REVIEWS

Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes (eds.), *Rationality and Relativism*, Basil Blackwell, 1982

Bryan Wilson's anthology of essays on 'Rationality', first published in 1970, has become something of a minor classic in recent analytical philosophy, bringing together the main contributions to a lively and accessible debate, and providing the starting-point for a host of subsequent discussions concerned with this important interface between philosophy and the social sciences. In a period when unease at the complacencies of linguistic analysis was only beginning to surface in British philosophy, it provided a demonstration that philosophical argument could bear directly on social and political issues. These issues are still very much alive. Is it relativism which is best suited to heading off what Ian Hacking has termed the 'philosophical B-52s', as not only followers of Winch or Feyerabend, but the majority of adherents of post-structuralist styles of thought appear to believe? Or does the advocacy of equal respect for all human beings, however such a notion may be interpreted politically, require the recognition of at least some universal principles of rationality?

In Rationality and Relativism, designed as a sequel to Rationality, and edited by two contributors to the former volume, this debate is continued in the somewhat altered circumstances of the early 1980s. One sign of this alteration is that the relativist pole of the argument is exemplified not by a 'hermeneutic' position, such as that of Peter Winch, but by the hard-line sociology of knowledge advocated by Barry Barnes and David Bloor. The suggestion is no longer that, if beliefs are grasped in terms of the role which they play in a 'form of life', then they can no longer be labelled as 'irrational', but that 'the incidence of all beliefs without exception calls for empirical investigation and must be accounted for by finding the specific local causes of this credibility'; accordingly much more time is devoted in this anthology to the problem of whether there must be an asymmetry in the explanation of rational and of irrational beliefs. Unfortunately, Barnes and Bloor never get round to investigating the 'local causes' of their own commitment to relativism. But, in their proselytising enthusiasm for a doctrine which undermines the point of attempting to persuade anyone of anything, they do provide a sharp philosophical marker for the remaining contributors to take their distance from.

Not all the other essays, however, are equally hostile to relativism. Steven Lukes seems resigned to a permanent plurality of frameworks in the social sciences, but rejects any suggestion that different human communities can be said to live in different natural worlds. Ian Hacking seeks to defend a qualified form of relativism, according to which there may be incommensurable 'styles of reasoning': it is not, he argues, truth itself which is relative, but the very eligibility of sentences to be assessed along the dimension of truth and falsity. Against this suggestion that there cannot be meta-reasons for styles of reasoning, W. Newton-Smith argues that any theoretical mode must at some point hook up with humble, non-theoretical propositions which will provide a means of assessing its overall adequacy: style and content are simply not that separable.

A similar concern with cognitive styles is at the centre of Charles Taylor's paper, one of the most interesting in the collection. Taylor contends that the generosity manifested in the 'symbolic' or 'expressive' interpretation of apparently absurd or erroneous beliefs is misguided, since it presupposes that primitive societies, or earlier stages of our own culture, recognised a domain of purely expressive thought. In fact, it is a distinctive feature of our kind of civilisation that we possess a science and technology from which the expressive dimension has been purged, and - correspondingly - a form of activity which allows expression uninhibited play (presumably Taylor is thinking of autonomous art). For a Renaissance magus, by contrast, the task of understanding is inseparable from the aim of achieving a state of harmony with the universe. But this is not to say that the astrologer or alchemist has no practical goals: he or she is genuinely attempting, although unsuccessfully, to predict the future, or to transform base metals into gold. Thus Taylor suggests that 'it wouldn't do to say ... that ritual practices in some primitive society were to be understood simply as symbolic, that is, directed at attunement and not at practical control.' Pre- and post-Galilean science may, in one sense, be said to be incommensurable, since they are activities with different purposes. Yet we can still say that modern science achieves more adequately one of the aims of traditional forms of knowledge: technical mastery over nature.

Taylor's contentions are supported by Robin Horton's 'Tradition and Modernity Revisited', in which Horton reviews and revises the celebrated comparison of African and Western thought which he presented in the original Rationality volume. Horton, too, argues that 'the use of theory in the explanation, prediction and control of events' is central to a 'common core' of rationality which is shared by both

traditional and modern cultures. However, this common core is shaped in very different ways in the two types of social world: traditional societies - although not hostile to all theoretical revision - tend to inhibit the formation of a plurality of competing theories and to underplay the discontinuity between past and present beliefs, whereas 'cognitive modernism' is characterised by a willingness to innovate radically, by a 'continuous theoretical monitoring of the cognitive framework', and by an orientation towards progress rather than preservation as the primary value. To an even greater extent than Taylor, who suggests merely that the natural science model has 'wreaked havoc' when applied to society, Horton emphasises that cognitive modernism is a 'Pandora's Box' which 'contains an array of intellectual diseases which has no parallel in traditionalistic theorising', and he stresses that both modern and traditional theorising must be seen as rational responses to the problem of explanation in the kind of society to which they belong. Horton's sensitivity in this respect contrasts sharply with the tone of Ernest Gellner's contribution, which consists in a blunt celebration of the triumphant 'One World' of modern science.

Among the other pieces, Dan Sperber attempts a critique of relativism in terms of a distinction between 'factual' and 'representational' beliefs. A representational belief is a proposition which we are committed to as being true under some interpretation, although we are not presently, and may never be, in possession of that interpretation: an example - probably subscribed to by the majority of readers of this magazine - would be: 'Only in a socialist society can human beings achieve their full potential.' Many anthropologists, Sperber suggests, have failed to observe this distinction, and have therefore been tempted by relativism as a means of explaining away the apparent incredibility of what are in fact 'representational' beliefs, the majority of culturally-transmitted beliefs being of this kind. Martin Hollis offers a defence of the view that, in Vico's words, 'There must in human institutions be a mental language common to all nations, which uniformly grasps the substance of things feasible in social life.' Against the depredations of Barnes and Bloor-type relativism, Hollis argues for the autonomy of Reason, which he defines as 'the portmanteau name for the rules of proof, which aid the mind in securing a priori knowledge, and for the canons of evidence, used in judging the truth of beliefs against the facts of an independent world'.

It is here, however, that some of the most difficult questions - scarcely touched on in this collection - begin to arise. The anti-relativists are obliged to defend some form of the universality of reason, to assume the existence of what Steven Lukes, in his summarising contribution, calls 'a bridgehead of common standards and common beliefs' between different eras and cultures. Yet relativists, at this point, can return with the taunt that, although anti-relativists are committed to the existence of such a bridgehead, they appear to have permanent difficulty in specifying what these common standards and beliefs might be. At this point the anti-relativist can perhaps usefully refer to the recent work of Jürgen Habermas, a shadowy presence in several of the discussions in this book, particularly that of Charles Taylor. Habermas acknowledges that there is not much hope of identifying specific beliefs, 'canons of evidence' or methodological recommendations as rational per se, as Horton seems to assume. But he suggests that there is built into the foundations of argumentative discourse an anticipation of the conditions under which the acceptance of beliefs would guarantee their rationality, conditions of unconstrained consensus. Such an account of rationality, concerned with the forms of communication in which claims to truth (and other validity-claims) are resolved, rather than with the specific content of such claims, would seem to be the best present hope for a theory which can overcome the potentially conservative - even nihilistic - implications of relativism, while at the same time - because it is based on the idea of unforced consensus - disarming the 'philosophical B-52s'.

