REVIEWS

THINKING ABOUT CHILDREN

Children, Parents and Politics, edited by Geoffrey Scarre, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. xiv + 207pp., £25 hb, 0521 360986.

Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931*, London, Virago Press, 1990. ix + 343pp., £16.99 pb, 185381 1238.

Philosophers - at least those in the Anglo-American tradition - have not had a great deal to say about children. There have only been a few collections of essays and a couple of texts. Whilst all philosophers must have been children at some stage, philosophy conceives of both itself and adulthood as the putting aside of childish things. Childhood is characteristically understood in negative terms as the opposite and absence of everything that marks the adult human.

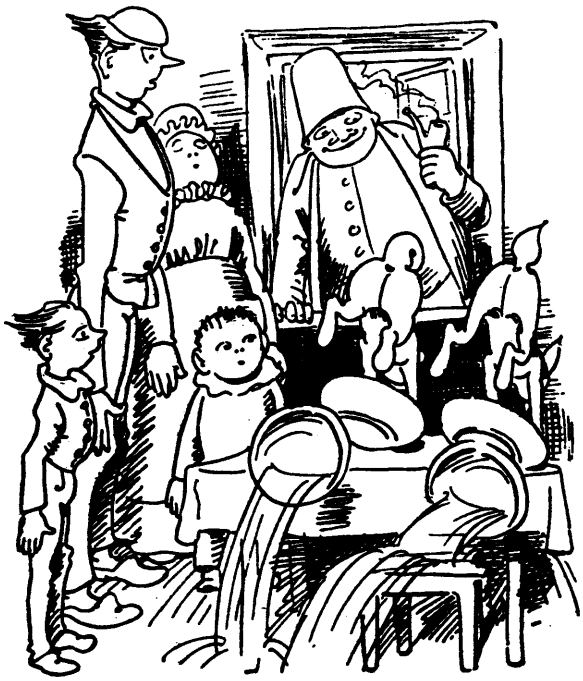
Currently, the dominant philosophical ideology in the West is liberalism, broadly construed. It conceives of individuals as rational, self-interested agents associating on a voluntary, contractual basis; a principle of fundamental equality governs their interrelationships in so far as all mature rational adults are entitled to the same respect. Children do not and cannot figure in such a picture. As immature beings, they lack full rationality, cannot enter into contracts and have no sense of themselves as the possessors of interests.

This might seem a very good reason to abandon the liberal model, but it is a mark perhaps of that model's present dominance that it seems hard to conceive of any attractive alternative that can also be true to the reality of childhood. Thus, the Scarre collection is notable for the number of its contributors who are concerned not to render children marginal people, indeed non-persons, but who struggle to do so within the terms of the liberal discourse.

For example, as Tom Regan points out, the evident wrongness of child pornography presents difficulties for the Kantian. For, whilst it is wrong to treat persons as means in the way that a pornographer does, it is very unclear whether children, although undeniably humans, should count as persons. Regan's own approach - entitling to respect those who may be described as subjects-of-a-life - draws the line in a different place, but may make the same basic mistake of assuming that a clear and straight line is there to be drawn. Others are also in the business of marking boundaries. William Ruddick worries about when childhood begins because even those humans who are not persons seem to deserve some sort of special moral protection - and it is vital to know in virtue of what qualities or attributes they acquire a status below that of adulthood but above that of the unborn. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer beg the question in offering a negative answer to their own question, 'Should All Seriously Disabled Infants Live?', by following Michael Tooley in distinguishing infants from mature human beings. The former do not, as the latter do, fulfil the criteria of personhood: being self-aware and purposeful creatures.

The corrective to this kind of philosophical treatment of childhood is twofold. First, it is probably mistaken to assume that a clear and unambiguous line can always and everywhere be marked between childhood and adulthood. Second, it seems implausible to think that human relationships should be thought about only in terms of rationality, self-interest and contracts. On the first, Judith Hughes is right to remind us that, although 'all communities have ways of treating the children which are different from ways of treating adults, ... not all societies treat children the same'. Even that claim may seem too strong in the light of Aris's famous assertion that the category of 'childhood' is only a comparatively recent invention. We need at least to take seriously Ludmilla Jordanova's insistence that there are various concepts of 'childhood', that these have historical and cultural specificity, and that they are imbued with different moral values.

Stephen Clark's piece is thus interesting as an example of the first half of the corrective to standard philosophical thinking about children. He argues that the liberal errs in seeing legalistic



and contractual bonds as primary, and as self-imposed constraints upon isolated egoistic individuals. On the contrary, Clark maintains, the civil community is defined in the first instance by affective habits of care and affection, of which the familial bonds are a paradigmatic instance: 'The relationship with children is not a marginal one, and children are not marginal cases. They are what the civil community is for, and the bond of parental care is the beginning of society.'

This not quite Filmer re-stated against Locke, but one does start to worryy when the family gets wheeled out as the standard counter instance to the contractualist model of human relations. (In analogous terms, Jean Bethke Elshtain counterposes familial to democratic authority.) This is not to deny the fact that certain kinds of relationship may resist their standard interpretation. It is rather to caution against easy dichotomies - either a voluntarily contracted rights-holder or an affectively constituted role-filler. There is no reason to think that parents cannot both love and owe obligations to their children; nor that the latter should not have rights even in the context of deep and unwilled love.

