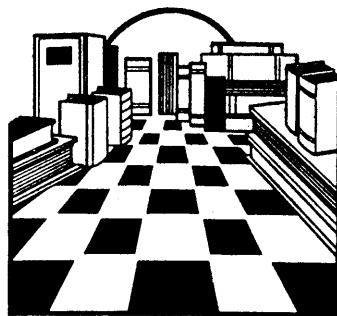


REVIEWS



ANTI-ANTI-ALTHUSSERIANISM

Gregory Elliott, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, London, Verso, 1988, 359pp., £29.95 hb, £10.95 pb.

Few events in the recent history of the intellectual left in Britain can have had as disruptive an effect upon its prevailing orthodoxies and habits of mind as the onset of 'Althusserianism' in the early 1970s. Yet few intellectual trends, especially intellectual-political ones, have been effaced so swiftly. By the beginning of the 1980s Althusserianism was as dead in England as it was, albeit for rather different reasons, in France.

Such a fate, Elliott suggests, in what is far and away the most comprehensive treatment of Althusser's work yet to appear in English, affords an opportunity: 'the resurrection of Althusser's intellectual and political career as *history*'. It is this resurrection that Elliott undertakes. In particular, he is concerned, first, to extend the rather limited range of existing critical works on Althusser, and look in greater detail at the later, more directly political phase of his career; and secondly, to pay more attention to the developing intellectual and political *context* of Althusser's writings as a whole.

Most discussions of Althusser in English have tended to focus upon the more narrowly interpretive or strictly theoretical problems associated with his work. Elliott, on the other hand, broadens the canvas to return it to its true intellectual homeland: debates within the French Communist Party (PCF) in the aftermath of Krushchev's critique of Stalin, and the crisis in the international communist movement precipitated by the Sino-Soviet split. Althusser's writings, it is argued (following Rancière), must be read within the context of a single project: the renovation of Communist political practice by a restoration and renewal of Marxist theory. For Althusser this meant above all else a theoretical 'return' to Marx and a political turn to *Peking* – since it was in Maoism that the most vigorous dissent from the ossified politics of the 'post-Stalinist' CPSU and PCF was to be found within Marxism in the early 1960s.

The theoretical resources for Althusser's return to Marx were, however, to be found rather closer to home: in the 'rational materialism' of Bachelard's historical epistemology, the structuralist anti-humanism of Lacan and Lévi-Strauss, and perhaps most bizarrely, although certainly no less centrally, Spinoza's monist rationalism. It is in the contortions of this three-fold movement (Marx, Mao, and a Spinoza-supplemented dose of contemporary French rationalism) that, as Elliott shows, the complexity, the creativity, and ultimately, the deeply contradictory nature of Althusser's thought are to be found. Its immediate results are well-known: the redefinition of Marxist philosophy as

the theory of theoretical practice; a re-periodisation of Marx's work on the basis of this philosophy, centred upon the identification of an 'epistemological break' between those works which preceded and those which followed *The German Ideology*; a reconceptualisation of the materialist dialectic in terms of the notions of overdetermination, condensation, and complex and ruptural unity; and a fierce attack upon the complementary reductionisms of 'humanism', 'economism', 'historicism', and 'empiricism'. The most basic contours of historical materialism were, it seemed, to be redrawn according to the parameters of contemporary French philosophy of science – and all in the name of a 'return' to Marx.

The effect was the liberation of little less than an entire generation of Marxist intellectuals from the tired phrase-mongering of the official Communist philosophy, and a rebirth of serious study of Marx's works, especially *Capital*, the privileged text of the new periodisation. The problems encountered by Althusser's new theoretical synthesis were, however, myriad. Elliott runs over the now familiar critical ground with a sure sense of Althusser's weaknesses. Lack of detailed attention to alternative theoretical positions leading to a series of reductive reading of other Marxists, bordering on travesty; the importation of an idealist, rationalist epistemology into Marxist philosophy, quite foreign to Marx's own practical, scientific materialism, without textual or adequate intellectual justification; a blanket opposition of theory to practice (science to ideology) which cut Marx's work off, in principle, from the very project it was supposed to be fostering (the renovation of a Communist political *practice*); and a virtual elimination of the concept of agency as a category of historical understanding – all these things vitiated Althusser's 'return', to the point, if not of cancelling out its more productive elements, at least of seriously disfiguring them.

The problem, Elliott argues, was that Althusser took the scientificity of Marxism for granted. The *raison d'être* of his intervention was its defence. Yet he never provided a positive vindication of it. The defence of 'science' (against ideology) and of some kind of authentic Leninism (against contemporary Soviet political orthodoxy) were run together into a single enterprise, the philosophical foundations of which were never adequately interrogated. The attack on the humanism of Marx's early works was based less upon any account of their actual theoretical deficiencies than upon their perceived political consequences – in particular, the denial of the centrality of the class struggle which they were supposed, by Althusser, to entail. It is arguable, Elliott is led to conclude, that Althusser's reading of

Marx was 'theoretically, *because politically*, culpable'.

It is the vexed issue of Althusser's shifting political loyalties, and of their theoretical and political effects, that forms the subject matter of the fourth and most interesting chapter of Elliott's book, 'The Time of Theory, the Time of Politics'. The complexities of Althusser's development here are formidable. And Elliott traces the relation between the internal (theoretical) and external (political) logics of his 'ongoing labour of autocritique and rectification' between 1967 and 1974 with admirable clarity and care. The process is depicted as essentially that of a left radicalisation in theory, combined with a continuing submission to the political authority of the Party in practice. It was this contradiction, Elliott argues, exemplified in Althusser's attitude to May 1968— 'the turning point at which he failed to turn' — that underlay the collapse of Althusserianism in France. For whilst, in relation to the May events, he may have signalled a measure of dissent on certain issues, Althusser 'utilised — and deformed — his own repertoire of concepts to produce an analysis proximate to the PCF's own, of a social dynamic in which it participated only to frustrate'.

In 1968, Rancière has argued, Althusserianism revealed itself to be a 'philosophy of order'. Elliott cites the judgement, and whilst he does not explicitly endorse it, his own account is clearly in tune with it. The Maoist opponents of the PCF, inspired in large part by Althusser's work, abandoned their attempt to detach him from it. Althusser became the 'lost leader' of a movement the subsequent history of which 'was eventually to prove detrimental to the whole French left'.

The effect of this schism on Althusser's work was a contradictory one. Faced now with criticisms from the (Maoist) left, similar to those to which he had earlier been subjected from the (Communist) right, he preserved his revolutionary credentials by 'rectifying' his theoretical position in line with the emergent Maoist orthodoxy, whilst nonetheless maintaining his public loyalty to the PCF. This apparent theoretical radicalisation (and its accompanying redefinition of philosophy as 'class struggle at the level of theory') was, however, in certain respects, simply a return to a quasi-Stalinist orthodoxy. (It was, of course, in the name of Stalin that Mao had launched his attack upon the CPSU in the years immediately following Stalin's death.) Elliott is, I think, quite right when he argues that the key to the relationship of Althusser's work to Stalinism lies in its relationship to Maoism; and more specifically, in the thoroughly contradictory character of Maoism's relation to Stalinism. There was, without doubt, a theoretical and political minefield here from which Althusser was not to emerge unscathed. Elliott's reading of the *Reply to John Lewis* as representative of a regrettable regression on Althusser's part to the 'tone and style of an earlier era' is a convincing one.

Subsequently, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Maoist alternative, and the almost wholesale defection of French intellectuals to the right, Althusser was to submit, first, to a political pessimism which he was to generalise into a full-blown 'crisis of Marxism'; and finally, to a theoretical scepticism for which the subtitle of *Capital* ('A Critique of Political Economy') was understood to signify a 'disclaimer of any pretension to "science"'. In the 1977 essay 'Marxism Today', ('gleefully described by Colletti ... as a "wholesale slaughter" of historical materialism') Althusser finally gave up his theoretical ghost. His affiliation to the Leninist tradition, and to the PCF, however, remained intact. It was not until the late 1970s, in fact, that he was to produce what were both his most lengthy and his most interesting political writings, attacking the PCF from within from a left Eurocommunist perspective.