Peter Dews

Gilles Deleuze: *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Athlone Press, £16 hc; Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £18.50 hc.

In his autobiography, Alexander Herzen complained that Hegel's philosophy 'led straight to the recognition of the existing authorities, to a man's sitting with folded hands, and that was just what the Berlin Buddhists wanted'. Deleuze makes a similar, albeit more philosophical, point when he writes, 'the dialectic is a fundamentally Christian way of thinking, powerless to create new ways of thinking and feeling.' Whereas Marxism has claimed to have sublated Hegel by appropriating the radical form (the dialectic as method) and dispensing with the conservative content, Deleuze makes no such distinction - both the form and content of Hegel's philosophy are rejected as 'reactive'. The originality of Deleuze's argument lies in thinking the critique of Hegel from the perspective of Nietzsche.

First published in France in 1962, Nietzsche and Philosophy represents a seminal reading of Nietzsche's writings which has exercised a tremendous influence on much recent French thought. In an effort to break away from the Hegelian tradition, Deleuze places Nietzsche in a strategic role as the first real critic of Hegel and dialectical thought. Establishing a new empiricism and a new pragmatism - the interpretation of forces, the evaluation of power - Nietzsche is seen as proposing 'a new image of thought' which serves as an alternative radical philosophy and challenges the hegemony of the dialectic.

Deleuze's argument revolves around the task of demonstrating the essential difference between Nietzsche's thought and Hegel's thought. The former's is affirmative and active, predicated on 'difference', the latter's is negative and reactive, predicated on identity. Deleuze illustrates his point with the example of the master/slave relationship and how it is construed by the two thinkers: where Hegel posits the relation in terms of recognition by the 'other' through negation and contradiction, in Nietzsche the relation is posited in terms of affirmative difference (the 'pathos of distance'). The affirmative subject does not 'oppose' nor is 'contradicted' by the 'other' - it differentiates itself and affirms its difference: 'Affirmation is the enjoyment and play of its own difference, just as negation is the suffering and labour of the opposition that belongs to it' (p. 189). Hegel's negative, dialectical thought is rejected because 'it is exhausted by compromise. It never makes us overcome the reactive forces which are expressed in man, self-consciousness, reason, morality and religion. It even has the opposite effect - it turns these forces into something a little more "our own"' (p. 89). It is philosophy thought from the perspective of the slave.

The book is divided into five main sections. The first, entitled The Tragic, introduces the general tenor of Nietzschean thought by characterising it as a tragic conception of the world which is opposed to dialectical and Christian conceptions. The second section, Active and Reactive, stresses the importance of the body in Nietzsche's thought, the distinction of forces in terms of activity and reactivity, and places an interpretation of the eternal return at the centre of the Nietzsche contra Hegel argument: 'Why should affirmation be better than negation?' (p. 86). The third section, entitled Critique, is perhaps the crucial section of the book. It sets out to specify Nietzsche's relation to Western metaphysics, with the relation between Nietzsche and Kant being decisive.

For Nietzsche, Kant's Copernican Revolution in philosophy signifies the impossibility, the end, of metaphysics. But Kant's critique did not go far enough: 'One of the principal motifs of Nietzsche's work is that Kant had not carried out a true critique because he was unable to pose the problem of critique in terms of values.' The aim of the principle of Nietzsche's philosophy - the will to power and the revaluation of all values - is to initiate not a tribunal

of reason but 'a genesis of reason.... What is the will which hides and expresses itself in reason?' (p. 91). Deleuze contends that with the Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche wanted to rewrite the Critique of Pure Reason, and this genealogical project is of great importance for the history of philosophy, for 'it runs counter not only to Kantianism but to the whole Kantian inheritance' (p. 88). Kant's failure to radicalise the traditional notion of critique meant that it was possible for Fichte and Hegel to interpret Critical Philosophy as marking the beginning, not the end, of metaphysics. 'What became of critique after Kant via the famous "critical critique" from Hegel to Feuerbach?' Deleuze asks. 'It became,' he replies, 'an art by which mind, self-consciousness, the critic himself, adapted themselves to things and ideas, an art by which man reappropriated determinations to which he claimed to have been deprived of, in short, the dialectic' (p. 88). Of the Young Hegelian critique of Hegel, Deleuze writes, drawing on Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, 'By turning theology into anthropology, by putting man in God's place, do we abolish the essential, that is to say, the place?' (ibid.). Nietzsche, argues Deleuze, proposes a new image of thought that places thought in the element of sense and value, for 'thinking is never the natural exercise of a faculty. Thought never thinks alone and by itself' (p. 108). The will to truth (Western metaphysics, morality, and religion) is inseparable from a will to power, and Nietzsche sees it the task of the true philosopher to call into question the value of truth.

Section 4, From Ressentiment to Bad Conscience, is an interpretation of the Genealogy of Morals in terms of a 'degenerated history', the triumph of the reactive forces in religion, morality, philosophy, and politics. The fifth and final section, The Overman: Against the Dialectic, develops further the contention made in section 1 that 'anti-Hegelianism runs through Nietzsche's work as its cutting edge' (p. 8). Nietzsche, Deleuze argues, is opposed to every form of thought that bases itself on the power of the negative, to thought, 'which moves in the element of the negative, which makes use of negation as a motor, a power, and a quality' (p. 179). It is Nietzsche who changes the relation between the negative movement and the affirmative movement: 'the negative ceases to be a primary quality and an autonomous power.' Negation does play a role in his thought but it is construed in non-dialectical terms, not as the opposite of affirmation but as essential component of it. Through the transvaluation of values and the eternal return, which Deleuze interprets in Kantian categorical imperative terms, the negative becomes a power of affirming. Thus Nietzsche's great discovery is the 'negativity of the positive' as opposed to the 'positivity of the negative' (p. 180).

Throughout, Deleuze's argument is subtle and intricate, and justice cannot be done here to its complexity. The issues it raises and the challenge it presents are too large and important to be adequately dealt with in a book review. Nevertheless several critical remarks are worth making concerning the validity and tenability of the argument.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is Deleuze's flat refusal to take into account textual and biographical evidence to support his argument (p. 187), for such evidence suggests that Nietzsche had a very superficial reading of Hegel largely derived from second-hand sources - Burckhardt, Schopenhauer, Friedrich Lange, and Young Hegelians like Bauer and Strauss. The evidence does not support Deleuze's claim that 'anti-Hegelianism' provides the 'cutting edge' for Nietzsche's thought. It shows such a claim to be absurd. Deleuze's argument frequently assumes the guise of 'an unintelligent rage against Hegel' (Beyond Good and Evil, Section 206). To describe Hegel's thought as no more than a conflation of philosophy and theology is to adopt a very crude reading of Hegel's critique of Christianity. Could it not be that Hegel's critique is as radical as Nietzsche's, if not more, for, by carrying out an immanent critique, Hegel undermined Christianity from within? Deleuze pays little serious attention to Hegel's speculative philosophy and the different possible ways it can be construed. To say that Hegel hypostatises the role of the negative into an autonomous one is to make the negative movement and the affirmative movement in his thought distinct, which they are not. For Hegel every negation is a determinate negation. It is neither formal nor abstract. Deleuze's antipathy to Hegel's dialectics can be partly explained on the basis of his ahistorical conception of philosophy. For him philosophy 'is always untimely ... there is no eternal or historical philosophy' (p. 107). And yet philosophy is a critique of the present, 'at its most positive as critique, as an enterprise of demystification'. Philosophy's own mystification, however, begins 'from the moment it renounces its role as demystifier and takes the established powers into consideration'. Deleuze, by equating taking established power into consideration with justification and endorsement of established power, has made it impossible for himself to see dialectical thinking as a radical critique of power. Consequently, Hegel can appear to him as no more than the official philosopher of the Prussian state.