It is worth remembering then just how pregnant a moral and political symbol childhood is. Carolyn Steedman's book is valuable in this respect. Margaret McMillan was a leading ILP activist and propagandist, chiefly remembered now for her writings and work on behalf of children. Steedman well evokes the period in the history of British society and socialism, when culture, class and childhood were ambiguous and often contradictory reference points in the debate about the way forward. Childhood in particular was seen both as a stage on the way to adulthood and as a lost age. The way in which reformers strive to improve the lot of children was and remains a significant indicator of their attitudes to adult society. And one cannot but feel a great sympathy for someone like McMillan who wanted in the first instance simply to give 'her' working-class infants a cleaner and materially ameliorated environment.

How we aim to secure and better the well-being of children should remain an important preoccupation to all who wish to improve society. But one should retain a suspicion towards all our current presuppositions, particularly of the dominant philosophical variety, concerning the nature of 'childhood'. In the last analysis all our talk of little adults and young persons may say far more about us adult persons than it does about the young.

David Archard

PORNOLOGIES

Alison Assiter, *Pornography, Feminism and the Individual*, Pluto Press, London, 1989. 192pp., ú17.50 hb, 0 7543 0319 6 hb.

In the introduction to her book, Alison Assiter points out that there have been two sorts of dominant discussions about pornography: those which start from 'liberal' premises and whose main concern is opposition to censorship, and those which have been produced within radical feminism. The stress on male sexual power and male violence, and on pornography as one of its fundamental exemplifications, has led to campaigns by radical feminists both in the US and in Britain to ban pornography. And it might appear, Assiter suggests, that the wheel has come full circle; radical feminists apparently support censorship in ways that may seem hard to distinguish from the moralists who were the target of the liberal campaign.

The central arguments of Assiter's book, however, can be expressed as follows:

1. Pornography *is* wrong and should be the object of a feminist critique; but some of the reasons given for this by radical feminists are misguided.

2. Despite the difference in objectives between the liberal and the radical feminist critique, they share some fundamental assumptions and principles.

In particular, Assiter argues, radical feminists share with their liberal opponents an 'individualistic' approach to the self.

The first four chapters of the book are primarily devoted to a discussion of central concepts and themes in the liberal tradition, in particular those of freedom of speech, individualism and autonomy. Assiter argues that certain values within the liberal tradition, in particular those of autonomy and liberty, are indeed worth defending, but they can only be adequately realised if the 'individualistic' perspective of much of the liberal tradition is dropped. In particular, the liberal individualist commitment to the 'freedom of the individual' obscures the power relations involved in pornography; any frame of reference, including a liberal feminist one, which does not recognise, for example, that a woman posing for a pornographic photograph is not simply 'an individual' whose use or exploitation in this context has to be 'balanced' against things such as the freedom of other 'individuals', is inadequate; she is a *woman*, and as such, is positioned in a complex set of social relationships structured not only by gender but also by such things as race and class.

These social relations are ones in which some social groups have power over others; and of course it is male power and violence that has above all been stressed by the radical feminist view of pornography. Chapters 5–10 of Assiter's book are largely devoted to a discussion of the work of Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin and Suzanne Kappeler.

Assiter argues that Dworkin is wrong to suppose that all, or even most of the pornography that is most widely disseminated today involves 'violence' against women. To claim this involves both an illegitimate extension of the word 'violence' and a highly questionable analysis of male sexuality. The majority of soft porn, sold in newsagents for example, whilst often objectionable for other reasons, is misdescribed as 'violent' and sometimes very explicitly distances itself from or rejects violence – it should not be assimilated to things like hard-core porn or snuff movies as if there were no difference. This false assimilation is partly due to the view that heterosexual sex is, of its very nature, violent. The penis, Dworkin says, is a weapon, a symbol of terror. But, Assiter argues, the penis which is seen as a weapon can only be a symbolic penis, whose connection to realitymay often be remote. The biological organ, the penis, does not in itself symbolise anything; there is no reason why it should be *impossible* for heterosexual relationships to be tender or caring, simply because they involve the 'penetration' of the vagina by the penis. Furthermore, Assiter argues, it is wrong to suppose that male *power* over women is always supported or legitimated by male *violence*.

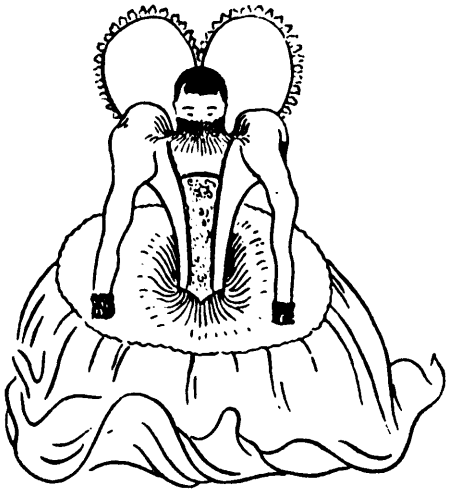
Dworkin's critique of pornography also involves, Assiter claims, problematic assumptions about the female self. Firstly, somewhat after the manner of Nietzsche (to whom Assiter compares her), Dworkin's writing evinces a thinly veiled contempt for

the vast majority of 'ordinary' women who *do* both have and often want sex with men. In *Intercourse*, Dworkin's 'heroine' is Joan of Arc, the militant virgin whom Dworkin sees as wholly self-sufficient, self-contained, not at all dependent on others, able to liberate herself simply through a personal act of radical choice. Assiter's objections to Dworkin are on two main grounds. Firstly, she argues that in Dworkin's stress on the self-sufficient and self-contained nature of the 'feminist' self (for which virginity is a symbol), there is simply a replication of the values of the 'individualist' tradition which renders the origins of the self in connections to others wholly mysterious. Secondly, she argues, with a brief detour into psychoanalytic theory and post-structuralism, that we cannot accept the model of a wholly 'unified' and 'integrated' self which is wholly perspicuous to itself, and which is assumed in Dworkin's view of women – or at least, in those women who have 'seen the light' and reject sex with men.

