much to think/write better about culture as to spend less time on such thinking/writing – an injunction made more straightforwardly on Eagleton’s penultimate page: ‘cultural theorists *qua* cultural theorists have precious little to contribute’, says Eagleton, to resolving humanity’s pressing concerns.

We can agree that the world of immediate political demands remains largely unaffected by academic theorizing, and that politics as socially regulated contestation over specified ends operates within its own domain. However, if the ‘political’ also denotes any kind of general re-imagining of the social, then this can hardly be sealed off from the ‘cultural’. In a coda, Mulhern invokes Lukács, speaking in 1919 as a member of the Hungarian revolutionary government. Lukács, advocating ‘conscious action directed towards the comprehended totality of society’, envisages the abolition of ‘the economic’ as an autonomous sphere, inaugurating ‘a state of things in which “ideology” becomes the dominant, “the authentic content of human life”’. Mulhern offers this as political ‘lucidity’

and a rebuke to today’s ‘parochial’ understandings, but such a conception of the political, disastrous in Soviet practice, has surely to be seen as an equivocal resource of the European cultural imaginary. Indeed one might argue that we desperately need to imagine a way of subordinating ‘economics’ *without* instituting a politics that aims or claims to govern ‘the comprehended totality’: it is politics, rather than culture, which needs to be delimited.

It seems clear, now, that the academic politicization of ‘culture’ has in part to be understood as the cultural-critical deployment by Left intellectuals of ideas regarding ‘the totality’ which they – we – were unable to make effective in actuality. Cultural studies, as indeed Mulhern puts it (summarizing an argument of Todd Gitlin’s), may be a ‘redemptive substitute for blocked or defeated movements’. Mulhern presses



towards such large questions, which he can do little more than indicate, given the book’s series remit as a text for undergraduates. I stress the context of publication, because this reminds us that the meta-discursive and self-reflexive temper of current writing about culture poses intractable problems of audience and address. Literary-cultural academics talk to each other in these complicated ways: one in four cultural studies titles is now *about* cultural studies. One has to ask what these debates mean to students, who in most cases arrive in higher education with little experience of reading complex cultural texts/practices, let alone thinking consequentially about how these may be related to their contexts. If we are to find a way back from an improperly politicized, unmanageably diffuse and incessantly revisited discourse of ‘culture’, perhaps a disciplined assessment of our role as teachers may

help, and may encourage a focus on delimited cases, in which ‘cultural theory’ can confront some conditions and limits of its own applicability. Some of the best published work in ‘cultural studies’, missed when one attends only to the discourses of the metacultural, consists of case studies.

Mulhern places Williams on the cusp between ‘cultural diffusionism’ – a pedagogical and academic practice of allowing new readerships to engage with inherited texts – and that redefinition of the content of ‘culture’ which laid the grounds for cultural studies. As late as 1973, in *The Country and the City*, Williams was still working with a largely ‘canonical’ range of texts. ‘Cultural studies’, as this instance suggests, is not so much the entire displacement of one practice by another as the introduction of distinctively new text-objects (in media studies) and of more diverse textual canons, together with the de-naturalization of earlier disciplines and their boundaries. This inflection of existing curricula, across the text-based humanities

– though least of all, perhaps, in philosophy – has been attributable not just to the New Left but to the influence of feminist critique and scholarship, and subsequently of work addressing the situation of subaltern and oppressed minorities. The academy has responded to, as well as helped, to fashion broader intellectual and social changes, a point inadequately acknowledged in Mulhern’s bibliocentric history and too dismissively registered in Eagleton’s mockeries of ‘identity politics’. The ‘culture’ we diffuse has changed. Just for this reason, ‘cultural diffusion’, within a broadly social-democratic educational project, remains an honourable project, worth defending against government-sponsored neo-vocationalism and Internet hype. Here, perhaps, as much as in the theoretical revisionings recommended by Mulhern and Eagleton, Left academics in the humanities might still articulate a modest and modestly political common project, in relation to some shared notion of what might count as a better cultural future.

Martin Ryle

Why not?