I would not dispute the fact that Nietzsche possessed a deep distrust of dialectics, but to portray Hegel as the target of all Nietzsche's criticisms is to omit the historically pertinent critique of Socrates. To say that Nietzsche is against the dialectic per se is to transform his historically specific critique into an unhistorical one. And, as a general point, I would argue that Deleuze's account of Nietzsche's writings is devoid of any 'historical sense', especially his reading of the Genealogy.

Once history has failed to deliver the goods, Deleuze has no further use for it. The goal of culture is 'the sovereign individual who defines himself by power over himself ... the free and powerful man' (p. 137), but history is evil (Deleuze turns Nietzsche's historical understanding of nihilism into an ahistorical one when he calls nihilism 'the a priori concept of universal history' - p. 166 - and diverts the course of culture in favour of the 'reactive forces'). 'We have neglected history', Deleuze says banally (p. 138). Religion, morality, philosophy, etc., are all treated in Deleuze's account as abstractions which are a priori reactive. Culture is described as 'formative activity' (p. 136), but since it only applies to 'man's prehistoric activity', history itself is presented in degenerative terms. In the Phenomenology Hegel treats religion, morality, philosophy, etc. as formative activities. This is precisely what Nietzsche is doing in the Genealogy.

The approach of the book is one of concerted polemic and bold assertions rather than trenchant analysis and argument. Deleuze presents the case for Nietzsche contra Hegel in the form of simple oppositions - genealogy versus dialectic, Nietzsche's 'yes' opposed to the dialectician's 'no', the play of difference opposed to the labour of the negative, 'lightness and dance to dialectical responsibilities' (p. 8). Despite Deleuze's insistence that opposition in Nietzsche is not a dialectical opposition but a differential affirmation (p. 17), he ends up presenting the critique of Hegel in oppositional terms whichever way you look at it. The main criticism that can be levelled against the post-structuralist appropriation of Nietzsche's work is that it dehistoricises that work, and, by eschewing dialectics, is compelled to present the critique of Hegel in terms of a spurious choice.

Deleuze then presents a tendentious reading of Nietzsche - Nietzsche as anti-metaphysician, pragmatist and pluralist. But this 'neo-Kantian' reading precludes Deleuze from being able to present the full complexity and ambiguity of Nietzsche's central discovery - nihilism (its 'undecidable' nature). Whereas Deleuze construes nihilism as an a priori reactive force, indeed as the a priori concept of history, Nietzsche, in the preface to the notebooks that form The Will to Power, construes the problem of nihilism in dialectical terms. In answer to the question as to why nihilism has become necessary he writes, 'because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals, because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these values had. We require, sometime, new values'. This is something fundamentally different from Deleuze's conception of the crea-

tion of new values ex nihilo. Thus when Deleuze says that Stirner is the dialectician who reveals nihilism as the truth of the dialectic (p. 121), we might riposte that Nietzsche is the dialectician who reveals dialectic as the truth of nihilism.

However, it should be said that when Deleuze is not engaging in pyrotechnic displays (which is most of the time) but philosophising with a hammer in the Nietzschean manner, he makes some devastating criticisms of Hegel's philosophy and its pretensions. Despite the many reservations I have, Deleuze has written a remarkable book. It is perhaps the most original, exciting, and challenging interpretation of Nietzsche to date.

In contrast to Deleuze's wonderfully intoxicating reading of Nietzsche, Schacht presents a very sober and scholarly account of Nietzsche's ideas. The aim of the book, a volume in the 'Arguments of the Philosophers' series, is to give the untutored reader a thorough introduction to Nietzsche as well as attempting to make his ideas accessible and interesting to Anglo-Saxon philosophers.

It is a fairly straightforward explication of Nietzsche's ideas and thus poses far fewer problems than Deleuze's book. In its orthodox Kantian organisation, the book treats Nietzsche's views on knowledge and truth, values and morality, art and aesthetics, and locates in his writings a philosophical cosmology and anthropology. Here Schacht is to be commended for his intelligent and sympathetic treatment. The major weakness of the book however is that it treats Nietzsche's ideas in a philosophical and historical vacuum. While the book may serve as a propaedeutic for analytical philosophers, to whom it primarily addresses itself, it does little for the rest of us. And the only advantage it has over Walter Kaufmann's classic of 1950, which for my money remains unsurpassed as an introduction to Nietzsche, is the length and analytical rigour and power of the explication.

Keith Pearson

THINGS ARE SELDOM WHAT THEY SEEM

Roland Gibson, *Logic as History of Science and Experience of Art*, 140 pp, Heinemann Educational Books, 1982, £12 pb

Heinemann have an agreeable track record in publishing slightly off-beat works, and this book is to be welcomed on those grounds. According to the blurb, the author 'has attempted to synthesise Marxism and formal logic by concentrating on Marx's fundamental propositions coupled with restoring the norm to merely positivistic logic through recognition of logic as behavioural'. Nor is this all. In a phrase calculated to touch every Radical Philosopher's heart, the blurb observes that 'academic philosophy has degenerated into arid technicalities in a context of anachronistic social relationships fettering evident possibilities for progress'. Stirring stuff. But I fear the blurb-writer did not read the book: Marx is only referred to en passant on page 3; and if this book is a possibility for progress, some of us have a bit of catching-up to do.

What Roland Gibson is doing (I think) is showing how various aspects of mathematics and other things can be put into pigeon-holes of matrices which can be hierarchically arranged and the dualities observed. (If you find my description unclear, you should read the book.) Now this enterprise is actually quite fun. If you want to bone up on metric space, or to discover the connection between Schoenberg's twelve-tone system and general relativity theory, then this is the book for you.

But stay alert, gentle reader. Things are not always what they seem. 'The reader is reminded that "history of science" here does not mean the usual anecdotal embedding in some absolutely independent temporal "stream"; but a generating function of moments in the general sense of references of statistical norms' (p. 42). I think matters would become clearer if this book were set to music. Is there some progressive composer out there who will take up the challenge?