Assiter goes on to argue that a central problem, too, with the work of Dworkin, Griffin and Kappeler, is that they all underplay the significance of the fact that porn is big business; that it is underpinned by the capitalistic motivation of the men who make large quantities of money by it, and not simply by their maleness. Nor can women always and in all circumstances be seen as oppressed and subjugated by men. Taking into account the ways in which people are also divided by race and class must inevitably complicate the over-simple picture of female oppression drawn, for example, by Dworkin.

Assiter ends with the conclusion that there are indeed reasons for resisting pornography. Firstly, she suggests, the individual male consumer of a pornographic magazine can be blamed for treating his fantasy object simply as a means to satisfying his desires. Secondly, men can be blamed collectively for the loss of autonomy caused by pornography for women as a group. And thirdly, Assiter suggests, one can be critical of the individualist values that underlie the justifications given for pornography. But she concludes the book with a rejection of feminist campaigns for censorship, for two reasons. First, since male power over women is by no means based solely on sexual violence and terror, censoring porn is not going to achieve very much on its own. Second, such censorship is quite likely to backfire badly; given the male dominated and sexist nature of many of the institutions of law enforcement, it is quite likely that any law designed by its protagonists to protect women will in fact also be used against them.

Assiter's intervention in the debate about pornography is more than welcome, given the current dominance in many quarters of the sort of radical feminist critique she is criticising; and with the broad outlines of much of her critique I am very much in sympathy. I felt, however, that the structure of the book did not always enable Assiter to do justice to her own objectives. The subject matter over which she ranges is enormously broad and the problems of selection in a relatively short book which aims to look at the philosophical underpinnings of debates about pornography as well as at more recent feminist thinking, are acute. Assiter's approach, in the first four chapters of the book, is so panoramic that some of the theories and thinkers discussed are skimmed over almost to the point of distortion. This is clearest, I think, in the discussions of 'individualism'. Assiter seems to write at times as if the notion of 'individualism' had a more or less constant 'core' meaning which is pretty clear; and as if objecting to 'individualism' is simply a matter of finding ammunition from wherever one can. Assiter's own main sources are references to race and class (which tend to become rather ritualistic and unexemplified), to post-structuralist and psychoanalytic debates about the self, and to such things as feminist moral theory which argues that certain assumptions about 'individualism' and 'autonomy' are paradigmatically male. But it is in fact not at all obvious that these lines of approach all cohere; and it is not at all clear that we should regard all forms of 'individualism' as pernicious. Assiter's own stress on the notion of autonomy, for example, makes it clear that she does *not* want simply to reject *all* the values associated with all forms of 'individualism'. It is not clear, within many forms of post-structuralism, what possible space should be left for any notion of autonomy of the sort to which Assiter herself wishes to appeal.



The attempt to provide such a panoramic over-view of a great number of philosophical debates means that the topic of pornography itself at times almost seems to get marginalised. In Assiter's more detailed discussion of those writers she has chosen, however, there is much that is of great interest. In particular, I thought her discussion of Dworkin's view of the self was very illuminating, and her analysis of the problems in seeing all pornography as 'violent' very useful. There were certain absences in the argument, however, which I regretted. I believe, for example, that the view of male sexuality, female victimisation and the female self in Dworkin in fact precludes her from being able to give any account of female sexuality at all – discussion of female sexuality is certainly a striking absence in her works. Assiter devotes a chapter to discussing recent theories that romantic fiction can be seen as 'pornography for women'. She discusses the role of fantasy in sexuality. But she does not really discuss the significance, for example, of the fact that many women find some sorts of pornography erotic; of the ways in which, in some contemporary feminist writing about male violence and male sexuality, female sexuality is either not really discussed, or else is delineated in stereotypical ways as somehow intrinsically 'nicer' than male sexuality – warm, gentle, caring, instead of aggressive, penetrative and violent. Why does Dworkin not give an account of female sexuality? What prevents her? What sorts of things do we need to appeal to in order to be able to give an account of sexuality at all? I regretted the absence of these questions in Assiter's book.

Pornography, Feminism and the Individual was published shortly before a book called *Anticlimax* by Sheila Jeffreys (The Women's Press, 1990). Jeffrey's book (which has had considerable publicity) adopts a view of intercourse and male sexuality which is very similar to that of Dworkin. There is a real danger that the sort of view represented by Dworkin and Jeffreys will come to be seen as 'the' feminist view. I have some reservations about the ways in which Assiter's book was written, and some regrets about the topics it does not really explore. But I hope that it is widely read, as it deserves to be – it is a contribution to the debate about pornography that is badly needed at the moment.