Lynne Segal, *Why Feminism? Gender, Psychology, Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999. xiii + 286 pp., £49.40 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 7456 1500 7 hb., 0 7456 2347 6 pb.

A crude account of the last thirty-odd years of feminism may help to show why Lynne Segal is particularly well placed to offer us an account that isn’t crude. Crudely, there’s been a shift in feminism’s focus – a shift from social structure to culture, from politics to theory, from the collective to the individual, from the material to the symbolic. So whereas in the 1970s feminists’ academic outputs were to be found mainly in the social sciences, in the 1990s they were to be found mainly in the arts and humanities. And whereas a feminist of 1970 took herself to belong to a unified collective movement, three decades later she is supposed to be keenly aware of the multiply fragmented character of any social identity.

Lynne Segal’s special qualifications to report on three decades of feminist writings depend in part on her disciplinary connections. By affiliation she is a psychologist, although at a considerable distance from psychology’s mainstream. She has inhabited the centre of Feminist Studies since its inception, and her own work has always been genuinely interdisciplinary, crossing academic boundaries with easy erudition. But there is another feature of Segal and of her approach

which makes her overview of feminism’s recent history uniquely interesting. Having witnessed the evolution of feminism from the inside, Segal knows about women’s activism, as well as about feminism’s academic moments. The Liberation Movement that grew in the late 1960s had a vision; and the possibility of a vision of society’s transformation inspires her account of subsequent developments. It provides a sort of normative reference point throughout – a point of continuity for the assessment of very disparate academic work. Does it contribute to understanding the social reality of gender relations? Is it at the service of politics?

Segal thinks that a vastly distorted account of feminism’s past is acquiring the status of received wisdom. First there were white middle-class women of unshakeable conviction who naively supposed that there was a single hierarchy of power based on sex. And then – according to this account (or at least to a caricature of it which accentuates the usual distortions) – starting in the late 1970s, feminists came gradually to appreciate that there were more differences between human beings than could be understood

using the category of gender. Finally, at stage three, which takes us to the present, feminism lost connection with political projects altogether and became absorbed in retheorizing signifiers and subjectivity. There are two major flaws in any such story, by Segal's lights (and I agree). First, the representation of early second-wave feminists as inflexibly wedded to the idea that all domination and oppression was by males of females is simply untrue to the facts and to the texts: in Britain at least, these women were socialists. Second, the story tends to conflate the real world with the academic. The recent disconnection of feminist theory from feminist practice within the academy shouldn't be mistaken for an end to properly feminist politics. For, on the one hand, old struggles carry on, albeit abated. And, on the other hand, there is still plenty of space for criticism – of the present – informed by understandings of gender.

We know at any rate that feminism's popular face today doesn't wear the expression of the post-structuralist theorizing that feminism in some quarters is supposed to have become. One popular line goes, 'Feminism has achieved a great deal but there's still a way to go.' Another goes, 'Feminism has achieved so much that we should turn our attention to the problems of men.' The first line encourages us to think that we need only stay with the mainstream now that equal opportunities are officially on the agenda; everything that feminists ever wanted will follow as a matter of course. The second encourages us to think we have already gone too far and must restore some of the prizes to men. Segal doesn't dispute feminism's achievements, but she thinks that both lines conceal the truth. If one is to describe the present in the terms of either of the two popular lines, then one participates in the very thinking that we are told got feminism off on the wrong foot – when, according to the story, feminists thought that *only* gender differences were politically relevant differences. In reality, gender politics was never about dividing up the prizes in a competition between the sexes.

Certainly, there is plenty of evidence that these are troubled times for many men, and it is very plausible that the achievements of feminists have something to do with this. But it isn't as if women have come to have more than their fair share (in earnings terms, for instance, they still fall way behind men throughout the First and Third Worlds alike). And it is surely still true, if one wants to generalize, that women's political and economic power and access to cultural prestige remains less than men's. Segal offers a diagnosis which treats men's difficulties with 'masculinity' and women's persisting secondary status as aspects of a

single problem. Putative male failings are so apparent – both to individual men and to statistical surveys – because 'manhood' still has a symbolic weight which is denied to 'womanhood'. The diagnosis relies upon refusing to treat gender relations in abstraction from all others. Only specific groups of men actually occupy positions of public power, political and corporate. But they ensure that a hierarchical structuring of gender which conveys the old meaning of manhood continues, and that the equation of 'masculinity' with power lives on. Except that the equation now works to the detriment of women *and* men, or at least of most women and most men: most people are ordinary (not especially rich or powerful) people.