John Fauvel

Isidor Walliman, *Estrangement: Marx's Conception of Human Nature and the Division of Labour* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981)

Elliott A. Krause, *Division of Labour: A Political Perspective* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981)

While much of the language of, and debate over, the concept of 'alienation' has seemingly passed out of fashion, discussions of the relationship of the division of labour to radical and socialist political and economic goals are widespread and thriving, and can in many ways be understood as the more practical and productive outcome of earlier indecisions concerning the problem of 'alienation'. Both of these books, to varying extents, accept the logic of this succession and attempt to build upon its claims by placing the division of labour at the very centre of socialist inquiry (where it belongs) and stressing its predominance over both 'alienation' and the question of property ownership per se. Walliman's chief argument is that previous interpreters of Marx have concentrated too much (usually in an effort to certify the existence of a humanistic Marx) upon the presence or absence of terms like Entfremdung in the texts, and upon attempts to measure or quantify 'alienation' in existing societies. Marx's conception, for Walliman, was rather grounded upon a notion of human nature in which intellect, emotion, will and consciousness were seen to be specifically human attributes separating humankind from the animal world. This characteristic human essence, however (though it undergoes some alteration through history) is violated whenever an involuntary division of labour hinders its realisation, e.g. through its ability to render the products of its labour subject to its own control. Human beings are hence 'estranged' not when scarcity exists, nor because of the objectification of their personalities in the products of their making, but rather when an alien will interferes with the process and product of labour.

Walliman's conception of this theory does improve upon many aspects of earlier accounts by Ollman, Meszaros and others, while not superseding them. To see an 'involuntary division of labour' as central to Marx's theory of estrangement aids in clarifying the relationship between the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 and the German Ideology, as well as the relation of these to later writings. Practically speaking, 'nationalisation' or 'socialization' of the means of production no longer becomes a solution to a condition brought to its highest stage of development under capitalism; what is important is the subjection of work and its conditions and results to individual and social control (though these are clearly different too) by ensuring a voluntary distribution of tasks even while certain forms of routine, as well as highly specialist work, may remain. Walliman is not concerned with the degree to which the later Marx may have suggested that various forms of the industrial division of labour might be inevitable (as is, for example, Ali Rattansi in his study of Marx). Her treatment of the early works in the context of the division of labour is however quite useful, although weak in its lack of definition (following Marx's omission) as to what a 'voluntary' division of labour really means in practical terms. It is not sufficient, in this sense, to remain within the tautologous formulation that 'involuntary' equals 'estrangement-producing' (p. 172, n.3). Despite the brief

introduction of a few quotes concerning Marx's views of the results of automation on the division of labour, this book is not concerned with developing any of the practical implications of Marx's theory of estrangement, only with establishing the centrality of the conception of the division of labour to it.

Krause's book also takes Marx as a point of departure, but mainly attempts to outline a 'political model' (seeking specific changes) for understanding recent transformations in the division of labour. After three brief chapters on Marx, Weber and Durkheim, Krause outlines a fourteen-point 'model' consisting of categories by which alterations in the division of labour can be understood, and then applies this (relatively loosely) to three case studies: sexism and the question of 'women's work', deprofessionalisation and the erosion of the autonomy of separate professions, and health work (particularly nursing), where a continuous process of proletarianisation is evident, at least in the American context. No attempt is made to establish any clear or rigorous criteria for what the division of labour on the whole ought to look like, beyond a simple plea for its 'humanisation', nor are many of the sharper questions of power and authority or 'political' vs. 'technical' decision-making illustrated as clearly as they are, for example, in the collection of essays on the division of labour edited by André Gorz. This book, rather, is quite useful as a general but critical introduction to the sociology of the division of labour (in its North American forms) and of the professions in particular, rather than a theoretical tome about the relationship of the division of labour to the ultimate ends of society (for which Bahro and Sohn-Rethel are better consulted). Krause's 'model' is confessedly loose, flexible, and tentative, but at least in its attempt to draw the entire subject together from a practical point of view, it offers insights of use to all concerned with such matters.

Gregory Claeys

Sollace Mitchell and Michael Rosen (eds.), *The Need for Interpretation: Contemporary Conceptions of the Philosopher's Task* (London: The Athlone Press; and New Jersey: Humanities Press; 1983)

Much is promised for this book at the outset, and it looks to be right up Radical Philosophy's street. According to the blurb, it 'expresses the growing reaction within the ranks of analytically-trained philosophers against the professed aims of current Anglo-American philosophy'. Unfortunately, it does nothing of the sort. It is an undistinguished collection of papers by a group of Oxford philosophy teachers and graduate students, who formed a discussion group because they were dissatisfied with analytical philosophy. Their dissidence, however, is a pathetically timid and tentative affair. Only a few pages after the bold initial promises the editors are in open retreat. They seem unable to specify either what it is they dissent from, or how they dissent from it. In so far as the papers share a common theme, it is that the model of the natural sciences cannot be used to understand the world of human thought and action. Hardly a novel theme, handled here in entirely familiar ways. The highlight of the collection is an excellent piece by Charles Taylor, rejecting the computer analogy for the human mind. None of the other papers reach this standard. Mitchell contributes an earnest and usefully clear, though leisurely, critique of Derrida. There is a discussion of Critical Theory by Rosen which is not without interest. The remaining pieces are vapid and dreamy. A movement of dissent within analytical philosophy would be a most welcome development, but it is not apparent here.

Sean Sayers.

Michael J. Sandel, *Liberation and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, £5.95 pb

This book contains a penetrating critique of the presupposition of the liberalism of Rawls which is rightly seen as drawing on a Kantian tradition. Sandel's main target is the 'transcendental', isolated self of this kind of liberalism, so detached both from its own goals and from communal relationship as to render radically problematic the very idea of a just society of real people, its supposed ideal. Sandel argues for a more 'situated' notion of the self, one of which 'communal' involvements are partly constitutive.

Though Sandel is right to see that the status of justice as a value is bound up with separateness and conflict among social units, it is surely a bizarrely parochial view to treat this concept as essentially tied to an individualistic liberalism defined (with Dworkin) in terms of neutrality about basic personal values. (The idea is that since none of our ends (goods) can claim moral priority we must seek fair play (rights) among our differing ends; that is 'justice'.) Plato, Aristotle and the Thomist tradition (see Joseph Pieper's work for example), not to mention socialist thought, have left us with a much deeper concept both of justice and of freedom than Sandel allows for. (I would here recommend Gerald Doppelt's 'Critique from the Left' of Rawls in NOUS, Vol. 15, September 1981.) Thus his book's actual preoccupations are narrower than its title proclaims. This narrowness is given exaggerated symbolic expression in the convulution of Sandel's prose.

Tony Skillen

K. Marx and F. Engels, *Letters on 'Capital'* (trans. Andrew Drummond), New Park Publications, London, 1983, £6.95 pb

It is extraordinary that a century after Marx's death his and Engels's correspondence is still so patchily available in English. It is true, of course, that their Collected Works are at last being produced in English, and that the first two volumes of letters have appeared. But these are two of a projected twelve, and take us only up to 1855. The great bulk of the letters still remains to be translated; and New Park Publications (alias the WRP) are to be congratulated on bringing out this wonderfully rich and valuable collection, originally made in E. Germany. Most of the letters it contains have not previously been available in English. All of them are newly, and excellently, translated by Andrew Drummond.