Jean Grimshaw

THE HEIDEGGERIAN CIRCLE

Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Humanities Press (1987), 1989, distributed in UK by Eurospan. xix + 293pp., £10.96 pb, 0 391 03616 5.

It took me many years and several false starts before I could see anything in Heidegger except dense thickets of preposterous verbiage. I am ashamed to say it, but I used to suspect that there was nothing to him except the 'windy mysticism' which analytic philosophers love to find there. It seemed a little unlikely, however, that all Heidegger's admirers could be completely wrong, so I kept peering into *Being and Time*, and eventually something started to come into focus. Perhaps my breakthrough came when I began to realise that, in some cases at least, reaching a theoretical conclusion may be a disaster rather than a triumph: I could then begin to appreciate Heidegger as an antidote to the itch for conceptual certainty. At any rate, Heidegger has now become, for me, one of the most thought-provoking writers in the entire history of philosophy, and I deeply regret that it took me so long to find my way to reading him.

Clearly there is a need for books which will introduce Heidegger to new readers; and Otto Pöggeler's classic, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, first published in German in 1963, must come near the top of everyone's list. It is comprehensive, sympathetic, economical, reliable, and about as straightforward as it could be given its subject. The English translation which has at last become available is therefore very welcome indeed. And yet, even after Pöggeler's lucid expositions, Heidegger remains uniquely forbidding, exclusive, and remote; you still feel that you would need to be a member of a very exclusive inner circle before you could be allowed to approach. An atmosphere of mystery and holiness surrounds him still. Is this Pöggeler's fault? or Heidegger's? or mine? Or is it perhaps no fault at all, but simply the aura that clings inevitably to original and challenging thinkers?

Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking was written in order to discredit what Pöggeler calls 'nonsensical chatter about the one existential philosophy as the expression of our time'. In particular it was directed against Sartre for having 'missed Heidegger's authentic tendency'. Although this polemical intention has lost much of its urgency over the past thirty years, it still provides a distinct and valuable perspective. Pöggeler describes Heidegger's thought as a journey, which began before the First World War with Hegelianism and theology, and whose subsequent involvement with historicity, facticity, and interpretation constantly referred back to its starting point: Heidegger's interest in 'the Western experience of God'. *Being and Time* (1927) gets only one chapter, and the emphasis falls on the 1930s, when Heidegger began to criticise his earlier work for what he memorably called 'false thoroughness'. As Pöggeler sees it, Heidegger's late philosophy gradually became able to 'relinquish its wanting-to-ground'.

Pöggeler summarises his interpretation by distinguishing three kinds of philosophical thinking. First there is Explanation, which means busy Hegelian scientism, obsessed with reducing things to their intelligible causes; then there is Elucidation, of the officious Husserlian quest for essences; and finally, abjuring all such violence, there is Emplacement, which, he argues, was the true aim of Heidegger's entire intellectual career. Emplacement involves a willingness to leave things be, and to appreciate Being in terms of its 'clearings' and 'appropriative events'. It means 'speaking from the abode', and it invites humankind to be 'the shepherd of Being' instead of striving to be its master. True philosophy, as Emplacement, is a patient search for interpretive openings, rather than an irritable reaching after a metaphysical conclusion.

Though it is nearly thirty years old, Pöggeler's presentation is remarkably up-to-date, mainly because Heidegger co-operated with him as he was working on it. In particular he supplied him with various manuscripts, especially the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* of 1936–8, which the rest of the world did not get to see till they were published as Volume 65 of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* in 1989. Since Pöggeler regards the *Beiträge* as Heidegger's greatest work, this has always given his book a special interest and an extra tang of inside information.

Heidegger stated that Pöggeler's book ought to be taken as the last word about him. 'I think now would be the time to stop writing *about* Heidegger,' he wrote after *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking* had appeared; we should now get down to some 'substantive discussion'. Yet Pöggeler had not written '*about* Heidegger' in any historical or biographical sense. 'What is primarily at issue is not *Heidegger's* thought,' he said, 'but rather the task envisioned by him.' In explaining this philosophical task, Pöggeler depends heavily on Heidegger's own metaphors of 'fieldpaths', 'timbertracks', and 'ways'; in addition he relies on a rather startling assumption about the attitude with which readers should approach Heidegger. 'An appreciation of Heidegger's thinking,' he says, 'can be awakened only if the reader of Heidegger's writings is prepared to accept all that he or she reads as a step toward what has to be thought, something toward which Heidegger himself is under way.'

This practice of assuming in advance that what you are about to read is 'a step toward what has to be thought' may be a bit farfetched, however. After all, the most tiresome platitudes will turn out rather interesting under such a generous interpretative régime. So much the better, perhaps; but it is hard not to suspect Pöggeler of favouritism when he makes a special point in applying the principle to Heidegger: the effect may be not only decently scrupulous and respectful, but irresponsibly pious and evasive too.

And of course many will say that, when it comes to defending Heidegger, piety and evasion are an indispensable resource. For, as everyone knows, Heidegger was a keen Nazi in politics, and a cowardly conformist in personal and academic life. Still, it takes no bravery or nobility to condemn Heidegger's Nazism; and it may be that all we achieve by doing so is a cheap good conscience, and a pretext for avoiding thinking about Nazism, politics, or the ambiguities and surprises of twentieth-century history.