Segal's analysis of this situation attends to the material and the symbolic. And it moves through psychological categories. Segal evidently thinks that psychological sophistication was lacking in the early days. Her explorations of much recent and current theory are motivated by the need to achieve such sophistication. It isn't found in mainstream psychology. Feminism needs psychoanalysis, Segal thinks. But it also needs to turn some psychoanalytic premisses on their heads so as to release the theory from *hierarchical* sexual difference. Segal has nothing kind to say about Lacan's 'uniquely fatalistic phallicism'.

Segal is critical of much of the material she reviews, and finds it hard to take all of it seriously. She doesn't have much time for theory which characterizes the subject (or self) so as to distance her from the role or agent, or for theory which is so remote from real-life concerns as to be incommensurate with any practical solutions. But Segal is always patient and fair, and prepared to explain complexities wherever they might introduce a richness to our understanding of something about which something might be done.

In trying to convey a sense of where Segal stands in relation to feminism's history, I have failed to mention how very *useful* her book will be to those who want to learn about the debates as they have developed and continue. It is extraordinarily knowledgeable. Her chapter on evolutionary psychology, for instance, although it is wholly and predictably dismissive (a single false assumption about biology's relation to culture pervades the entire subject), nevertheless has the same breadth of reference as those in which she has real sympathy for the work she is examining. Her account of the history of gender's conceptualization and queer theory's attempts at subversion is unusually instructive. And her treatment of controversies over memory and trauma is nuanced and balanced.

Segal doesn't think that feminism has made the triumphant progress which some might nowadays claim for it, or which socialist feminists might actually have hoped for a while ago. Inequalities generally have increased and are increasing, and there ought to be as much scope as ever for radical politics. Segal might have been cynical or dispirited. She isn't: *Why Feminism?* is resolutely good-humoured. She might have hankered after the past. She doesn't: *Why Feminism?* is never nostalgic. If there is anything for which Segal conveys a residual longing, it is the restoration of some vision, and of a sense of shared commitment that moved so many women in the past.

Jennifer Hornsby

A theory of one's own

Toril Moi, *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999. xxiv + 517 pp., £25.00 hb., 0 19 8122242 X.

Toril Moi is a woman, an intellectual woman, a feminist theoretician. Setting out from reflections on her personal history, Moi argues that it can be immensely liberating to realize that there is nothing inherently wrong with the word 'woman'. It is also liberating, she goes on to suggest – against other feminist scholars in North America now abandoning the 'alienating' rigours of theory for the intimate pleasures of autobiography – to have the courage to achieve 'a theoretical voice of one's own'. With Simone de Beauvoir her constant guide and inspiration, Judith Butler and poststructuralism the source of much of her disquiet, and Stanley Cavell and Ludwig Wittgenstein her new philosophical friends, Moi embarks on the project of rethinking what it means to proclaim oneself a woman today.

This exploration of the contradictions of 'being a woman' covers a great deal of by now very well-rehearsed ground. In the two main essays, Moi devotes over a hundred pages to an extended critique of the sex/gender distinction and its equivocal, usually misconceived, relation to the thinker who first inspired it, Simone de Beauvoir. This exhaustive and occasionally repetitive coverage of the debate, at a time when many feminists have declared it obsolete, allows Moi to recapitulate what has been her major concern for over a decade: the reinstatement of de Beauvoir as 'the emblematic intellectual woman' of the twentieth

century and its 'greatest feminist theorist', much misunderstood and lamentably underrated by her feminist heirs.