So, what, at the end of the day, remains of the Althusserian heritage? Elliott is scathing about both the scale and the form of

Althusser's retreat from his earlier theoretical positions, agreeing with Balibar that this constituted an over-reaction on his part to the criticisms to which he was subjected. The highly sophisticated originality of the project 'to endow historical materialism with an epistemological foundation independent of class consciousness/experience', it is argued, was replaced by the 'orthodoxy' of a schematic Marxism-Leninism. And in his later work, Althusser is judged to have opted for the 'worst of both worlds' by retaining a strict theoretical anti-humanism while relaxing his conception of structural causality 'to accord an exorbitant role to the class struggle'. It is hard, however, to see any *theoretical* grounds here for preferring either of two such one-sided theoretical positions over the other.

It is here, I think, that there are grounds for criticism of Elliott's book. For his final assessment of Althusser's work is at times strangely out of tune with the depth and subtlety of his own account of its development. Having supplemented the familiar criticisms of the theoretical failings of the early work with a contextual account of its wider historical significance, Elliott regresses to a more narrowly theoretical viewpoint from which to draw up a 'balance sheet' of Althusser's progress. Thereupon, having already demonstrated both the tremendous importance of Althusser's work and its fundamental theoretical failings, he is forced to seek *theoretical* evidence for this importance in a way which goes against the grain of his own earlier criticisms. It is suggested, for example, that Althusser's return to Marx has strong claims not only to being considered the most original enterprise in Marxist philosophy since *History and Class Consciousness*, but to being judged 'superior' to it as well. But what is the basis for this judgement?



The problem is a deep one. For it raises the whole question of what grounds are to be considered appropriate for a genuinely 'historical' judgement upon a thinker's work. Survival of its claims in the face of successive attempts at their 'refutation', the breadth and depth of its 'influence' (independently of its success in maintaining any particular truth claims), and relevance to current problems and preoccupations, all suggest themselves as potentially competing dimensions of the problem. Elliott, however, never addresses such issues directly. Instead, he falls back upon the formalism of a method of accounting popularised within Marxism by Perry Anderson (*Considerations on Western Marxism and Arguments Within English Marxism*) in order to conclude his survey. It is questionable, however, whether such double-entry book-keeping as the simple, comparative listing of the merits and demerits of a thinker's work, which this method involves, is capable, in principle, of providing a genuinely *historical* judgement of their achievement, since the relation between the elements of the judgement remains obscure.

The basic tendency of Elliott's book is to play off Althusser's theoretical failings against the broader benefits of the emancipatory impact of his early work upon left intellectual culture in general. These benefits are then, however, by a deft sleight of hand, deployed to produce some kind of legitimation for the theoretical content of the early work itself. This is deeply problematic. For one might just as easily reverse the procedure in

order to question the credentials of the Althusserian emancipation. Whilst it may be true, as Elliott argues, that much of what was best in Althusserianism has been assimilated into left-wing intellectual culture, quite a lot of what was not so good about it (notably, its rampant theoreticism) is in there too. Elliott does not discuss the specific form of Althusser's influence on work within social theory in Britain – presumably because of the distance of such work from Althusser's own formative interests, with which he is primarily concerned. Yet surely this disjunction itself has much to tell us about the historical meaning of Althusser's work; especially, paradoxically, in relation to Marxism.

Althusser, Elliott argues, ended up with the worst of both worlds. Elliott, understandably, wants the best of both worlds. Whether he can have it *for Althusser*, however, is another matter. This said, *The Detour of Theory* is nonetheless a very good book. It is a measure of its achievement that, in its very ambivalence towards Althusser, it should pose the wider philosophical problem of the character of historical judgement in so acute a form. It is not, I think, so easy as Elliott supposes to be an 'anti-anti-Althusserian' without being *for* Althusser.

Peter Osborne

BHASKARIANA

R. Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, London, Verso, 1986, 308pp., £29.95 hb, £9.95 pb.

Modern realism is distinguished by its opposition to empiricism on the one hand, and to what Bhaskar calls 'super-idealism' on the other. Against empiricism's invocation of brute facts of experience, realism insists on the need for complex theoretical redescrptions of reality. Against super-idealism, realists deny that in Kuhn's notorious phrase, scientists operating within different theoretical frameworks occupy 'different worlds'. In the language of classical philosophy, the realist position is that we 'constitute' the world epistemically by fitting it into hypothetical structures of description and explanation, but that these are potentially corrigible by further discoveries in relation to a reality whose ontological constitution is independent of our conceptionalisation. In the terms introduced by Bhaskar's *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975) they are the transitive objects of science, created by human beings to represent the intransitive objects of science, the entities and structures of reality itself. As Bhaskar states at the end of that book:

Things exist and act independently of our descriptions, but we can only know them under particular descriptions... Science ... is the systematic attempt to express in thought the structure and ways of acting of things that exist and act independently of thought.

In *A Realist Theory* Bhaskar focused his arguments for scientific realism on natural science and it was in his second book, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), that he examined the implications of the position presented in the former work for the social and human sciences.

In the first two chapters of *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* Bhaskar consolidates and develops the theories outlined in these earlier books. The third and last chapter is an exercise in the analysis and explication of 'philosophical ideologies' focused on the 'historically crucial case' of positivism. In presenting an added depth and supporting terminological innovation in the first two chapters, this makes them more than simply a condensed repetition of his earlier works. But commentaries on Bhaskar's earlier works are still relevant. In particular a useful critical introduction to his ideas is presented in Ted Benton's article, 'Realism and Social Science' (RP 27). Although in sympathy with Bhaskar's project, Benton argues that the latter's thesis with its stated 'limits on naturalism' represents a form of anti-naturalism rather than a 'qualified naturalism'. Benton suggests that because Bhaskar has focused on contrasting potential social science with the example of 'experimental clo-

sure' in chemistry and physics he has neglected comparison with a range of historical natural sciences such as evolutionary biology in which, like social science, experimental closure is not an available means of empirical control on theory.

In *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* Bhaskar still retains the 'limits on naturalism' but he does acknowledge that in 'any fully comprehensive investigation of the epistemic conditions and possibilities of the human sciences, one would undertake comparative exercises with a whole compendium of sciences...' (p. 119). However, it is not clear that he means this in the context of assessing the nature of empirical controls on theory. For example in chapter two, on social science, he argues for a modified evolutionary biology schema for situating social change; but this appears to focus more on the assessment of ontology and its status for scientific explanation than on the question of empirical controls. Benton's argument not only suggests that an exposition of the latter issue is necessary for an adequate comparison of the natural and social sciences, but also that scientific realist knowledge in social inquiry requires empirical controls in the form of appropriate methods.

Now, despite these developments, there is still the problem of the nature and objectives of an argument for realism. Competing strategies have been suggested in order to argue for and legitimate scientific realism as a metatheory. Bhaskar uses the term 'transcendental realism' both as a label for the nature of the transcendental argument he uses, and for scientific realism itself. Reflecting the approach in his former works he continues to use this strategy in *Scientific Realism* in the following way.

On the basis of the strategy of transcendental realism, philosophy is conceived as pursuing a line of questioning with contingent historical origins and definite social conditions. In other words, philosophy is taken to treat the self-same world as the sciences, but transcendently, i.e. from the perspective of what such practices (sciences) presuppose about the world. Moreover, with the intention of avoiding 'bad circularity implicit in recourse to arbitrary and external criteria of knowledge', philosophy is given the status of 'immanent critique' in that transcendental arguments are supplemented at a second level by transcendental refutation of alternative metatheories of science. This second level is termed metacritique. Using the strategy of transcendental argument at these two levels, the remainder of chapter one is devoted to arguing for a transcendental realist ontology (ontology for scientific realism), an associated account of science, and a critique of empiricist and idealist reconstructions of science.