Assuming that Heidegger's work is otherwise a worthy part of the philosophical canon, the spectrum of possibilities lies between two extremes. At one end, the connection between Heidegger's philosophical work and Germany's political past is seen as an external coincidence; at the other, there is thought to be an essential bond between them. To the extent that it is only a coincidence, we can obviously carry on using Heidegger's works with as little concern as we do certain other products of the Third Reich, such as the VW Beetle for example. But if the connection is closer, it does not follow that Heidegger ought to be put on an index of forbidden authors. On the contrary: reading, after all, need not mean surrending to an authority and being swept away by its dogmas; rather, it can be a matter of seeing how a work

works, for good or evil. And if you are sure that a given work works for evil, then – unless you believe that you already know very well exactly what the sources and remedies of evil are – you ought to feel an obligation to read it with especial care.

When *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking* was first published, Pöggeler neglected the question of Nazism, but the second edition (1983) made amends with an important and judicious Afterword. It is one thing 'merely to judge Heidegger', Pöggeler says, but it is a different and more interesting task 'to appropriate initiatives and to learn from him'. This wise advice, however, hides another and more troubling issue. Pöggeler uncritically repeats Heidegger's own grandiose theme of the necessity of his being misunderstood. He reports that Heidegger regarded the public's preoccupation with *Being and Time* – which was, after all, his only systematic published work – as 'a misunderstanding of his genuine concern'. And he recalls that Heidegger 'constantly reiterated the "necessity" that the contemporaries and disciples of the thinker, who has an essential question, must misunderstand him'. Indeed, Heidegger claimed – with superhuman self-assurance – that the 'somnambulistic certainty' with which everyone had missed the point of *Being and Time* was not 'a matter of misunderstanding a book, but rather of our abandonment by Being'.

We might be forgiven, I hope, for suspecting that Heidegger may have used the impressive idea of 'our abandonment by Being' as an alibi for his own abandonment of an author's ordinary responsibilities to us readers. Consider, for example, Heidegger's notorious reference to 'the inner truth and greatness of National Socialism' in his 1935 lecture course, 'An Introduction to Metaphysics'. Pöggeler's Afterword gives a clear descriptionf of how, after the war, Heidegger tried (consciously or unconsciously) to cover up the phrase, and quotes a letter of 1968 in which Heidegger explained himself as follows:

> My position towards National Socialism at that time was already unequivocally antagonistic. The listeners who understood this lecture, therefore, also grasped how the sentence was to be understood. Only the party informers who – as I knew – sat in my courses understood it otherwise, as they well should have. One had to throw these people a crumb here and there in order to preserve the freedom of teaching and discourse.

But this explanation is far worse than the offence it is designed to excuse. The idea that every text is destined to be misinterpreted suggests that we are all in the same boat. But here it is used to segregate insiders who know 'what has to be thought' from the rest of us who presumably do not. The Heideggerian priesthood will be circulating their self-conscious difficulties in the name of 'freedom of teaching and discourse' whilst we laypersons have to squabble with 'party informers' for the crumbs which they let fall. Pöggeler provides a fine and accessible description of Heidegger's thought; but authentic Heideggerian 'openness' still seems to be reserved for members of a closed Heideggerian circle.

Jonathan Rée

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

David Gooding, Trevor Pinch, Simon Schaffer, eds., *The Uses of Experiment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. xvii + 481pp., £45 hb, £17.50 pb, 0 521 33185 4 hb, 0 521 33768 2 pb.

In standard accounts of science, Experiment is portrayed as the handmaiden of Theory. This picture is reinforced in the traditional process of scientific education. Stories of 'great experiments' are ritually rehearsed to provide the authoritative underpinning for accepted theory. Sometimes, these stories become high historical drama, in which a crucial experiment is shown adjudicating between competing hypotheses. However, we are left in no doubt that the real locus of imaginative creativity and intellectual struggle is Theory, and that Vindicated Theories constitute science's real contribution to the sum of human knowledge. By contrast, the Experiment is taken simply to represent the relatively unproblematic declarations of nature herself.

Since Kuhn published his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* it has been recognised that such stories involve a 'rational reconstruction' of history in the interests of the currently prevailing dogmas and practices of the scientific community. Furthermore the role played by the performance of 'experiments' in the classroom has come to be understood in a different light. It is the competence of the pupil rather than the truth of the theory which is tested! More subtly, students are *shown* what the scientific community *means* when it says that a theory and an experiment 'agree'. However, the fact that experimental results are presented as 'Declarations by Nature' has the consequence that the whole educational process systematically obscures the fact that agreement between theory and experiment is a social accomplishment. Nor is this confined to the classroom: in their classic anthropological study *Laboratory Life*, Latour and Woolgar show how 'establishing a fact' involves creating a research report which eliminates traces of its 'social construction'.

The Uses of Experiment arises from a very important conference held in Bath in September 1985. It is edited by a distinguished trio, well-known in the sociology of science for such works as *Faraday Rediscovered*, *The Sociology of Solar Neutrino Detection* and *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*. This volume contains 14 revised papers selected from among the original 39 at the conference. The overall diversity and originality of a number of the papers mark the book as an important contribution to the history, philosophy and sociology of science. The papers fall into five groups, addressing different ranges of questions. 1. *Instruments in Experiment* – How does an experimenter fix the interpretation of an instrument? How is assent to its reliability gained? 2. *Experiment and Argument* – What are the functions of reports of experiments in scientific rhetoric? How do these reports relate to laboratory practices? 3. *Representing and Realising* – How are experiments used to articulate aspects of the 'real world'? How do concepts develop in instrumental practice? How are 'natural phenomena' discerned among experimental artifacts? 4. *The Constituency of Experiment* – How does the audience affect the presentation of experimental knowledge? 5. *Hallmarks of Experiment* – What makes an experient *believable*?