Throughout the book, Moi is unwavering in her support of de Beauvoir as having already solved the dilemmas feminists confront continuously as we oscillate between criticism and celebration of 'femininity' and 'the female body'. 'Contemporary feminist theory has never formulated this problem as well as Beauvoir did', she writes. I am not so sure. Moi has a far less critical eye for her mentor here than in her previous book, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (1994). There, Moi more readily conceded the provocations in de Beauvoir's clarion call for women to throw off their chains and strive for freedom and full humanity, in *The Second Sex* (1949). Once feminism re-emerged as a collective movement two decades later, de Beauvoir's existentialist ideals soon seemed dangerously circumscribed by her troubled abhorrence of the 'feminine' and her boundless admiration for the 'masculine' – however much she also registered the workings of patriarchal perceptions underpinning the cultural fears and idealizations which shaped her our subjectivity.

Nonetheless, Moi is surely right – although certainly far from the first – to stress that de Beauvoir herself avoids many of the pitfalls of the Anglo-American sex/gender distinction, which has – at least until recently – tended to downplay the role of biology and the material body, as insignificant raw material, passively waiting to be named, mapped and thereby helped into actuality by the far weightier and oppressive cultural forces that bear upon them. De Beauvoir's deployment of Merleau-Ponty's account of the sexed body as not 'a thing' but rather a 'situation' is, as Moi emphasizes (rather too often), helpful in so far as it reveals the body as always fundamentally ambiguous: 'The body is a historical sedimentation of our way of living in the world, and of the world's way of living in us.' The body and the meanings we give to it are always, at one and the same time, both biological and cultural: the one is never reducible to the other. Quite so. Meanwhile, Moi criticizes Judith Butler and other poststructuralists for reducing the body to a 'congealed ideological construct' – a wholly 'cultural', never 'natural', affair. Doubtless Butler would respond that Moi has simplified her position. But Moi's Beauvoirian formulation of the body, and of being a woman, as a condition of 'open-ended becoming' has, at the very least, the merit of proving easier to understand and deploy than Butler's more contorted formulations of semiotically driven performativities.

That said, Moi's ponderous working through of the sex/gender distinction displays an unconvincing tendency to assert its own originality, as singular successor to de Beauvoir. After 'queer theory', for example, she is merely echoing a long familiar complaint in suggesting that 'generalizations about gender may be just as oppressive as generalizations about sex'. And like them, she dismisses far too lightly the purchase and appeal of biological determination, failing to register the sweeping rise of evolutionary psychology and new genetic reductionisms in her suggestion that such essentialism is no longer 'the most pressing obstacle to an emancipatory understanding of what a woman is'. At times it is hard not to feel some irritation at the self-regard accompanying Moi's close attention to the nuances driving her own writing as a feminist intellectual, tightly bounded as they are by a politics restricted to the academy: from her fond memories of the 'courageous and free' selfhood behind her book *Sexual/Textual Politics* to detailed commentary upon the feminists who have criticized it. This makes her attack on other feminists for being 'spectacularly unconcerned with class' less than compelling. Her own sole reference to that social category occurs in an analysis of courtly love – presumably, not quite the neglect she had in mind when berating her peers.

In shorter essays from the last two decades, Moi appropriates Bourdieu and Freud for feminism (again assisted by de Beauvoir), before concluding with a section analysing texts of love. It is only here, at the finishing line, that Moi finally faults her mentor, in de Beauvoir's coldly hostile censure of the abandoned older woman, Monique, in *The Woman Destroyed*: the agent of her own destruction for not appreciating the greater independence and intelligence of her husband and his new lover, making them superior creatures to herself. In the face of de Beauvoir's complete abandonment of the domesticated woman (as too loving and too dependent), on the penultimate page of the book Moi admits: 'It is in this sense that the feminists in 1968 were right to criticize [this] story: in the end it does not allow for change, let alone revolutionary transformation.' This is an abrupt ending to a book which began with a rather grand claim: 'No feminist has produced a better theory of the embodied, sexually different human being than Simone de Beauvoir.'