The letters cover a much wider range than the book's title suggests. They deal not only with the planning, writing, publication and reception of Capital, but with the whole spectrum of economics: that subject, as always with Marx and Engels, being conceived and treated in the broadest possible terms, to encompass also history and prehistory, politics, sociology and philosophy. What is so vividly evident in these letters is the remarkable intellectual vitality and openness of both Marx and Engels, their amazing responsiveness to developments in society and in thought. One is struck at how absurd and false is the charge of dogmatism so often levelled against these mighty thinkers. On the contrary, they are always alive to the world around them, developing and testing their ideas against the facts, and questioning and modifying their views in the light of them.

Through Marx's letters one can follow the evolution of his plans for his work on Political Economy, announced as imminent in a letter to Leske of 1846, through his plans of 1857-9 (in which the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy was to form merely the first part), to the publication of Volume I of Capital in its various editions

and his work on the later volumes. Then, after Marx's death, we have Engels's graphic accounts of the struggle, which occupied the last ten years of his life, to get Volumes II and III into publishable shape and to arrange for work on Theories of Surplus Value to be continued after his death by Bernstein and Kautsky.

There are many gems here. To choose a few, almost at random: there is Marx confiding to Engels that his article on India describing as 'revolutionary' the impact of the British is quite consciously intended to 'shock'; there is Engels's blow by blow account of the depression of 1857, and his patient explanations to Marx of the ways in which business accounting deals with the depreciation of machinery; and there are Marx's attempts to drum up some attention for Capital - even to the lengths of sketching out a review attacking it, which he hoped would provoke a response.

In short, this is a welcome and important addition to the Marxist literature in English. The volume is supplied with a brief preface by Geoff Pilling; it is well annotated and indexed, and attractively produced. It is worth just noting that it is part of an enterprising series of new Marx translations published by New Park, which has so far included a useful collection of Marx's writings on Value, his diatribe against Herr Vögt, and the first translation of his Mathematical Manuscripts. These are all useful additions to the Marxist literature in English and it is to be hoped that they will soon be joined by others.

Sean Sayers

Gary Bent Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, Ohio University Press, £16.20 hc, £9.00 pb

In this work, Gary Brent Madison outlines the development of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology from The Structure of Behaviour (1941) to The Visible and the Invisible (which was unfinished at the time of Merleau-Ponty's death in 1961). In particular, Madison wishes to pick out an implicit and progressive transition from phenomenology to ontology, which gives Merleau-Ponty's work an underlying unity. I shall now try to outline the salient points of this progression, as it is presented by Madison. First, in The Structure of Behaviour Merleau-Ponty sets out to investigate the relation between consciousness and nature, and is concerned with criticising both physiological interpretations, and those of gestalt psychology - which were much in vogue at the time. As a result, Merleau-Ponty is led to the view that the world is meaningful only on the presuposition that the human subject's cognitive apparatus makes some active contribution towards such meaning. It is to the clarification of this relationship between consciousness and the world, that Merleau-Ponty turns his attention in the Phenomenology of Perception (1945). The most fundamental new concept employed in this work is 'being-in-the-world' - a notion used previously by both Heidegger and Sartre, but which, in the Phenomenology of Perception, is given a radically new inflection. The reason for this is the primacy which Merleau-Ponty affords embodiment. Madison expresses this view nicely as follows: 'We must recognise the existence of a body-subject; we must view the body as our living bond with the world and as the umbilical cord which attaches us to it' (p.21). On these terms, the relationship between embodied subject and world is dialectical. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: 'The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world; and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world it projects itself' (quoted by Madison p. 169).

Now Madison sees this approach as leaving Merleau-Ponty with (in effect) two important problems. First, whilst the relation between embodied subject and world is a rational one, the fact that there is such a relation at all is construed by Merleau-Ponty as merely contingent. Second, the nature of the relation between embodied subject and world is left highly ambiguous. On what, ontologically speaking, is it grounded? What are its origins? It is Merleau-Ponty's answers to these questions which mark his shift from a purely phenomenological method to an interest in ontology. The course of this change can be traced in most of his writings after 1945, but is most marked in his final essay, 'Eye and Mind' (1961), and The Visible and the Invisible - where Merleau-Ponty was beginning a drastic revision of his overall position. The most fundamental notion in this late work is that of 'Flesh', i.e. the ontological kinship/bonding of the embodied subject and the world. For Merleau-Ponty, the paradigm of this bonding is found in the phenomenon of visibility. Again Madison provides a very useful summary:

> 'If I can see it is because I have a body, that is because I have a body, that is, because I exist in the world among things, because I am precisely a certain carnal here around which things arrange themselves in depth. The seeing subject cannot be foreign to what he sees. I would never be able to see, were I not myself visible.' (p. 173)

Hence, subject and world are not simply in a state of dialectical reciprocity, but are so because they are fundamentally made of the same stuff. The seer is a seen. This is why Merleau-Ponty attaches so much importance to painting. The painter appropriates the world in a way which manifests the primordial intertwining of vision and visibilia - by giving voice to that mute pre-reflective realm of 'wild being' where subject and world first entwine. Consciousness, as it were, doubles back and catches itself in the act of becoming. Now it is this doubling back and expressing the point of origin which Merleau-Ponty takes to be the ultimate teleology not only of painting, but also of philosophy, and, indeed, of the human condition as such. Being (in the widest sense) achieves a state of self-affirmation through individual embodied subjects questioning the ontology of their own origin. As Madison puts it, '... the Origin is the world's own internal possibility, a world whose essence is to be in development' (p. 105).

Let me now review Madison's presentation of Merleau-Ponty's arguments. The first thing to say is that (at the time of writing at least) Madison's book is the best introduction to Merleau-Ponty's thought. It is somewhat more lucid, for example, than Samuel Mallin's, Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy (Yale 1980) and keeps the underlying unity of development more clearly in view. This, however, does raise some problems as well. Madison's emphasis on exposition leads to rather a lot of repetition (especially in the later stages of the book) and leaves almost no room for discussion of some of Merleau-Ponty's more contentious ideas. The problems (mentioned earlier) which he does take Merleau-Ponty to be facing at the end of The Phenomenology of Perception, he seems to regard as solved by the later work. Now the basis of Merleau-Ponty's later position is, as we have seen, teleological. The real purpose of philosophy, and, indeed, of human being as such, lies not in achieving solutions to problems, but, rather, in the very act of questioning ontological origins. (This brings Merleau-Ponty's views quite close to Heidegger's later work, as Madison brings out quite well.) However, we really must ask what sort of teleology is involved here, and what its implications are. In relation to the first point, I would say that, even if one can accept that Being is disclosed to itself through human consciousness, and philosophy in particular, there is (to say the least) no intrinsic reason why this should be privileged as the purpose of human being or philosophy, over and above those purposes which arise from our needs and aspirations as social beings. Second, it is interesting that Merleau-Ponty's more ontologically orientated approach coincides with his abandonment of radical politics in favour of a 'liberal' stance. Now whilst, in the second of the two useful appendices to his book, Madison does consider Merleau-Ponty's political development, he does not

link it in any coherent way to those ontological preoccupations which became central to his philosophy as a whole. This is unfortunate because, considered in itself, Merleau-Ponty's ontology appears, prima facie, at best to favour the status quo and, at worst, to construe our humanity in terms of a goal (i.e. the questioning of Being) which is realisable whether we are in fetters or on a throne. The concrete interests of our species being, in other words, are made secondary to the demands of an inevitably elitist ontology.