The editors provide a substantial introductory essay, which explores the themes raised in each of these sections. Anyone tempted to believe that 'experiment' is basically unproblematic and uninteresting ought to read this essay. However, it needs to be said that, while all contributors are convinced of the importance of 'experiment' as a subject for investigation, not only are their papers differently focussed but there are some underlying ten-

sions which offer opportunities for lively debate.

The contrast between two specific papers illustrates one of these tensions. The first, Simon Schaffer's wittily entitled 'Glass works', stands out as a paradigm of its genre. It is a brilliant historical discussion of Newton's optical controversies, set firmly in the relativist style of historiography. Nothing, one would imagine, could be less problematic as a scientific instrument than a straightforward glass prism. Nothing, one would imagine, could be less capable of engendering controversy. A prism surely is (literally and metaphorically) 'transparent'. What do experimenters have to do, except record the direct evidence of their eyes? *A priori* nothing could be less promising as an object for a *sociological* analysis. And this, of course, is precisely why such an analysis is so important. For if it can be done *here* then no scientific instrument or experiment whatsoever can claim immunity.

Now the 'prisms' with which we are familiar in elementary optics laboratories are engineered by specialist instrument manufacturers in accordance with the need to demonstrate the principles of elementary Newtonian optics. This 'closure', whereby Newtonian optics comes to provide the criteria for judging the adequacy and reliability of prisms, is totally obscured by the practice of taking such prisms to be independent oracles of Nature.

Newton's work began with a technical problem: can the chromatic aberration of lenses, which limits the effectiveness of telescopes, be overcome by grinding lenses in a special shape? His answer was 'No' – hence his invention of the reflecting telescope. However, he did not demonstrate this by messing about with different types of lenses. Instead he set about showing that ordinary white light is composed of several elementary 'rays' which are bound to be refracted differently, so that there is no way chromatic aberration can be overcome by reshaping lenses. He used the prism as a simple device for showing that light is composed of rays of different colours. His opponents argued that the prism *created* these colours.

But where could you get a 'prism' in the 1660s? 'Prisms' were toys or ornaments sold at public fairs, often tinted and full of bubbles and internal flaws, and they varied in width, angle, colour, transparency, uniformity, refractive index and surface planarity. One of Newton's crucial demonstrations was intended to show that the 'elementary rays' could not suffer further dispersion by a second prism. However, if your prism has a small angle and the surfaces are (even slightly) concave then you simply won't be able to replicate Newton's results. Indeed Newton himself could not separate a strictly 'elementary' ray.

It emerges that the prism is no more theoretically transparent than any other scientific instrument. Its credentials and the protocols for its use are established by negotiation between theory, fabrication and technique. Only when this closure is complete will the facts appear to speak for themselves. Simon Schaffer's study abjures the temptations of imposing *our* ideas of what is right and wrong on the historical material. We cannot understand what happened if we presuppose things which were established only as the outcome of the debate. The rationality of that outcome is thus relativised to its social and cultural context.

By contrast, in 'The Epistemology of Experiment', the final paper in the book, Allan Franklin tries to distinguish 'culturally accepted practices' from 'reasons for rational belief'. He explores how we come rationally to believe that an experimental result is *genuine*, as opposed to being an artifact of our apparatus. Two types of 'consilience' are noted. Firstly different instruments may yield the same results over a given range. But this 'mutual validation' is not available in precisely the most interesting cases, when an instrument allows us to explore previously inaccessible territory. However, there is a second type of 'consilience' – not between instrument and instrument, but between instrument and theory. We accept an instrument as reliable when it yields results which are consistent with independent predictions from theory. Allan Franklin argues that arguments of this type are rationally justified in a way which transcends any particular context.

It is clear that this is a quite different kind of exercise from Simon Schaffer's, but it would be an error to suppose there is a *choice* to be made between the two approaches. The stance of 'methodological relativism' seems inescapable if you attempt to 'get inside' a controversy, but methodological relativists cannot avoid having their own methodological commitments, and presupposing them in their own investigations. They cannot explain away their own methodological commitments as mere matters of custom, for their own justification of such 'explanations' presupposes commitment to some canons of rationality. Thus the success of relativist sociological history of science does not displace the philosophy of science. We need to *understand* but we also need to *decide* what to believe and what to do.

The papers in this book show that philosophy has a great deal to gain from attention to the sociology and history of science – particularly when care has been taken to avoid imposing 'rational reconstructions' on the material. David Gooding's paper on Faraday shows concepts being developed in experimental practices prior to their articulation in explicit theory, and this links with a programmatic discussion by Thomas Nickles on the 'genetic justification' of scientific concepts and theories. Anyone who is inclined to think that the normative philosophy of science is doomed to a mutually destructive oscillation between Bacon and Popper ought to put the further critical articulation of these ideas firmly on the agenda. However, beware of supposing that the 'historical record' can speak for itself, for, as Ron Naylor and Geoffrey Cantor in particular show to great effect, if you do want to learn from this record you need to be carefully attuned to the variety of rhetorical uses to which 'experiments' are put.