For anyone interested in the last thirty years of feminist reflections on what a woman is, Moi provides a wealth of useful material – although it might have benefited from a good editor. In its proclaimed disdain for the obscurities of theoreticism in favour of the 'things that really matter', we can see both

the strengths and limitations of much contemporary feminist theory. For what really matters to Moi is to lead a fulfilled and committed life as an intellectual woman within the elite section of the North American university system. Fair enough. But the debates which provide both the irritation and the inspiration for Moi are far narrower than the ground on which de Beauvoir and her political generation energetically fought for freedom, equality and solidarity with the most oppressed peoples of the world, including – albeit for de Beauvoir rarely freely from ambivalence – the women of the world. Moi's feminism begins and ends within the confines of academia, which exists to cultivate the academism she enjoys admonishing.

Lynne Segal

A blazing apostle

Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999. 160 pp., £33.50 hb., £13.50 pb., 0 8166 3139 5 hb., 0 8166 3140 9 pb.

In this truly extraordinary book Deleuze has perhaps at last found his reader. The fact that Badiou writes as a philosophical adversary adds a level of dramatic intensity to the encounter. There was always a relationship of opposites, and Badiou is frank in his view that here there is no possibility of a dialectical synthesis of the two positions. His book shows that the stakes of the encounter between the two systems of thought are as high as they can be. Badiou approaches Deleuze as a philosophical outsider who had no truck with either the analytical bent for grammatical logicizing reductions or the continental establishment (phenomenology) with its reduction of living actualizations to intentional correlations of consciousness. Deleuze's oddity as a contemporary figure stands out in two respects: he cannot be made part of the discourse of postmetaphysical modernity (at least not in any simple or straightforward manner), and he never accepted a post-Kantian fate. In spite of the fact that Deleuze dwelt in a different philosophical space to his own, Badiou feels a close affinity with him because of what he regards as the essentially and resolutely 'classical' character of Deleuze's project: metaphysics can more than withstand the Kantian critique and remains, as ever, philosophy's task (consider Deleuze's refusal to treat Spinoza and Leibniz simply as pre-critical thinkers).

It was only in the last years of Deleuze's life that the philosophical agon between him and Badiou began in earnest and took the form of a correspondence over the philosophical questions of paramount concern to both: the nature of multiplicities (should this be thought in terms of an ontology of set theory or in terms of Bergson's typology of actual/discrete and virtual/continuous multiplicities?), the reality of the virtual (which proves to be the decisive issue separating the two), and a thinking of the event (does the event belong to the ontological order, even an order ruled by an-archy, or does it interrupt the order of being? What is the 'site' of 'extra-Being'?). For the two decades of the 1960s and the 1970s Badiou saw himself as the Maoist enemy of the champion of desire and anarcho-revolution (this is, paradoxically, the popular image of Deleuze that Badiou desires more than any other to demolish in this book), and he recounts rich episodes from those youthful days, including the time he commanded a brigade that intervened in Deleuze's courses. Deleuze, along with Lyotard, eventually accused Badiou of 'Bolshevism' and retook control of his department. It was only with Deleuze's vigorous public criticism of the 'New Philosophers' that Badiou saw the possibility of an alliance with his old enemy. He had still yet to engage seriously with the texts themselves. However, with the publication of his magnum opus in 1988, *L'Être et l'événement*, a text in desperate need of an informed

English translation, Badiou came to appreciate that his advocacy of an ontology of the multiple that is irreducible to the One or to univocity was positioned against Deleuze. In spite, then, of a common front against certain rivals to the integrity of the philosophical endeavour, in the end they were destined to be philosophical poles apart. In spite of (and maybe because of) the fact that Badiou construes Deleuze as his principal rival, he has succeeded in composing what is the most incisive reading of Deleuze to date. The book is full of stunning philosophical insights into the nature of Deleuze's project and makes for extraordinary reading. It has two main flaws in my view.