The argument for a realist ontology reflects that offered in *A Realist Theory of Science*. Bhaskar takes the 'historical' case of

classical experimentation in physics and chemistry. He argues that for the possibility of experimentation and the 'causal law it enables us to identify' there must be an ontological distinction between the law and events produced in the experiment for its identification. This argument is then complemented by an exposure of the absurdity of the empiricist reduction of laws to constant conjunctions of events. Additionally, reflection on the possibility of change in the sciences over time and the requirement of scientific training ontologically dissociates events from experiences. In sum, experiences are distinguished from events, both of which are distinguished from laws, which are analysed as the tendencies of mechanisms.

When Bhaskar moves to chapter two he wants to establish the possibility of a naturalism in the sense of the 'susceptibility of social and natural phenomena to explanation in essentially the same way, i.e. "scientifically"; where the explanation of social phenomena can be established in terms of social structures analogous to the mechanisms of nature.

The transcendental argument is given a different mode of articulation, but with the same intention of historicising the argument; i.e. treating the self-same world as the sciences. The approach here corresponds with that outlined in *The Possibility of Naturalism*. There Bhaskar notes that it would seem that we must first know what kinds of things societies (and people) are before we can consider whether it is possible to study them scientifically; that without some prior specification of an object of inquiry, *any discourse on method is bound to be more or less arbitrary*; and that therefore his strategy is concerned with establishing what properties societies and people possess that might make them possible objects of knowledge for us. Moreover, while for natural science Bhaskar applied transcendental analysis to the experimental method, he observes that it would clearly beg the question to pick on some or other form of social scientific activity to act as premises for a transcendental inquiry:

For such activities are themselves the subject of substantive theoretical controversy; and presuppose different and conflicting conceptions of society. But it does not follow from this that one cannot isolate more or less universally recognised features of substantive social life itself, which do not beg the issue at the outset in favour of one type of social science rather than another (1979, pp. 17-18).

In order to achieve the objectives stated here, Bhaskar sets out the mode of transcendental argument, in the following way. He argues for a 'Transformational Model of Social Activity' which represents the identification of ontological properties of society and people. This is derived by arguing for the nature of the conditions which are necessary for the possibility of intentional agency. From this he derives his 'limits on naturalism' which include ontological and epistemological limits in terms of which he derives the possible nature of scientific explanation in social inquiry. The 'epistemological limit' is 'the ineradicably open calibre of social systems which accounts for the absence of (ontologically) crucial or decisive test situations' and therefore the inappropriateness of the experimental method used in classical physics and chemistry, in the production of closed experimental conditions. However, he concludes that:

the empirically-controlled retrodution of explanatory structures from (here conceptualised) phenomena, and the synthetic reconstruction of networks of (here internally related) transfactually efficacious causal structures at work in the production of events, etc., in conjunctures, are possible here in the social, as in the natural world [and therefore] ... on the critical naturalist approach ... the social sciences can be sciences in exactly the same sense

as the natural ones, but on the strict condition that they are science in ways as specific and different as their objects (1986, pp. 134-35).

The problematic nature of Bhaskar's arguments appears to be an inevitable outcome of the stated role he gives philosophy in relation to science. He makes a clear distinction between philosophical and scientific ontologies: 'that is between the kind of world presupposed by a philosophical account of science and the particular types of entities and processes postulated by some substantive scientific theory.' This follows from the position stated in *The Possibility of Naturalism* where he notes that his deduction of the nature of social scientific knowledge, from the necessary pre-existence of social forms for intentional action, illustrates the formal philosophical use of transcendental procedure. Yet, Bhaskar also appears to attempt to distance himself from any charge of question-begging, when he states that:

there is no way in which philosophy can legislate in advance for the transposition of particular scientific procedures; so that the minor premises of philosophy's arguments may have to be developed afresh in the case of each specific science. Indeed, were philosophy able to anticipate the form of or stimulate criteria *ex ante* for successful scientific practices ... science would now appear as the simple realization of philosophy or as the automatic product of a practice (or method) authenticated by it (1979, p. 9).

But, surely, by using the strategy in which he *assumes* a conception of society and the implications for social inquiry, he does legislate in advance for social science. He philosophically begs the issue at the outset in favour of, not only a realistic conception of ontology and scientific inquiry, but one type of social science rather than another. For, what criteria would the science use to alter the premises and deductions of the philosophical discourse, since it is premised on the latter?

These reflections dictate implications for the earlier observations on empirical controls. If in his text, Bhaskar had reflected on potential social science methods by comparison with the natural sciences suggested by Benton, the problem would remain as to the appropriateness of any natural science method for the object domain of social science. This is because Bhaskar's claims for the nature of society (including the realist ontology), on which basis a comparison would be made, have been derived from the arguments criticised here. Benton, however, like Bhaskar, does not give any solution to the problem of justifying the appropriateness of a method which could generate realist knowledge.

In the latter part of chapter two, Bhaskar develops his thesis on emancipation which focuses on the role of social science as a basis for the criticism of ideology or false consciousness. But, of course, his argument rests on the prior aspects of his thesis which have been criticised here.

Whatever the merits of my criticisms, Bhaskar's text continues his important contribution to the realist movement, and remains challenging and worthy of assessment. In particular, I think that his arguments against other metatheories are powerful. I have in mind the role of his level of transcendental argument in its metacritical form, where it takes as its premises the conceptual forms of metatheories. In this respect, chapter three delivers a crushing critique of positivism. However, such metacritique does not solve the problem of justifying realism and associated claims to the standards and possibilities of any particular science. This is a problem which the realist movement has not yet been able to overcome.

Paul Fox-Strangways

LACAN: THE SEMINAR

Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book 1: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated with notes by John Forrester, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, ix + 314pp., £35.00 hb, £12.50 pb

Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book 2: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Sylvana Tomaselli with notes by John Forrester, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, ix + 343pp., £35.00 hb, £12.50 pb

Lacan's Seminar was in effect an institution in its own right and was the most sustained project in which he was involved. Lacan's career was punctuated by splits, schisms and quarrels, but the Seminar went on. It began in 1951 with a private study group, but by the 1970s it had become a meeting place of the intellectual *tout Paris*, a theoretical tourist attraction worthy of at least three stars in the Michelin guide. Things were rather different in the mid-1950s. The Seminar was then a central element in the training programme of the Société Française de Psychanalyse, the association formed by Lacan and others after their departure from the original Société Psychanalytique de Paris in 1953. The Seminar provides a focus for analytic training and its stated ambition is to reconsider 'the fundamental texts of the analytic experience' (Book 1, p. 89).

Each year of the Seminar takes as its theme a major topic in psychoanalysis (the psychoses in 1955-56, identification in 1961-62, and so on), but discussion can be much more wide-ranging than this might suggest as Lacan circles his chosen topic, digressing into a discussion of linguistics, anthropology or literature, but always returning to the fundamental issue of the analytic experience itself. Themes interweave with one another; concepts are introduced, worked upon and revised.

The Seminar is the crucible in which Lacan's theory is forged, and in its most exciting sections one has the impression of encountering thought in the making, thought in search of a discourse adequate to its objects. This can in itself be a source of surprise. In the first two years of the Seminar, for instance, Lacan constantly refers to language and makes occasional use of terms like 'signifier', but there is no real discussion of Saussure, who has yet to become a major figure in Lacan's theoretical universe. Indeed, the scriptural axiom that 'In the beginning was the word' and St Augustine's writings on language prove to be much more relevant to Lacan's concerns of the moment than the father of modern linguistics.

Whilst the later Seminar is forbidding in the extreme, these early volumes are characterized by a surprising clarity, even limpidity, of style. This is not to suggest that they are light reading, but the clarity must be a welcome relief to anyone who has struggled with the density of, say, 'The Freudian Thing'. It is rather as though Lacan's theoretical and stylistic defences were down, as though he were more truly at home here than anywhere else. The style is also a reminder that teaching was probably his true vocation, and that speech, rather than the written word, was his natural habitat. At this stage, Lacan can still indulge in dialogue, debating issues with Jean Hyppolite and others and answering interventions from the floor. The dialogic element soon disappears almost completely; the Seminar becomes a monologue and, in the last years, a mime show as demonstrations of the properties of Moebius strips and topological models replace the oratory of the past.