Jonathan Powers

SISTERHOOD AND DIFFERENCE

Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whiteford, eds., *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1988. x + 234pp., $35 hb, $12.95 pb, 0 253 32172 7 hb, 0 253 20461 5 pb.

Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy is a collection of essays which grew out of 'Women in Philosophy', a group of feminists in England who meet regularly to read and discuss current research. It contains essays by Mary Midgley, Brenda Almond, Alison Assiter, Judith Hughes, Jean Grimshaw, Margaret Whitford, Morwenna Griffiths, Joanna Hodge, Anne Seller, Lorraine Code, and Paula Boddington. The collection represents both analytic and continental approaches, and deals with a diverse set of problems in contemporary feminism.

If there is a general theme around which the essays cohere, it is the problem of balancing the various contradictory demands feminism makes upon women. Among the balancing acts required of feminists is the tension, acknowledged for example by Jean Grimshaw, Judith Hughes and Anne Seller, between the need for sisterhood and a sense of collective identity on the one hand, and the need for women to retain and preserve their individuality on the other hand. There is also the ever-present tension, never far below the surface in feminist theories, between nature and culture. While Mary Midgley tackles this problem directly in her article 'On Not Being Afraid of Natural Sex Differences', it is also a motif in the essays by Lorraine Code and Morwenna Griffiths. Several of the contributors, including Mary Midgley, Brenda Almond, and Margaret Whitford address the issue which pervades so many debates within contemporary feminism, that of sameness versus difference.

Alison Assiter confronts the conflict between the private and public domains, arguing that feminists need to revise the tendency, in Kant and Hegel for example, to construe autonomy as pertaining to the public sphere but not to the private. Assiter shows that, by excluding autonomy from the private realm, philosophers have exempted themselves from responsibility for problems of concern to feminism. Kant, for example, overlooks the problem of the autonomy of wives, who were considered the possessions of their husbands. They were acknowledged only in terms of the family, not as public individuals. Assiter goes on to argue that we should not see pornography simply as an activity carried out in the privacy of one's home – and as such exempt from the considerations of autonomy. That is, we should not consider the situations in which men fail to treat women as autonomous as isolated cases. The objectification of women through enjoyment of the pornographic has consoequences for the way women are treated in general. If what happens in the private domain has ramifications in the public world, it is inappropriate to hold that autonomy is an issue only pertinent to the public dimension.

One concern shared by both Grimshaw and Sellers in balancing a sense of shared sisterhood with a recognition of the uniqueness of individuals is that women should not be trivilized or condemned for falling short of some feminist orthodoxy. Wary of reproducing the very dogmatism that feminism resists in the authority of patriarchy, they are loath to see feminism dictate its own rigid codes of behaviour. Judith Hughes explores the tension between the need to see individuals as both capable of original thought and the need to show how they can be shaped by their social, cultural and educational environment; and the related tension between the need to recognize the autonomy of children and yet still take responsibility for their safety and protection in the world which we adults have helped to develop.

Lorraine Code reminds us that natural differences can never be entirely divorced from cultural influences which inform our perception of those differences. Mary Midgley however provides a corrective to those who would dispense with any notion of natural sex differences altogether. Some feminists are so intent on combatting the idea that sex is destiny, and explaining all differences through socialisation, that they tend to forget that the way people are brought up is no more in their control than is their genetic make-up. Midgley points out that the problem is not 'determinism' but 'fatalism', or pretending we have no control over things we can in fact control. She warns against overemphasizing the boundary separating the physical and mental aspects of humans, which may be useful for lining up opponents on opposite sides for the sake of academic arguments, but hardly coincides with the reality of experience.

Morwenna Griffiths observes that feminists have turned on its head the argument that usually accompanies the commonly-held belief that women are more emotional than men. Feminists conclude not that women are less suited to public life, but that since men lack emotion they are less suited for public life. Traditionally, philosophers have seen the effective control of the body as entailed by rationality. Emotions and feelings are considered threats to rationality. Griffiths argues for taking feelings and emotions seriously and not lumping them together with either the mind or the body. To treat emotions as most philosophers have done is to accept a Cartesian mind and body dualism. This refuses to grant metaphysical significance to any categories other than mental or bodily aspects of the self. Without wishing to endorse the essentialism she sees in Daly and Griffin, Griffiths finds their reinstatement of feelings and emotions valuable. She concludes that, rather than construing feelings as things to control, we should strive to be in harmony with our feelings. One is reminded of Aristotle's belief that the good life is led by those who not only learn how to take action appropriate to each occasion, but also learn to want to do the right thing, so that they feel pleasure in living a worthy life.

Margaret Whitford's article draws together several themes which reverberate through the other essays. She takes up, for

example, the tension addressed by Brenda Almond between the need to preserve a specifically feminine identity and the need to embrace a view which does not adhere strictly and exclusively either to women's perspective or to men's. Whitford argues against the still predominantly negative reception Anglo-American feminists have given Luce Irigaray's work. She contends that two oversimplifications have characterized the misconceptions surrounding Irigaray's project. Answering a long-overdue challenge, Whitford defends Irigaray against the view that she is an essentialist thinker. She explains that in her references to women's bodily parts, Irigaray is not falling into the trap of essentialism, but rather engaging in a deliberate strategy of mimicry, which can only be mistaken for biological determinism if it is taken out of context. Whitford provides the context in defending Irigaray against a second popular misconception, that of reducing her position to that of a Lacanian. Whitford demonstrates that the role of the imaginary in Irigaray's questioning of the Western metaphysical model of rationality originates with Lacan's reading of Freud, but that Irigaray invests it with a new meaning, namely that of social critique.