Paul Crowther

Sabina Lovibond, *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*, Basil Blackwell, Library of Philosophy and Logic, £15 hc

My attention was first drawn to this book at a conference, where I was told that it embodies the way ethics will be done in the nineteen eighties and nineties. Having now studied the book, I hope these remarks will prove to be prophetic. Before showing why I hope this will be so, let me first outline what I take to be the central structure of Ms Lovibond's argument.

Her starting point is that body of moral theory known as 'non-cognitivism', which seeks to assert a rigid metaphysical distinction between those statements which assert facts, and those which take the form of evaluations. As Ms Lovibond rightly points out, the effect of such a distinction is to ground moral judgements on irrationalist premises. Specifically, morality is construed in terms of those attitudes or dispositions which we entertain towards facts, but which are not logically constrained by such facts. On these terms, morality becomes, at best, the partisan deployment of a mere inclination to pursue justice and liberty.

Ms Lovibond's solution to this problem is to generate a theory of moral realism out of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. This philosophy

> ... tells us that there is just one standard of assertability, which applies to all assertoric uses of language - namely truth.... We are not debarred, on this view, from saying (as we have presumably always said) that the propositions of science possess truth status; but we are shown that there is nothing in the notion of truth, correctly understood, which would prevent us in principle from assigning the same status to the propositions of ethics. (p.42)

The reason why ethics is on a metaphysical par, truth-wise, with science is because all modes of discourse are grounded ultimately on the authority of consensus within the speech community. In order to learn, say, the use of moral and scientific concepts, we are subjected to patterns of material and intellectual coercion which enable us to learn the appropriate 'grammar' of moral and scientific conduct. That is to say, we are initiated into the practice of following the appropriate rules. It is the authority of this rule-governed practice which exercises a kind of 'pull towards objectivity' and rationality in all modes of discourse. Interestingly, Ms Lovibond sees an anticipation of the application of this view to the moral sphere, in terms of Hegel's notion of Sittlichkeit, i.e. 'concrete ethics'. As she puts it:

> The idea of an obligation to sustain the institutions which embody a shared way of life seems to characterise to perfection the way in which, according to Wittgenstein, we are governed by the rules of our language. The fact of participation in language-games <such as morality> imposes on the individual a system of sittlich obligations: injunctions to 'do the same' as regards the manner of responding, verbally, to the changing configuration of things in the world. (p. 64)

Now this being said, it is clear that we allow much less authority to simply following established rules in the moral, as opposed, say, to the scientific sphere. Ms Lovibond suggests that this is because moral judgements are, by nature, more subjective than scientific ones. This does not mean, however, that moral judgements are simply subjective - as proponents of the fact/value distinction would hold. Rather, 'Our moral realism denies that distinction at the level at which the non-cognitive theorist of ethics asserts it' (p. 68), i.e. the distinction between judgements of fact and value is not metaphysical, but rather one of degree. On these terms, then, we would be more justified in talking of the 'fact/value continuum'.

Some readers, of course, will be struck by the importance which Ms Lovibond attaches to the authority of established social practice. Does this not smack of inherent conservatism? The author is, however, acutely aware of this possibility, and suggests that the moral realism she is proposing is intrinsically conservative only in the sense of the moral language-game requiring some continuity of its rules and institutions. Now to participate in such institutions is to identify ourselves with them, but if we recognise (as the theory of moral realism requires we must) that such institutions are only the historical products of social practice, then we see that, morally speaking, things could be otherwise. Again, to use Ms Lovibond's words, 'Armed with our newly acquired historicist insight, we can never again participate otherwise than reflectively in any language-game' (p. 122). This is why the author goes on to attach so much importance to the notion of imagination, and our ability to conceive moral possibilities other than those which are actual. Our initiation into moral practices through the customary institutions furnishes us with the means for subjecting those institutions to 'critical scrutiny', or juxtaposing them against the 'speculative construction of alternatives'. It is only through this process of critical reflection that institutions will emerge into a system that the individual can identify with, and achieve self-objection through; thereby finding a meaning in life as a whole.

I have, then, presented at length what I take to be the central structure of argument in Realism and Imagination in Ethics. In covering so much ground, the text necessarily proceeds at a high level of generality, and it is in this generality that its faults - such as they are - are to be found. For example, the 'empiricist' non-cognitive view which Ms Lovibond opposes throughout is actually a construct of three mutually incompatible views, and is thus something of a straw-man. Her case might have been more convincing in this respect if she had concentrated her critique on one of the most recent and plausible non-cognitive approaches, namely that of John Mackie. A more detailed consideration of Mackie's views, indeed, might also have led her to focus more clearly on what gives moral discourse (if such it has) its logically distinctive character. If anything, the overall tendency of Ms Lovibond's argument is to outline the transcendental conditions which make any discourse possible; but to leave us with little sense of the actual content of concrete moral judgements. These (and various other difficulties which Ms Lovibond's theory faces) are, however, primarily sins of omission which do not disrupt the overall structure of argument. On the positive side, Ms Lovibond's book is important in terms of both methodology and content. She combines, for example, logical rigour and speculative insight, in a way that avoids both the over-technical (and, at times, superficial) knock-down arguments characteristic of the analytic tradition, and the tediously obscure technicality which bedevils more radical approaches. It is, indeed, the more speculative use of wide-ranging sources and examples which gives the book such a distinctive and de-familiarising impact. A more central achievement still, however, is that Ms Lovibond shows the direction which any really searching radical critique of moral individualism must take. Too often, the radical theorist merely confronts the established position, with

an alternative dogma. Ms Lovibond, in contrast, seeks to subvert that position, not just on transcendental grounds, but on transcendental grounds which themselves embody the necessity for radical and collectivist moral reflection. Of course, the ideologically pure in heart will make much of the lack of concrete analysis noted above, and in particular the absence of any well-defined notions of class hegemony and conflict. However, the move from 'moral realism' to an ethics of historical materialism is, I suspect, very easy. It is therefore up to the radically minded to build upon Ms Lovibond's impressive foundation. Indeed, it is to be hoped that she herself will seek to consolidate her position with more concrete analyses.