These Seminars of the 1950s probably represent Lacan at his most exciting. Language has become a central theme, but theoretical linguistics has yet to be appropriated in any serious manner. Lacan is in fact beginning to make an important transition, moving from a phenomenology to what will come to be known as structuralism. In the discussion of the constitution of the ego, great weight is attached to relations between the subject and the other, relations which can be described in terms derived from Hegel and illustrated by Sartre's theory of intersubjectivity. This model gradually begins to be replaced by a reference to the Other, to a symbolic model of language and culture constructed with help from Lévi-Strauss. The structuralist Lacan is beginning to emerge from his phenomenological chrysalis. Lévi-Strauss is not the only element involved in the transition. Lacan's interlocutors include the theorists of cybernetics, and his topics the theme of the machine from La Mettrie onwards. It is this theme which inspires the first discussion of Poe's *Purloined Letter* and not, as might be assumed from the later and better-known version, a concern with textuality, structural or otherwise.

Lacan's intellectual development is characterized both by his ability to borrow from a wide variety of sources (which suggests that his genius is for synthesis rather than innovation) and by his seeming need to think *against*. Here, as so often, he thinks against ego-psychologists such as Hartmann and their notion of the autonomous ego. They are charged with re-absorbing psychoanalysis into a general psychology which represses the Freudian discovery, of subverting the revolution which proves that the ego is not even master in its own house. Against this distortion, Lacan argues that the ego is a fundamentally narcissistic construct, the product of an alienating identification with an image seen, originally at least, in a mirror.

He also thinks against the theorists of object-relations, as represented by Alice and Michael Balint and Fairbairn, who are condemned for confusing the real and imaginary dimensions of subjectivity and for their neglect of intersubjectivity (Sartre proves to be a useful ally here). Thinking against is such a feature of Lacan's work that one sometimes wonders what he would have done without theoretical adversaries, how he would have lived without polemic. One also wonders whether the unspoken element in the quarrel with object-relations might not have something to do with the image of mothering promoted by that trend within psychoanalysis, an image far removed from the phallogocentrism of Lacanian analysis.

Publication of the Seminar began in 1973 with Book II (translated as *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Hogarth, 1977) and six volumes are currently available in



French. The full Seminar will take up twenty-six volumes, a somewhat awesome prospect. In all cases, the text has been prepared and edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's son-in-law, literary executor and *fides Achates*, on the basis of tapes and stenographic transcripts. Miller's role is not uncontroversial, and he has been accused of making excessive editorial interventions and even interpretations; attempts to produce an alternative text have been blocked by legal action. But there appears to be no real reason to doubt his probity, or his devotion to what can only be a lifetime's work. This is likely to be the Authorized Version, the Lacanian equivalent to the Standard Edition of Freud. The appearance of a further two volumes in English is a major event, and the news that a translation of the Seminar on the psychoses is in preparation is greatly to be welcomed. The difficulties involved in reading Lacan are notorious, but for too long they have been compounded by the fact that so little of the corpus is available. That situation is at last being remedied.

In many respects the English reader now has a distinct advantage over his or her French counterpart. The French text of the Seminar comprises no notes, bibliography or index, and is therefore a somewhat cumbersome beast to work with. The English text has been indexed, and a bibliography has been appended, but the real bonus comes in the form of John Forrester's erudite notes. Virtually all Lacan's allusions have been identified; at one point Lacan has even been silently corrected, as his erroneous ascription of a paper by Margaret Little to Annie Reich has been emended. It is particularly helpful to have all the allusions to Freud so clearly elucidated. Sadly, the illuminating introductions written by Forrester for these volumes have been omitted from the published text at Miller's insistence. They can now be read in *Free Associations* 10 and 11, and deserve a wide audience. The

translations, by Forrester and Sylvana Tomaselli are accurate and read fluently. They also go a long way to providing a standardized Lacanian terminology in English, and should form the basis for future work. At a number of points, the translators depart from the terminology of the Standard Edition of Freud. The decision to use 'drive' rather than 'instinct' for *Trieb* is scarcely controversial, but the choice of 'investment' for *Be-setzung* may cause the odd purist eyebrow to be raised. Yet 'investment' is closer to both the German and the French (*investissement*) than Strachey's neologism 'cathexis', a pseudo-classicism which did not exactly please Freud himself.

The use of 'desire' is perhaps less happy. Lacan uses *désir* to cover both Freud's *Wunsch* ('wish', as in wish-fulfilment; *Wunsch-erfüllung*) and his own notion of desire, which owes more to the philosophical tradition of Hegel and even Spinoza than to the analytic tradition itself. Inevitably, the blanket use of 'desire' in English tends to obscure some differences, and hints at a continuity between Freud and Lacan which, some would say, simply does not exist. The introduction of Austin's 'performative' might also be seen as dubious. It is used to translate Lacan's verbal phrase *Ce qui fait acte*, and certainly captures the implications of a founding word which established a pact simply by virtue of being pronounced. It does, on the other hand, give a rather distorted impression of his framework of reference, which alludes to a Biblical tradition rather than to Austin. But these are very minor quibbles given the magnitude of the task facing Lacan's translators. The Seminar is essential reading. In this translation it is also pleasurable reading.

David Macey

POST FREUD

Peter Clark and Crispin Wright (eds.), *Mind, Psychoanalysis and Science*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988, 370pp., £27.50

Most of the pieces collected in this volume originated in a 1985 conference at St. Andrews convened in honour of Adolf Grünbaum's presence at the University as Gifford Lecturer. His own contribution is republished from elsewhere together with commissioned responses from Jim Hopkins and Frank Cioffi. The rest is conference proceedings, with several distinct areas each having a key paper and responses. The result is, in the main, state of the art Anglo-American philosophical interpretation of Freud, although there are distinguished non-philosophical contributors. But it is also a curate's egg of a book. Familiarity, and rather tired-looking, arguments are trundled out; there are fresh digs at old themes and problems; and since the format is not consistently followed a couple of pieces are left hanging in polemical mid-air.

Two issues seem to underlie all the contributions. The first is signalled by a Hilary Putnam quote on the very last page of text that 'we are not free to inhabit the pre-Freudian world'. We are, it would seem, all Freudians now; Freud's ideas are part of common sense. Yet what do you do if you think Freud is wrong? Or at least have serious worries about the consistency and probity of his ideas? Those who do believe Freud obviously and palpably wrong rail against his continued influence, and to explain it are driven to use the language of 'myth' and 'religion'. Cioffi's piece in particular is very bad-tempered and has the tone of an impassioned

atheist's protests against the survival of Christian belief. Frederick Crews, an erstwhile friend of psychoanalysis, writes a 'God that failed' piece which is full of some very bad language indeed: there are phrases like 'systematic mendacity', 'cavalier ethics', 'quintessential pseudo-scientist' and 'sophistries'. Freud even gets compared to Stalin. (What's the difference? Stalin was a real murderer and Freud believed his own lies!)

Even those who have doubts still tend, somewhat apologetically, to preface their sceptical remarks with a 'notwithstanding Freud's greatness' clause. There is a great unresolved uneasiness as to how to assess Freud's work given that the extent of his cultural and intellectual influence is disproportionate to the degree of scientific and philosophical agreement about the correctness of his theories. Everything too easily slides into avowals of faith or simple disbelief. The debate between Erwin and Kline concerning the extent of the evidential support for psychoanalysis has very much the tone of a 'Oh no it doesn't!' 'Oh yes it does' exchange.

The second issue at large is how to situate Freud's theory within the general terms of current Anglo-American philosophy of mind. This is presently very sophisticated indeed. This means that we can now, like Moore, call Freud a homuncular functionalist manqué where previously he was just a dualist. But reappraisal of Freud in this context is long overdue. Some, of course, like Dilman, ignore the present debates and pursue traditional conceptual analysis of a notion like 'unconscious intention'; others, like Sharpe, swim against the stream and

defend hermeneutic interpretations of Freud. Others again seem to be using Freud merely as a pretext for grinding their particular axes on general questions in philosophy of mind. But there are signs of a sophisticated and careful reading of Freudian theory in the light of current work in philosophical psychology.