The first flaw is that it is overly polemical. The publishers are advertising the 'effect' of this book as a 'bomb', owing to the fact Badiou overturns what is taken to be the widespread but deluded image of Deleuze as an anarcho-democratic thinker dedicated to the liberation of free-floating desire and the realization of the life-chances of the libidinally driven self. Badiou wishes to replace this libertarian Deleuze with one that is aristocratic and ascetic (authentically Nietzschean!), devoted to disciplining the passions and affects in the direction of the impersonal life of the non-organic. But one would have to be pretty stupid and/or naive to think that *Anti-Oedipus* could ever be made susceptible to an existentialist reading ('desire' has always been read as strictly impersonal). The shock of the book is



more likely to strike Hegelians and Heideggerians: the former in being told that Deleuze's project is closer to their own than either camp could ever imagine (being is memory or recollection for both, Badiou contends); the latter in being shown that Deleuze is Heidegger's most informed critical reader and provides the ultimate challenge to his questioning of Being (the contention is that he is a 'conniving priest' who remains within phenomenology). The second flaw with the book is that it is far too short and its arguments too succinct for many of its central claims to be sustained and rendered persuasive. Let me select one example to illustrate this point.

Badiou rightly places tremendous importance on the notion of the 'virtual' within Deleuze's thinking of being and time. Indeed, he claims that it is the *principal name* of Being in Deleuze's work and goes so far as to claim that Deleuze ends up producing a 'Platonism of the virtual' (in contrast to the Platonism of the multiple Badiou desires). Badiou does not believe in the existence or being of the virtual. In addition, he argues that Deleuze's unfolding of the reality of the virtual is incoherent. He asks at one point, for example, how can one consistently rank, as Deleuze does, the virtual as an 'image'? Surely, as the power that is 'proper to the One', it is impossible for the virtual to be a simulacrum? While this virtual being can give rise to images, no image can be given of it. Now, while Badiou is one of the few serious and informed writers on Deleuze to note that his real teacher is neither Spinoza nor Nietzsche but Bergson, he fails in this criticism of the virtual (conceived as the 'virtual image') to note that Deleuze is drawing on the construction of the image in Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, where matter is depicted in terms of an 'aggregate of images', a construction that aims to be neither idealist nor phenomenological. Moreover, Badiou has failed to locate the source of Bergson's utilization of the notion of matter as 'image', which, admittedly, is an ancient and classical source, and it is not Platonism but Epicureanism. If Badiou had produced an actual reading of Bergson's text, as well as a more informed reading of Deleuze's 'Cinema' books (which draw heavily on Bergson and demonstrate the enduring character of Bergson's influence), he would have appreciated precisely in what sense the virtual can be treated as an 'image' and that such a treatment is perfectly legitimate. Instead Badiou persists in reading the virtual in terms of an ontological substance (the power of the One), but this is to sacrifice the innovations of Bergson's movement of thought to Spinozism. Bergson was keen to distinguish

his conception of creative evolution from Spinoza's substance, and insisted that the creative power of life not be conceived in terms of the 'One'.

For Badiou Deleuze is, like Heidegger, a pre-Socratic, not in any Parmenidean sense (inaugurating the unconcealment of Being), but in the Greek sense of the physicist (a thinker of the 'All'). As our great contemporary physicist he was prone to the power of 'speculative dreaming' and assuming a prophetic 'quivering tonality'. But it is a prophecy without any promise of salvation: Deleuze 'said of Spinoza that he was the Christ of philosophy. To do Deleuze full justice, let us say that, of this Christ ... he was truly a most eminent apostle.' The character of Badiou's fascination with Deleuze is admirable, even exemplary. Why should we read Deleuze? For Badiou it is because Deleuze has opened up the possibilities of the philosophical project – the project of ontology and metaphysics – in a period when many have given up on it, devoted themselves to overcoming it, or shamed the discipline of thought with their preference for the conveyancing of philosophical clichés. A novel alliance can be constructed out of this philosophical agon between the two, consisting of a serene indifference in the face of precocious and portentous pronouncements on the end of philosophy. You cannot think beyond the human condition!, goes the prohibition. As Badiou points out, if metaphysics is to remain the ideal of philosophy, the question is not simply 'Is it still possible?', but rather, 'Are we still capable of it?'

Keith Ansell Pearson

As Americans...

Georgia Warnke, *Legitimate Differences: Interpretation in the Abortion Controversy and Other Public Debates*, California University Press, Berkeley, 1999. xi + 214 pp., £24.95 hb., 0 520 21633 4.