Paul Crowther

H.J. Sherman and J. Wood, *Sociology: Traditional and Radical Perspectives*, adapted for the UK by Peter Hamilton, Harper & Row, 1982

Sociology textbooks often give the impression that they have been written by a committee: there is no consistency in approach and one is not warned when switches in perspective are about to take place. Other textbooks strive towards the 'balanced' approach, by giving different theoretical perspectives on each substantive issue - Marxist, Weberian, Functionalist etc. The problem with this is that by (unconscious) sleight of hand, 'balance' becomes objectivity: contrived impartiality between perspectives makes do for truth. The author inevitably favours a particular sociological paradigm, but attempts to neutralise this theoretical preference via 'balance' or 'fairness' in the treatment of rival approaches. For instance, one writer notes: 'Politically I am a libertarian socialist.... I have kept in mind however that a textbook should present all relevant information and opinion with absolute fairness. I hope that if I have not stated my own opinions and values, they would not otherwise have been too obvious.' (M. O'Donnell, A New Introduction to Sociology, Harrap, 1981, p. ix). In the present writer's opinion this is unsatisfactory, both because it produces an elision of 'balance' and 'objectivity', and because the sociologist's actual partiality conflicts with the 'balanced' textual style and undermines the case he/she presents.

The virtue of Sherman and Wood's presentation is that they do not use the 'balance' stratagem; rather they seek to be objective through a Marxist or 'radical' sociology.

Although the book is not the last word as a source of information on sociological research, it aims to succeed in a more ambitious way; it addresses itself in large part to methodological points. The range of issues discussed includes: the base-superstructure relationship, necessary and unnecessary contradictions within a social formation, whether relations or forces of production have causal primacy, the relation between science, objectivity and class interests, the distinction between Marx's research methodology and his mode of exposition, dialectics as a means of transcending the dichotomies of 'bourgeois' social science. In the field of political practice, the writers pinpoint the crucial distinction between liberal humanism, with its idealist conception of harmonisation of social interests without negation/overcoming, and a Marxist humanism where progress is attained through recognition and overcoming of necessarily conflicting social interests.

The sections on substantive topics (apart from the usual) cover formation of gender identity, genesis of family structures, racism, ageism and the development of the 'socialist' (sic!) societies. The section on 'Poverty and Social Class' is illuminated by an examination of the mechanism of capitalist exploitation where the fundamental distinction between necessary and surplus labour time is drawn out. This topic is neglected by more conventional, 'balanced' texts where Marx on labour tends to be reduced to a psychologistic reading of alienation. (Presumably, a detailed treatment of exploitation would destroy textual 'balance', or perhaps it's simply that, for many, exploitation is 'economics' whilst alienation is 'sociology'.)

Traditional and Radical Perspectives could fall between two stools. It's by no means an adequate reference work on sociological research, but then what textbook is? On the other hand, its sizeable methodology section may still involve too much skating on the surface of a huge subject. It is, however, the sort of book that should whet the appetites of budding Marxist sociologists on 'A' Level or degree courses.

Howard Feather

H. Skolimowski, *Eco-Philosophy: Designing New Tactics for Living*, Marion Boyars, 1981, £2.95 pb

Eco-Philosophy has the demerit of combining in one volume a sub-Marcusian critique of twentieth-century tendencies to instrumentalise/technicise science and a sub-Coleridgean comment on nature-mysticism. It also recalls, without further illumination, the Romantic reaction to the fragmenting effects of (capitalist) industrialisation. Anyone hoping to find a concrete approach to these problems through, for instance, an attempt to elucidate the way science and technology are mediated by modes of production, is due for a disappointment.

Eco-Philosophy boils down to nature mysticism governed by an evolutionary finalism and presented in a platitudinous style: 'we tune in to the music of evolution, of which we are a part', or 'the cunning of life is infinite'.

All this book demonstrates is that the writer has been unable to move beyond the organicist intellectual repertoire used by the Romantics in criticising aspects of emergent industrial capitalism. They at least used it well.

Howard Feather

NEWS

'A' LEVEL PHILOSOPHY 1

A revised version of the Associated Examining Board's draft 'A' Level Philosophy syllabus (commented on by Steve Brigley in RP35) has been approved by the Schools Examination Council, and the first examination will be in 1985.

Changes in the content of the syllabus include the excision of Popper (Conjections and Refutations) and Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations) from prescribed texts for the Twentieth Century Philosophy module. They are substituted by (no reasons given for any of the changes) the 'philosophical has-beens' - Russell's Problems of Philosophy and Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic. However, Sartre is also introduced into this part of the course (prescribed text: Existentialism and Humanism), so removing Popper and Wittgenstein can't have been based on a criterion of difficult reading!

The reading for Marx (Nineteenth Century Philosophy) now includes the Theses on Feuerbach, and the linking of Marx with a 'laws of history' debate (model questions) goes out. This is replaced by the examination of the idealist-materialist debate in Marx and his view(s) of philosophy.

Additions to the syllabus include the issue of whether there are any fundamental distinctions between the natural and social sciences and the significance of socio-

cultural determinants for 'Our Perception of the External World'.

The aims of the syllabus have been changed since the first version from including an appreciation of 'historical development' and 'present day relevance' of philosophical ideas to involving an understanding of 'their historical presentation and their contribution to present day philosophical debate'.

Although it's possible to read too much into any set of 'aims and objectives', this perceptible shift in orientation serves only to bear out the fears expressed by Steve Brigley about the style of philosophising the examiners will be promoting.

Howard Feather

'A' LEVEL PHILOSOPHY 2

In response to Steve Brigley's critique in RP35, we have received the following comments from a member of the AEB Philosophy Working Group, Maurice Roche.

In defence of 'A' level Philosophy

Socrates is said to have believed that courage is a form of knowledge and practical wisdom. My response to the pessimistic mood of Stephen Brigley's critique of 'A' level Philosophy (in Radical Philosophy 35) is, 'have courage', or at least 'cheer up'. 'A' level Philosophy will be running courses in Further Education Colleges, sixth form colleges and schools up and down the country for examinations in 1985 and 1986. It will take organised philosophy teaching for the first time in a substantial way out of the grasp of the Universities and it will make it available to people of a wide range of ages and abilities who would never otherwise have had the chance to study it. This is an important educational development which is currently being taken forward by two 'A' level boards, the AEB and the JMB. It has great potential for use in programmes of study which can be built on and around existing 'A' level courses in the humanities and social sciences - programmes which can have their own integrity and rationale and which need not necessarily be presented as merely higher education entry tickets.

This sort of development deserves more from allegedly radical philosophers than Stephen Brigley's pessimism, and Radical Philosophy's relative indifference. It needs constructive criticism, support and development over the next few years from all quarters who believe in the value of philosophy and in making it widely available within the non-university education system.

The reception of 'A' level philosophy so far from the Right has been outrage - we need more from the Left than gloomy indifference. But at least the Left has intellectual standards - thus, Brigley's piece aims to inform and to comment reasonably. The Right - in the form of Roger Scruton (see his article 'Why teach philosophy to children who can't add up?', Daily Mail, 3 February 1984) - substitutes outrage and propaganda for rational discussion. Unlike Brigley, who seems to view 'A' level philosophy as something of an Oxbridge/academic elitist plot, the 'philosophic' Right, predictably, views it all as a Red plot. Thus Scruton writes:

> By taking over the Labour Party, the bigoted Left ensured the Party's defeat in the General Election. But in other areas ... and most of all in education - there are spectacular gains to be made and at little cost. One clever ploy ... is to introduce subjects which cannot be understood except by those who have a vocation for them. ... One such subject, I believe, is philosophy, currently being proposed by the Associated Academic (sic) Board as an 'A' level. ...