The key questions seem to be whether Freud's ideas can be assimilated within what is now called 'folk psychology'; and how best to honour Freud's undoubted commitment to physicalism. Confusions still prevail. Chief amongst these concerns the significance of Freud's rejection of the 1895 'Project'. This work is a failure but as Hobson rightly notes the failure is one of neurophysiological theory. Too many critics take Freud to be repudiating reductionism and even physicalism. There are also related errors concerning the relationship of Freudian psychology to neurology. On the 'folk psychological' side, it is not clear how Freud should be understood: as extending the domain of common-sense explanations of behaviour to encompass 'unconscious' reasons for action, as undermining the paradigm of conscious mental ratiocination with the idea of 'primary processes', or as deconstructing the idea of a single unified personal 'self'.

Freudianism does present an undoubted challenge to certain conceptions of the 'person'. But it is also undoubtedly true that Freud's work as a whole is ambiguous, inconsistent and often merely speculative. His problems lay in trying to combine his new understandings of the 'mental' and 'personal' with his unchanging commitment to a physicalist and natural scientific view of the human being. If we are to make progress in the topic of 'mind, psychoanalysis and science' we must honour Freud's commitments, and yet remain sophisticated about the philosophical and scientific context. In a situation where his influence upon intellectuals is, as one writer notes, independent of his scientific standing, it is too easy to be either reverential or plain bilious. Freudianism is neither myth nor commonsense. It is a theory of mind whose proper critical assessment demands both that we ignore the cultural institution and be aware of contemporary philosophical psychology.

David Archard

WHOSE JUSTICE? WHICH RATIONALITY?

Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London, Duckworth, 1988, 355pp., £12.95 pb

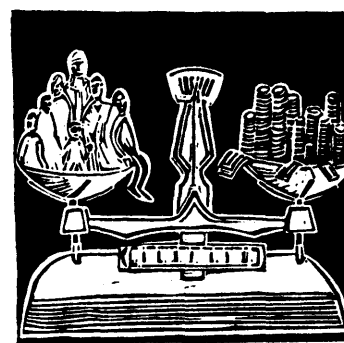
In his preface MacIntyre presents this book as a sequel to *After Virtue*. This might seem odd, because its underlying thesis appears sharply to depart from the stance of his earlier book. *After Virtue* begins with a striking simile. Suppose scientific knowledge were lost, leaving the terminology of science still in use, but devoid of its proper sense. It would still *promise* the means to decide between truth and falsehood, but, lacking its rational core, it would not deliver, leaving us to flounder in an arbitrary choice between competing opinions. This, MacIntyre argues, parallels the current state of moral discourse, poisoned by the bane of relativism. We have lost our way, our sense of the human *telos* – the point and purpose of human life which must underpin ethical rationality. 'Modern' philosophy is to blame, and MacIntyre faces that choice, which confronts all root and branch critics of modernity, between a *revolutionary restoration* of a new and appropriate purpose for humanity and the *retrieval* of the lost tradition of understanding of the point of human life.

After Virtue ends where post-apocalyptic science fiction begins; too late to bring all humanity back to virtue, we must hope that tiny communities, in which the flame of the moral life still burns, will float like Arks on the floodtide of barbarism engulfing the planet. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, on the other hand, begins with an apology for not being more eclectic than it is, goes on to explore a plurality of traditions of life and thought, and concludes, strenuously but not entirely convincingly, with a rebuttal of relativism – an accusation which the body of the work clearly invites.

Yet this is not the sort of *volte face* that delights the reviewer in pursuit of a facile point to score. A great merit of *After Virtue*, displayed equally in the present work, is MacIntyre's keen appreciation of the hermeneutic difficulty of retrieving a lost tradition. Modern philosophical relativism has thrived on the parallel between the problem in interpreting disparate contemporary cultures and that of reconstructing vanished world views. In *After Virtue* MacIntyre rejects what Putnam has called the

'God's eye view' of timeless rationality, espoused by enlightenment thinkers in their crusade against tradition. In this work he rightly rejects relativism as the negative pole of that view – that, without timeless criteria of rational decision making, there can be no Reason.

MacIntyre sought, in the earlier book, to locate reason in an historical narrative, invoking the thesis of the autonomy of narrative understanding, and the notion of practices whose goods are internal to them, in order to rediscover a principle of unity for the fractured human *telos*. A grasp of the point of human life, for MacIntyre, requires collective and individual human self-understanding. This, he holds, can only be achieved through comprehending the narrative unity of human life, embodied in a tradition.



Thence, you might think, to a Hegelian historical synthesis – the unfolding self-revelation of *Geist*. Not so, for MacIntyre finds several fundamental obstacles to such a facile teleology. The most obvious is that it is narrowly 'Eurocentric' and therefore blinkered to a rich diversity which would be folly to neglect. This is the most striking departure in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* from the earlier book, but one which is wholly consistent with its principal theses. Another obstacle to an easy Hegelianism is the contingent particularity of traditions – their rootedness in time and place, and their recalcitrant individuality

when confronting one another. Traditions do not give way gracefully to their perceived superiors. A synthesis of traditions is a rare and remarkable accomplishment – MacIntyre has a fascinating chapter on Aquinas in this connection. Lastly there is the occurrence of ‘epistemological crises’ internal to traditions – a burgeoning of incoherence and self-doubt within a tradition which it may or may not find the resources to surmount. This is a very interesting notion which MacIntyre brings forward – sharply distinct from such apparently analogous ideas as Kuhn’s conception of ‘anomalies’ within a paradigm, or Lakatos’s account of a ‘degenerating problemshift’ within a research programme.

Rationality, for MacIntyre, is necessarily embedded in traditions; and its style is distinctive in each separate tradition. He takes traditions to possess a relative autonomy, in that an enormous gulf lies between a superficial translation and a profound hermeneutic engagement between traditions. But this same gulf opens up when we try to retrieve the distant past of our own tradition. He distinguishes this gulf from the supposedly unbridgeable divide of the relativists’ ‘incommensurability’, but he has little to say about the criteria by which hermeneutic success is to be judged. He might fairly respond, however, that criteria are no more use in telling you how to do this if you do not know than they would be if you did not know how to ride a bicycle. Indeed, profound hermeneutic engagement with our past and with other traditions is the substance of the bulk of this book, and goes a considerable way towards vindicating its method which I have largely discussed in this review.

There is one more methodological issue of great concern, however, and that is the incompleteness of MacIntyre’s rebuttal of relativism. For there is no place in MacIntyre’s conception for a non-accidental drive towards universality and necessity. He is surely right not to adopt the Hegelian eschatology, according to which the universal and necessary end of history pulls the future inevitably into being out of the past. But the final refutation of relativism requires the means to discover, immanent in human affairs, not just a wish for universality and necessity (such as Habermas takes to be ‘presupposed’ in argumentation), but a concrete impulsion away from the contingent and particular. Marxism, for all its failings and false starts, seems alone amongst ‘traditions’ in seeking just this.

Roger Harris

REMEMBER FOUCAULT

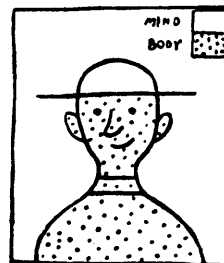
James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (eds.), *The Final Foucault*, London, MIT Press, 1988, £8.95 pb

This volume consists of a reprint of a special issue (Vol. 12, Nos. 2-3, 1987) of the journal *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Four years on from Foucault’s death, publication as a book – with a cover photo of Foucault as a rare emblem of his erstwhile materiality – places it firmly alongside a number of other posthumous attempts to recover, for posterity, the significance of Foucault’s massive body of work. An archaeology of Foucault’s own knowledge is a difficult, if not impossible project because, as Garth Gillan points out in his contribution, ‘Foucault’s Philosophy’, the question of ‘oeuvre’, authorial intention, and even the body of the writer, are fundamentally subverted in Foucault’s texts. Nevertheless, such attempts are being made, and this book assists those would-be seekers after Foucault’s ‘truth’ by providing a useful biographical chronology together with the most comprehensive English and French language Foucault bibliogra-

phy I have seen, numbering some 298 entries between 1954 and 1984.