Georgia Warnke's book treats a range of issues as they feature in American public life in an admirably careful and imaginative manner. The emphasis is on finding common ground between different viewpoints in order to locate precisely where key differences lie, and on using that understanding to find a way forward for public policy. Warnke gives subtle and engaging in-depth discussions of surrogate mothering, affirmative action, abortion, and pornography; and there are also chapters devoted to the meta-ethical and methodological questions. Her position is that ethical

debates have an irreducibly hermeneutical character and that an acknowledgement of this might lead us 'to appreciate the possibility of different legitimate compromises and accommodations ... with the salutary result that all can learn from the solutions or partial solutions each state and community has found to the understanding of principles we continue to share.'

Warnke's view is that we make a mistake when we characterize the two sides in, say, the abortion debate as adhering to conflicting moral principles: a right to life versus a right to choose, or a principle of life versus a principle of liberty. However, she aims to show that attempts to advance such debates by digging 'down further below the principles on which we seem to disagree to a deeper core of moral agreement ... fail to recognize both the depth of our differences and ... their interpretive character.' But there is a problem here. For it is unclear that the interpretive approach to moral disagreement does not precisely rely on establishing common ground between different parties in a given debate. Indeed, Warnke's own explicit claim is that, contrary to appearances, the different parties to the debates she considers *in fact* share the moral principles involved on both sides, yet differ over their interpretation:

[A]s Americans we do indeed share moral principles. Those who are pro-life do not reject the principle of liberty, nor do those who are pro-choice reject the principle of the sanctity of life. Likewise, those who defend affirmative action policies do not reject the principle of equality, and those who criticize affirmative action policies do not ignore all considerations of fairness and diversity that their proponents defend.

To proceed in moral debate by establishing agreement over principle and aiming to identify differences of interpretation strikes me as a paradigm case of digging for common ground. I doubt, then, that the hermeneutical approach is distinctive on this particular score. I suspect, in fact, the method of examining closely all parties' views in any given ethical debate is shared, and equally encouraged, by the clash-of-principle conception, which casts disagreements as differences over which principles apply where.

What is undoubtedly distinctive about the interpretive conception, however, is the ethical pluralism it helps us to understand and to value. Here the perceptive and always fair-minded manner in which Warnke accounts for the debates is a treat in itself, but it also constitutes evidence for her overarching meta-ethical claim that the hermeneutical approach facilitates the search for moral negotiation and accommodation.

The manner in which that approach makes way for pluralism is understood in comparison with literary interpretation; in particular, reference to the work of Jane Austen, and, most notably, Emma Thompson's reading of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* in her screenplay adaptation. The discussions of literature are of interest in themselves, but their purpose here is to persuade the reader of the parallelism with our moral predicament: sites of moral disagreement are best treated as text-analogues, which receive a range of different interpretations that are in tension or even direct conflict with one another. As in literature, some of these interpretations may be simply off the wall, but others, including those which are more or less incompatible, can all be legitimate. One should not expect differences of interpretation to be eradicated by debate, even an ideally rational and extended debate, for the presumption that debate aims at interpretive closure so that a single correct interpretation will survive critical reflection is quite misplaced. It is not even particularly desirable, for there is much to be gained from an appreciation of the tensions. Different interpretations are good at illuminating different aspects of their shared object:

Interpretive discussions contribute to changing constellations of concerns and themes, to new ways of relating different texts and works of art, and to seeing them and us in new ways. But this ever-changing kaleidoscope does not require fevered argument, nor does the defense of one's own position require demonstrating that all other positions are false. It rather requires situating one's perspective in a context of other perspectives in a way that illuminates the text or work of art at issue and even contributes to our understanding of ourselves.

Here there is both a convincing meta-ethical case and a practical lesson in deliberation and debate. Warnke's recommendation is that the interpretive conception can be used in practice to look more successfully for moral accommodation. The idea that progress in moral debates does not depend on interpretive agreement over moral principles (though, as I've already suggested, it must surely depend on sufficient lower-level agreement) is a profoundly important one for multicultural societies, or indeed any society where there is reason to expect interpretive moral differences. Treating moral views as interpretive makes way for an acceptance and appreciation of the case for one or another interpretation and it encourages an appeal to the creative and salutary potential of the pluralist attitude to difference: 'Why not ... allow for a diversity in our descriptions of the situation and focus on what each description might add to the others?'