This, along with such educational developments as Peace Studies, Women's Studies and Black Studies, are all damned as being deviations from the (pseudo) Classical curriculum of Greek, Latin, the Bible et al, and as being tainted by the brush of 'relevance'. Apparently the 'mind of a child' needs forms of study which are 'rigid'. I understand Scruton is currently working hard on the phallus, which may explain the interest in the topic of rigidity, but which turns his antipathy to the idea of the personal relevance of studies into a bit of a puzzle.

What Scruton takes as a criticism of 'A' level philosophy, i.e. the presence of 'relevance' in its aims and objectives, Brigley regards differently. He bemoans the absence of this idea from how he thinks the course will be taught.

Whereas Scruton's comments are deliberately misleading, it appears to me that Brigley's are merely rather confusing and unintentionally misleading. Curiously for his critical perspective, he seems to regard the central issue of the aims and objectives of the AEB syllabus, not only as acceptable but as 'uncontroversial - if a trifle vague and incomplete'. The bulk of his comments then could only be relatively less important, and they seem to be concerned with gloomy speculations about

(a) how the syllabus might have arisen (i.e., via a dilution of University philosophy courses out of deference to the latter;

(b) who it might be intended for (i.e. Oxbridge educated teachers and public schoolboys);

(c) how it might be taught badly (i.e. with no reference to the student's experience and views.

None of these points have very much substance in them in my view.

(a) The syllabus of both the AEB and JMB courses have been developed over the last two or three years by working groups in which Further Education College teachers are strongly represented (along with University teachers and school teachers) and in which they have been and remain important initiators. Besides this, Further Education teachers, sixth form college teachers and others have been consulted by questionnaire and correspondence during the AEB's syllabus development. Brigley's claim that 'A' level philosophy is 'inherently unsuitable to meet the educational needs of a large section of students at 16+' is unjustifiable if it implies that the syllabus and examination have been developed either in ignorance of, or with indifference to, 16+ students' varying needs and ranges of ability. We could argue about what specifically educational (as opposed to vocational, psychological and social) needs really are. Whatever one thinks of the GCE system in general, there must surely be an important place in our conception of such needs for the disciplined study of systems and bodies of knowledge which challenge the student and go beyond his or her own immediate situation. An education which never did this would be as undeserving of the name 'education' as would an education which only ever did this. A place must also be given to addressing the student and his, or her, situation and concerns. Part of this, in my view, is a question of teaching strategy, and I'll comment further on this in a moment, although I must note in passing that Brigley's conception of the student seems remarkably passive and reactive rather than active.

'A' level philosophy does attempt to address itself to both of these aspects of educational need - i.e. (i) the challenge of unfamiliar ideas, and (ii) the idea of immediate relevance. The two halves of the AEB syllabus concerned respectively with the ideas of some major philosophers and themes and issues (such as, for instance, causing death and saving lives, animal experiments, civil disobedience, etc.) are attempts to do just this. It is not for Brigley or any one else to specify what people will find of personal relevance to them in later life. But it is reasonable to suggest that offering people the opportunity to study carefully and critically some of the major categories of human experience - morality, science, faith, reason - and some major thinkers on these categories, ought to be

part of everybody's education and could well have a lasting personal significance and relevance for them. Incidentally, related to this, I note that Brigley's concern for 'large sections of students' doesn't appear to extend beyond 16+ (i.e. presumably 16-19). 'A' level philosophy - as much as anything else on offer within our youth-oriented educational system - should be conceived as equally available to, and relevant for, the educational needs of mature students of any age.

Some reference to University-level studies is surely appropriate for 'A' level courses in general and is surely unavoidable for new courses in philosophy. But this need not be seen as 'deference', as Brigley claims, nor as intellectual dependence on University philosophers. 'A' level philosophy will increasingly develop its own distinctive character as it establishes itself in the schools and colleges. While many Universities have welcomed the AEB course, predictably some haven't done so for reasons which are understandable, if not commendable. They know that ultimately they will have to change at least their introductory courses to accommodate a new, philosophically 'literate' kind of student. It is inadequate to picture likely future intellectual relationships between University and 'A' level philosophy according to some static formula of litism and of deference by the latter to the former. Effects will be created and produced at both ends of the relationship.

(b) 'A' level philosophy is not aimed at and intended for Oxbridge educated teachers and public school boys. In connection with this Brigley asks: 'is it too great an exaggeration to characterise the educational image of philosophy as ideologically antithetical to the comprehensive ideal?' Well, if this is the image (and not the reality) of philosophy, and if the comprehensive ideal involves at least equality of opportunity, then surely we should all strive to change the 'image' of philosophy by participating in attempts at making it readily available and accessible outside of lite institutions. Images are not reality and they can be changed.

(c) Any course of study can be badly taught - without reference to students' views and opinions and with no attempt to motivate them and catch their interest. There is a certain amount that 'A' level Boards can do to assist teachers - principally by keeping channels of communication open, giving guidance on reading, seeking feedback from them, organising teachers' conferences and so on. Also assessment procedures can exercise some constraints over approaches to the teaching and learning of subjects. But, as Brigley appears to acknowledge, 'A' level assessment procedures are nowadays fairly varied and open to change and improvement. If, with experience over time, teachers find the current Mode 1 examination format in philosophy to be unnecessarily constraining, there is no reason at all why, for instance, they couldn't lobby the Boards either to make a Mode 3 college-based format available, or to consider changes in both the syllabus and the examination format for Mode 1. But, having said all this, ultimately the responsibility for competent, imaginative, stimulating and responsive teaching lies with the teacher. Courses on paper, however good and encouraging they are, cannot of themselves generate good teaching from a poor teacher; while even bad courses usually offer some opportunities for a good teacher to build on. This is surely nowhere more true than in philosophy - a teacher who can't think well and deeply can't expect to get others to think. Brigley regards the aims and objectives of the AEB course - which include gaining and demonstrating understanding of texts and ideas of major figures in the Western tradition of philosophy - as 'uncontroversial'. So his comments about the need to contextualise the texts in the philosopher's life etc., boil down to advice about how best to implement these aims and objectives. The advice is well taken, but it seems to me to be in any case uncontroversially acceptable as a part (surely not the whole) of what any good teacher would be doing with these texts and ideas. His advice about teaching and learning by 'subjecting arguments to scepticism' is less well taken - how could any philosophy course be worthy of the name if it didn't involve this?

In conclusion, let me return to the problem of the overall mood of Brigley's criticism - that of pessimism. In the current social and educational climate surely the last thing we need is the further propagation of demoralization. The current establishment of 'A' level philosophy in British schools and colleges, and its improvement in future years by philosophy teachers, is surely a welcome development. It is one small but significant step in the necessary work of defending educational values and opportunities and of extending them in one of the most anti-educational climates in recent British history. Even if Socratic courage is beyond us we could at least try to rekindle something of his spirit of philosophic optimism.

Readers who want to get further information might contact Robin Thornbury (Sherbrooke Teachers' Centre, Rosaline Road, London SW6 7QN).

Maurice Roche