The interview which opens the book was conducted with Foucault just five months before he died, and focuses incisively on his interest in the ethic of ‘the care for the self’ as a practice of freedom, a shift in perspective which has perplexed so many of his critics in the 1980s. However, the remaining five essays in the book, though competent accounts of aspects of Foucault’s late work, throw little new light on the controversies over Foucault’s final ‘turn’. Such debates revolve around the publication of *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* (now also in English translation). These books seemed, initially, to contradict the promise of quite different lines of enquiry sketched in *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* had been published much earlier, in the 1970s, as the first exploration in a projected ‘history’ of sexuality, which has ended ultimately in four volumes rather than the expected six.

The essays here suffer from a willingness – despite protestations to the contrary – to accord too much to Foucault’s individual status as an academic ‘star’, especially in the final essay by Thomas Flynn which concentrates on Foucault’s last course at the Collège de France. Whereas European debates about Fou-



cault’s importance have often been couched in terms of his relationship – or lack of relationship – to Marxism, critical focus in the United States has been more frequently governed by questions about his precise role in intellectual formations; for instance, structuralism and post-structuralism. The cutting edge of Foucault’s work is often missed in such interpretations, and the absence of any consideration of the relevance of Foucault’s work on ‘sexuality’ for contemporary cultural politics, especially gay culture and the politics of masculinity, is particularly marked in these essays.

If there is a continuity between Foucault’s earlier work and that of the writings and lectures of the later years discussed in this book, the connection between the ‘games of truth’ and the practices of the formation of the subject provide it. Though *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* mapped a new field of research for Foucault – that of Greek and Roman ethics – and appeared to displace the concern with ‘power’ which characterised books like *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, the common thread is now identifiable as a series of historical investigations into the ways in which people have constituted and recognised themselves as ‘subjects’. Far from turning his back on the analysis of power/knowledge formations by burying himself in obscure mists of antiquity, Foucault’s late books reworked his continuing interest in the self-formation of subjectivities, finding a potentially different form of sexual ethic which did not confuse questions of lifestyle with regimes of truth. The political importance of such searches for new forms of subjectivity should not be lost on a post-Aids world. It is a pity that this book did not give higher priority to considering Foucault’s political legacy, rather than his more limited relevance for the academy.

Steve Redhead

THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS

Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, London and New York, Methuen, 1987, 164pp., £20 hb, £6.95 pb

Utopianism and Marxism charts the relationship between Marxist and utopian traditions of the socialist movement. In nine very brief chapters Geoghegan provides the reader with a useful and welcome introduction to this topic, tracing the relation from the classical utopian socialist texts of Saint-Simon, Owen and Fourier – who, it is stressed, regarded their own ideas as scientific rather than utopian – to the writings of Bahro and Gorz. In between he summarizes some of the ideas of the two most interesting writers in this respect: Marcuse's Freudian and Bloch's anti-Freudian approaches to critical utopian thinking. For Geoghegan, like the latter two writers, this mode of thought is grounded in a need for fantasy which, he suggests, is 'a constant in any conceivable society' and which in our own serves as the basis of a 'utopian impulse' producing critical images of it. In other words, Geoghegan reads utopias dialectically as projections into the future and as critiques of the present.

In the first half of the book the conflicts between Marxism and utopianism are most obviously brought to the fore. In these chapters Geoghegan deals with Marx and Engels' scientific critique of the utopian classics and their more reactionary followers, and with the Second International's positivist dismissal of all blueprints for the future. It is in these discussions that Geoghegan's main point emerges: the need to argue for a 'self-consciously utopian Marxism'. This becomes evident, for example, in Marx and Engels' own critique of utopianism. For, whilst criticising it for not being grounded in the social processes operative in the present, they also recognised its critical moment, and were utopian themselves when trying to represent their own ideas of a reconciled society – whether in the past (primitive communism) or the future (communism). This, one feels, is the crux of the matter for Geoghegan, who suggests that the need for day-dreaming and fantasy – expressing real needs – should not be left to the reactionary utopianisms of the right but rather recognised, cultivated and tapped politically by a pluralistic socialist movement. The implication is that the 'utopian impulse' is a facet, indeed a *politics*, of everyday life.

The argument for a 'self-consciously utopian Marxism' is not, however, really made in *Utopianism and Marxism*. This is because there remains an unanalysed disjuncture between the utopian moment of daydreaming on the one hand, and the utopian moment of the political practice of formulating projections into the future on the other. In this sense the book presents the reader with a number of sketches in which a series of questions (Are all political readings of history utopian? Is the 'utopian impulse' an integral part of all political reason? Has Marxism itself become utopian too?) constantly insinuate themselves, demanding to be addressed. A glimpse is offered of the complexity of the problems that are involved in what is perhaps the most interesting part of the book dealing with 'golden age' historical narratives and Sorel's rather limited concept of myth. Hopefully these pages map out an intellectual agenda for future critical reflection.

John Kraniauskas

JAMES CONNOLLY

Austen Morgan, *James Connolly: A Political Biography*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988, 244pp., £27.50 hb

James Connolly, *Collected Works: Volume One*, Dublin, New Books Publications, 1987, 516pp., £7.50 pb

James Connolly, *Selected Writings*, London, Pluto Press, 1988, 317pp., £8.95 pb

The life and work of James Connolly (1868-1916) raises the vexed question of the relationship between nationalism and the theory and practice of socialism; for Connolly, an active trade unionist and socialist, was also executed for his part in the Irish Easter Rising. Diverse interpretations of the nature of his achievements have arisen which both reflect and further reinforce major divisions within Irish socialism. Morgan's book is both a biography and an intervention in this debate. His target is the 'anti-imperialist' reading of Connolly contained in C. Desmond Greaves' *The Life and Times of James Connolly* (1961). This, says Morgan, portrays Connolly as a 'would-be Lenin' who successfully synthesised nationalism and Marxism and whose participation in the events of 1916 was impeccably Marxist. Underpinning Morgan's critique is his political opposition to contemporary exponents of Irish anti-imperialism – the so-called 'Green Marxists'. He counters with a bold reinterpretation of Connolly which replaces the notion of a successful synthesis with one of a fundamental and unfortunate break: he 'lived as a socialist and died an Irish nationalist'.

In the last twenty months of his life, Morgan argues, Connolly abandoned his life-long socialism (in which, it is further argued, nationalism had never been a vital element) for a thoroughly non-socialist nationalism. In developing his thesis Morgan displays impressive scholarship. He painstakingly chronicles Connolly's odyssey through a bewildering range of socialist parties and sects in Scotland, the USA and Ireland. He documents his engagement with the complex radical traditions of the Second International era. He locates Connolly's apostasy in 1914 and attributes it to four main causes: the great lockout in Dublin in 1913 had first raised and then crushed his hopes concerning the Irish working class; the possibility of Irish partition threatened permanently to divide this class; the collapse of the Second International in the



face of World War was a sickening blow; and the war presented a strategic opportunity for Irish self-assertion. Morgan concludes that, as a result of these factors, 'socialism had ceased to be his guiding ideology'; instead, he became a mere 'revolutionary nationalist'.

Morgan's book is an original and challenging contribution to the Connolly debate. The 'Green' counter-position can be found in two collections of Connolly's works – the *Collected Works: Volume 1* published by the Communist Party of Ireland, and the *Selected Works* edited by a theorist of 'Celtic Communism' P. Berresford Ellis. Both possess introductions in a vein Morgan so detests. However, their documentation can, to some extent, be a starting point for those wishing to test Morgan's thesis. The qualification regarding extent is important, for both are conscious selections and omit important material Morgan has consulted (we shall see whether the CPI edition will turn out to be truly 'Collected'). This reviewer certainly has doubts about Morgan's central contention. Even on Morgan's evidence nationalism comes over as an important dimension in Connolly's socialism. His early articles in the Belfast nationalist journal *Shan Van Vocht* (Selected Works), for example, and the historical works *Labour in Irish History* and *The Re-Conquest of Ireland* (Collected Works) certainly suggest an attempted synthesis of nationalism and socialism. Similarly his late articles in the *Irish Worker* and the *Workers' Republic* (examples in the two volumes) seem to retain a clear commitment to the socialist objectives of his earlier years. Connolly's practice can also be construed differently in terms of critical participation in nationalist movements earlier on and tactical support for Britain's wartime opponents. Whatever future readers may decide on these matters Morgan has undoubtedly introduced a fresh and sophisticated dimension to the debate. His work contributes to the elevation of Connolly from plaster saint to human being.