Warnke's book is a rewarding contribution to first-order debates, which also makes an eloquent case for the interpretive approach she aims to promote. Admittedly it has the feel of a book which has emerged from disparate papers, and the Conclusion suffers from a rush to say something about other moral issues not dealt with in the main text (thus there are varyingly brief discussions of same-sex marriage, the right to bear arms, euthanasia and capital punishment too, all in the space of the final thirteen pages). But this last-ditch bid for comprehensiveness is unnecessary. Overall, Warnke's book is an uncommon treat to moral, political and literary sensibilities, and its different points of focus come together to present a coherent and appealing philosophical picture of some important debates, which are topical and fractious not only in the USA but in Europe too.

Miranda Fricker

Dream on

Sean Sayers, *Plato's Republic: An Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999. xi + 173 pp., £9.95 pb., 0 7486 1188 6.

Sean Sayers's latest book, an excellent introduction to the *Republic*, is notable among others of its ilk for its strong socialist reading of the principles underlying the construction of Plato's ideal city. The task Sayers sets himself is to reinterpret the *Republic* in the context of a post-Cold War world, releasing its political understanding from the domineering grip of Popperian anti-communism. Sayers shares, however, something of Popper's attitude towards the interpretation of ancient texts, in so far as present political exigencies sanction a little anachronism. His avowed aim is to see beyond, whilst acknowledging, Plato's repellent authoritarian attitudes, to the deeper philosophical themes of the *Republic*, and to appropriate Plato's ideas in the terms of the (Western) present. Sayers succeeds in making the *Republic* live, and offers a basic education in socialist principles to boot.

Whereas Popper identifies the danger of the *Republic* in its proposing and/or sanctioning a totalitarian status quo, Sayers stresses throughout its *critical* utopianism, seeing it as an ideal against which to judge our actually existing societies. Against the cynicism and defeatism of the acceptance of capitalism triumphant,

Sayers insists on the social(ist) efficacy of 'utopian hopes and dreams'. The alternative – giving up/selling out – is indeed an unedifying spectacle, but many will still blanch (or maybe redden) at Sayers's strong identification of socialism, communism and Marxist philosophy (often not distinguished from each other) with utopian thinking.

The latter tendency is no doubt born partly of the demands of the introductory genre, as is the characteristic generosity of Sayers's reading throughout. What is usually read, for example, as Plato's rampant disregard for the individual is reinterpreted – *contra* the modern individualism of social contract theory – in terms of an insistence on the social character of human being and the understanding of the social totality as more than simply an aggregate of individuals. Similarly, Plato's stress on the priority of the interest of society as a whole is read in terms of a critique of Hobbesian psychological egoism. Thrasymachus – a smart but bullish Tory-cum-Machiavelli – is taken as representative of the modern thoughtless assumption that self-interest is the motive principle of human life; Plato his proto-socialist adversary arguing, on the contrary, that self-interest corrupts individuals and perverts social life. One small point dates Sayers's book somewhat: references to arch individualist-privatizer Margaret Thatcher, the Shockheaded Peter of modern British politics, with whom we shall scare future generations of students.

Although an introductory text – and a defence of a political *bête noire* at that – will inevitably simplify and gloss, two points rankle. First, Sayers's desire to recuperate Plato for modern socialist thought leads at times to an overidentification of the two which is in danger of misrepresenting both ('modern communists and Plato agree that private property and the family are the main causes of social strife, and that private property at least should be abolished'). Those of a Popperian disposition will only take this identification to confirm their anti-communism/anti-socialism. Second, the discussion of the role of women and of the family only saves Plato by ignoring quite a lot of what he actually says (forcible removal of Guardians' children, for example) and misrepresenting quite a lot of the rest (it is not true, for example, that all women are to be common to all men *and vice versa*). Even so, Sayers's book makes a welcome change in the otherwise mostly conservative literature.

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