Vincent Geoghegan

THEATRICAL PHILOSOPHY

Julian Roberts, *German Philosophy: an Introduction*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1988, 276pp., £27.50 hb, £8.95 pb

An equator between two bizarrely-defined nations – the 'Anglo-Saxons' and the 'Continental' – has been the main battle-line in professional philosophy since the Second World War. The Continentals have rallied to the banner of Austro-German philosophy (but have looked upon Frege, Wittgenstein and Carnap as change-lings who must really have been of Anglo-Saxon stock). The story of this 'German philosophy' is easily schematised into a repeated sequence of discords and resolutions: Kantians dividing into Schellingians and Fichteans who were eventually unified by Hegel; Hegelians dividing into leftists and rightists till the rift was healed by neo-Kantians; then neo-Kantians dividing into two factions of their own. When you contemplate such a story, the only wonder is that able thinkers should have spent lifetimes labouring to create pantomime rôles which were to be obviously derivative and predictable from the vantage-point of future historians.

Julian Roberts's excellent new introduction to German philosophy is organised around a conception of Kant as the creator of a 'messianic' metaphysic of human freedom which led to two opposed traditions: Hegel's secular dialectic of history, and an existentialist reaction initiated by Schelling. Roberts's survey is original, not to say eccentric: Husserl, who has a pivotal position in most stories of German philosophy, has been airbrushed away;

Fichte and Dilthey are hardly mentioned either. The survivors though are revealed in an unusual and searching light.

Each of the book's ten main chapters is devoted to one thinker, who is granted sufficient individuality, through careful descriptions of particular works, to stand up to the tide of retrospective generalisation. In sixty skilful pages we are given a rounded portrait of Kant, integrating his Anglo-Saxon attitudes (in the first half of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) with his unmistakably Continental ones. Then there are increasingly condensed essays on Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Adorno, as well as Kierkegaard and Lukács, who are granted honorary German nationality for the occasion.

In some ways, Julian Roberts's sympathetic presentation of his pantheon of Continental philosophers is a response to one of the needs which engendered the Radical Philosophy Group twenty years ago. Except for one thing: the absence of Marxism. Even undeconstructed Marxists may forgive Roberts for avoiding the pretence that Marx's writings were mainly philosophical, and for discarding the old 'Hegel to Marx' paradigm, which flattens Marx's intellectual surroundings into anticipations or echoes or betrayals; and various asides will reassure Marxists that Roberts has a sympathetic if patronising regard for the Old Moor.

Roberts criticises recent German philosophy for its 'mandarin distaste for public responsibility', and also apologises for failing to supply the 'detailed historical knowledge' which, after all, he could hardly fit into a short introductory book. But his side-lining of Marx, and his concentration on 'mandarins', are perhaps an effect of general method rather than of particular practicalities. His book adheres to the tradition of systematic academic histories of philosophy: like them, it gives the impression that philosophising is a sophisticated recreation for brainy boys responding to each others' books, without a thought for their collective or individual experiences of the extramural world. This does not prevent Roberts from exposing some primary philosophical thoughts of his own (about identity, repetition, and music); but he judges the characters in his book only as secondary thinkers, and in particular as more or less adequate readers of Kant. He quotes a lament of Feuerbach's about arms-length, systematic philosophy: it is 'dramatic and theatrical' said Feuerbach, and 'in opposition to the lyricism of material thought'. It would be good to be able to hope for a revival of lyricism, instead of further stagings of other people's plays.

Jonathan Rée



WITTGENSTEIN

Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, second edition, 1987, 255pp., £9.95 pb

A. J. Ayer, *Wittgenstein*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986, 154pp., £3.95 pb

Fogelin's *Wittgenstein* was first published in the 'Arguments of the Philosophers' series in 1976. For the second edition two major modifications are evident. Fogelin has reworked the form and substance of some of his key arguments, notably the section criticising the logic of the *Tractatus*, and the chapters on the 'private language argument' and 'following a rule'. According to the Preface these changes have been made 'in the direction of simplicity', and in response to criticisms, particularly from those logicians who have jumped to the defence of the *Tractatus*.

The second significant change in this edition is a completely new final section entitled 'Wittgenstein and the History of Philosophy'. Unfortunately this short nine-page chapter does not live up to the title. The author quotes von Wright with approval: 'Wittgenstein's new philosophy is, so far as I can see, entirely outside any philosophical tradition and without literary sources of influence.' Fogelin assents to this strangely unhistorical view, thereby perpetuating once again the myth of Wittgenstein as a completely untutored genius, outside all influences of contemporary debates and philosophical tradition. Having decided there is nothing to say about Wittgenstein's work in relation to the history of philosophy, the author goes on to identify an apparent resemblance between the later writings and the 'philosophical movement' (?) of 'Pyrrhonian scepticism' established by Sextus Empiricus. This identification is surely mistaken and idiosyncratic; if anything the central thrust of the late works, particularly *On Certainty*, is precisely against sceptical arguments. The evidence for a contrary position is unconvincing.

Fogelin has written a rather narrowly-focussed work for those already familiar with academic philosophy. He seldom strays beyond the technicalities of the *Tractatus* and the familiar themes of the *Philosophical Investigations*. A. J. Ayer, on the other hand, has produced a more basic, panoramic study. One might be tempted to suggest that with the works of Pears and Kenny, good general introductions to Wittgenstein are readily available. Ayer, quite rightly, challenges this view: 'Neither of them would convey very much to a reader who did not already have considerable training in philosophy,' he says. With his usual elegance and lucidity, Ayer ranges effortlessly over biography, short studies of nearly all the available writings, and an assessment of Wittgenstein's influence.

Ayer's unreconstructed positivism gives rise to some distortion. For example, he refuses to accept the subversion of Moore's defence of 'common sense' in *On Certainty*. Wittgenstein shows how the rigid distinction between the logical and the empirical dissolves in an analysis of the way we speak about knowledge, certainty, and belief. Ayer cannot tolerate this position as it would undercut some of his deeply-held philosophical beliefs. Despite the intrusion of Ayer's own commitments, this is I think the best general introduction to date.

Chris Lawn

Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988, 246pp., £27.50 hb

Can we, as one contributor to this volume asks, trust 'Trust'? The concept (and the quality) seems so elusive and abstract, and yet, paradoxically, lies at the centre of political practice and theory. Cooperation is the core of social existence, and is based in mutuality – in the human disposition to desire that our desires coincide, so that our transactions may be governed not by coercion but by consent. To be able to trust another person is to be able to rely upon that person to produce a range of anticipated responses. A measure of trust is inevitable wherever organizational authority is maintained at a distance. How we come to cultivate this trust, with all its ambiguities and anxieties, is the subject of this book.

In buying and selling, games, romance, and across the whole range of social, economic and political life, how far one can and should trust another is of tremendous importance. Yet the concept of trust has not received the attention it deserves within modern political theory. Gambetta has thus collected together an interesting group of writers (including Lunn, Luhmann, Gellner and Bernard Williams) to address the problems associated with trust and distrust from diverse (and often antagonistic) standpoints. The result is a strange babble of voices with frustratingly few points of common reference, but nevertheless there are isolated passages and arguments here which are serious and deserve to be widely read.



John Dunn's essay, 'Trust and Political Agency', stands out as a brilliant piece of sustained and sensitive intellectual analysis. He criticises those political theories that marginalise trust, but he also acknowledges the intimidating fact that trust is a precondition for being taken: 'However indispensable trust may be as a device for coping with the freedom of others, it is a device with a permanent and built-in possibility of failure'. In arguing for trust, Dunn urges an appreciation of the necessarily risk-laden nature of any political theory: 'Trust does not have to be any more credulous or sentimental than the judgement of those who decide how to allocate it, though it will in practice, naturally, not be any less so either.' 'A purposeful determination to avoid being a sucker,' writes Dunn, 'if generalized to the human race, would subvert human sociality more or less in its entirety.' Dunn concludes by encouraging us to consider 'a quite novel problem

of practical trust – the question of human coexistence after the point at which human beings have learnt how to exterminate themselves'. The essay is a remarkable demonstration of how to make academic discussion both responsible and practical in outlook.

Other essays are less successful. Bernard Williams' use of the Prisoner's Dilemma manages to make his argument almost *arrogantly* obtuse. Niklas Luhmann's attempt at capturing the specificity of the concept of trust and its importance for modern societies is certainly worthwhile, but his conclusions (perhaps predictably) are very tentative and seem to leave the theorist with scarcely any *practical* role to play. Diego Gambetta's essay on the mafia is an illuminating account of how a society, founded on mutual distrust, can develop into a stable social structure and reproduce itself over a long period.

As Gambetta notes in his concluding remarks, the Wittgensteinian act of faith is a fragile yet essential precondition for a constructive theory of trust: 'If we are not prepared to bank on trust, then the alternatives in many cases will be so drastic, painful, and possibly immoral that they can never be lightly entertained.' Ironically, many of the contributors to this volume signally lack that capacity to trust the earnestness of each other's positions, and as a result the collection is not so much interdisciplinary as, petulantly, multi-disciplinary. Gambetta has provided us with a fascinating and provocative set of responses to an indubitably important problem. The debate, however, has clearly only just begun.

Graham McCann

Michael Ruse, *Homosexuality: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988, 299pp., £19.50 hb

Viewers of Werner Herzog's film *Aguirre, Wrath of God* will not quickly forget its final image of the mad Klaus Kinski swirling down the Amazon, firing redundant shots at imaginary antagonists, while the beasts of the jungle gambol playfully around his drifting raft. Professor Ruse, too, has now left the backwater tributary he paddled along in *Is Science Sexist?* (1981, reviewed in *RP* 31) and is caught up in the raging torrent of *A Philosophical Inquiry into Homosexuality*, which, he assures us, is 'particularly an obsession of our own age'.

Antagonists and beasts crowd aboard Professor Ruse's raft, not least homosexual men (his particular obsession) who 'as we know, frequently have literally hundreds of partners' for reasons whose 'ultimate causal factors lie back in the mists of evolutionary time'. Several perennial characteristics of Professor Ruse's philosophical style are seen here: daft empirical claims, obsessive aetiological preoccupations – over half the book is taken up with discussion of what *causes* homosexuality – and excessive credence in the research programme of sociobiology. The whole balance of the book is as relevant and realistic as Aguirre/Kinski's perception of the Amazon jungle.

What, the reader may ask, have such concerns to do with philosophy? What is Ruse trying to achieve? A philosophical analysis, he tells us, is one which 'tries to go beneath the rhetoric and emotion and to uncover the foundational suppositions which lead people to such different conclusions'. Quite so, though an analysis which stops at that point has hardly achieved much of value. Alas, Professor Ruse's philosophy is of the kind which considers it has done its job by laying out the consequences of various positions – but need never take the opportunity to think. Where his assumptions are threatened, his style is to cite contrary arguments, before proceeding to ignore their force. He does not



appear to understand the counterarguments he claims to have read. The conclusions tend to a ghastly predictable blandness, a kind of Big Mac of philosophical analysis. The mountains tremble, and there emerges a mouse:

Virtually everything points to the tolerance of minimal homosexual activity – a tolerance which should be acknowledged by law. This is not to say that one likes homosexual activity, or thinks it moral. It is to say that the state ought not to take it upon itself to ban it.

This book is being quite widely promoted, and the disconcerting suspicion dawns that it is intended for general studies in American colleges. Professor Ruse is obviously a kindly and well-meaning man. He fears an anti-gay backlash, because of AIDS, and this is his contribution to the general good. I have no doubt that he considers he is doing us a favour, and spreading enlightenment and tolerance. On balance, though, this is a harmful book, which ought not to be put into the hands of the susceptible young except in an evaluative framework of critical moral discussion which this book so conspicuously lacks.

The major problem is that a self-styled 'philosophical' analysis shows so little sensitivity to the problems introduced by its own assumptions. The impression is overwhelmingly left that research on copulating rats, or oestrogen therapy for hermaphrodites, is a sensible way of trying to seek answers to issues of homosexuality. It is naive to the point of other-worldliness to think that one is performing a constructive service by reaching a mildly non-negative conclusion, after pages and pages of irrelevant diagrams and statistics on such things as 'detumescence responses of homosexual males and heterosexual controls'. The world doesn't work like that. People are not going to study the good professor's equivocal conclusions before deciding whether or not to be panicked into anti-gay prejudice.

Where he could have been a force for public good is in demonstrating clear, balanced thought around all the issues of gay people in society. There is a useful course to be constructed by junking two-thirds of the items in his bibliography and replacing them with the philosophical contributions to the issue which Ruse

hasn't read, or at any rate taken notice of: Dannecker, Fernbach, Hocquenghem, Miele and so on. But the distortions introduced into the conceptual framework of this book by the author's bizarre choice of matters to take seriously quite outweigh the benefits of reaching mildly humane conclusions. Ruse himself introduces an analogy between the situation of gay people today and that of Jews in the Third Reich. But *it really won't do* to debate the relative merits of Cyclon B and shooting for the disposal of Jews, despite concluding that on balance perhaps it's better they be left alive.

John Fauvel

Patrick Murray, *Marx's Theory of Scientific Knowledge*, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1988, 279pp., £32.50

Murray's book reviews the corpus of Marx's writings from the doctoral dissertation to *Capital* demonstrating their continuity in terms of an ongoing critical project. Just as 'Marx's critique of philosophy has a political-economic character, so, conversely, his critique of political economy is philosophically significant'.

In *Capital* Marx identifies the logic of simple circulation with the logic of classical Enlightenment thought (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, the French materialists, the British empiricists and utilitarians, Kant, and others), and the logic of capital with the logic of Hegel's absolute idealism.

Murray rightly insists that Marx's *Capital* is no positivistic science. Marx writes in his 1843 notebook: 'The criticism of [Hegel's] philosophy of right and of the state ... is at once the critical analysis of the modern state and of the reality connected with it...' In the same way through his critique of political economy he mounts a critique of the capitalist mode of production

of which it is the rationalisation. Murray says:

Marx's very constitution of the theory of value, within the logic of essence, houses a critical evaluation of value as a determinate category of social production. He does not append the critique of value to a 'neutral' scientific presentation of a theory of value. Rather, the very logic of the scientific presentation of the theory of value is a critical one.

Murray spends a lot of time criticising the logic of essence employed by the abstract understanding. Indeed he goes so far as to say that, since essence must appear as something other than itself, the logic of essence is a 'logic of alienation'. (Must it? Marx implicitly envisages a coincidence of essence and appearance in his famous statement on when science is necessary: i.e. when essence and appearance do *not* coincide: it is strange that Murray does not consider this passage.)

In the best passages in the book Murray identifies point by point interesting parallels between Marx's critique of Hegel and his critique of political economy. What perhaps is lacking is enough reflection on how this could be possible: clearly it is not enough to say Hegel ideologically absolutises capital. We have to show how reality itself can work according to an inverted logic – the problem that baffled Colletti, a thinker neglected by Murray for some reason.

In discussing Marx's critique of Hegel, Murray speaks of Marx's 'return to the critical, *epistemological* position of Kantian philosophy'. This is a highly dubious conclusion; for Marx's vindication of the category of objectivity has nothing in common with Kant. Although Marx's account of the knowledge relation must be different from Hegel's, he agrees with him on the priority of ontology as against the epistemologism of virtually all modern philosophy.

Chris Arthur