This collection will be of considerable value both to feminist philosophers, and to feminists who may not have a philosophical training but who want to pursue the more theoretical issues in some of the feminist literature they have read to date.

Tina Chanter

POSTMODERN DISCONTENTS

Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, *The Postmodern Political Condition*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1988. 167pp., £25 pb, 0 7456 0625 3.

Agnes Heller, *Beyond Justice*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989. vi + 346pp., £9.95 pb., 0 631 17081 2.

Agnes Heller, *A Philosophy of Morals*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990. xiv + 245pp., £35 hb, 0 631 17083 9.

Although postmodernism has emerged as one of the key concepts of the last decade it is fair to say that there still exists no single accepted definition of the postmodern condition. Certainly the term has given rise to all sorts of vacuous academic posturing. Perhaps the question to raise is whether postmodernism signifies a genuine epochal shift from modernism or is simply a term invented by a certain kind of academicism to define the disillusionment of the Western intellectual with the various political projects of modernity. For Lyotard, whose work has inspired many of the current debates, postmodernism is not a term of historical periodisation, as periodising remains a classically modern ideal; instead it simply denotes a better mood and state of mind – as if 'better' was an unproblematic concept. For conservative cultural critics like Daniel Bell postmodernism represents the intensification of the adversarial tendencies of modernist art and culture in which instinctual desire is unleashed to the extent of propelling the logic of modernity to its outermost limits (and beyond). In philosophy a modish anti-foundationalism has emerged which resists all attempts to totalise and systematise 'reality' and which eschews all notions of objective truth and universal values. For Marxist writers like Fredric Jameson and David Harvey postmodernism is best understood as the cultural logic of the third major stage of capitalism, 'late' or 'post-industrial' capitalism.

Perhaps the most serious weakness in the postmodern standpoint is its refusal to examine the *moral* basis of its radical critique of prevailing norms and conventions, a failure which often results in the celebration of an apolitical nihilism. It is on this point that the recent work of Agnes Heller makes an important contribution. It cannot be said that what Heller provides is a straightforward 'post-modern' moral and political philosophy. For example, in her work we find an affirmation of what are to be taken to be certain 'universal' aspects of the postmodern condition, such as contingency and plurality, alongside a commitment to expounding what it means to be a good human being and a good citizen, even a guide to how to lead a decent and honest life.

For Heller and Feher postmodernity is not a historical period but is best understood as a 'private-collective time and space' which exists within the wider time and space of modernity and which sets out to problematise modernity by taking it to task and drawing up an inventory of its achievements and its unresolved dilemmas. 'The primary concern of those living-the present as postmodern,' they write, 'is that they live in the present while at the same time, both temporally as well as spatially, they are *being after*.' 'Europe,' they argue, is gradually becoming a museum and its cultural hegemony increasingly challenged by its Other – a challenge which to a large extent comes, ironically, from within the ideology of Europe itself in the form of 'postmodernity'. The postmodern political condition entails the fragmentation and disintegration of universals and has to be seen, the authors insist, as a fundamentally European innovation. The problem arises, however, when we recognise that Europe itself turns out to be a completely mythical entity, an invention, a fiction.

Although postmodernity is not conducive to universals, the authors seek to extract from the wreckage of modernity certain basic moral principles of democratic politics in order to define an appropriate postmodern ethos. Postmodernism itself is undoubtedly Janus-faced. For while on the one hand there exists the possibility of formulating a new postmodern liberal and democratic ethics and politics, there also exists the reality of postmodern moral relativism and political nihilism in which assessments of such horrors as mass deportation and genocide become matters of taste (the example given is Le Pen's 'postmodern fascism'). Postmodernity for the authors does not denote a new period of politics, but they see the collapse of prevailing orthodoxies in both Eastern and Western Europe as providing the opportunity for a revaluation of democratic-liberal and democratic-socialist norms, ideals, and traditions. It is their belief that debates over revolution versus reform have now fallen into the background, while questions of social justice and debates on the nature of civic virtues have gained a new urgency and relevance.

A central thesis of the book is that the cultural uniqueness of

the modern condition can be grasped with the notion of a 'dissatisfied society'. Modern societies thrive on the dissatisfactions of their populaces, the dissatisfactions of need-creation, of need-perception, and of need-distribution. It is this lack of satisfaction which constitutes a major motivational force in their reproduction. Contingency (described as 'a state of indeterminate possibilities') defines the essence of living in a dissatisfied society where social structures as well as human beings constantly reveal their contingent nature. The best way of understanding the discontents of our permanent modernity, they claim, is through a combination of insights gained from a social inquiry into human needs (their creation, satisfaction, perception, etc.) and an existential inquiry into the individual's subjective relation to the system of needs, which would focus on aspirations, enjoyments, sufferings, vulnerabilities, etc. It is in the context of this social-existential inquiry that the authors believe that important questions about the postmodern condition can be posed, such as, how is it possible to transform contingency into a destiny without resigning freedom and without trusting in a blind fatalism? How can the social context be translated into an existential one without relapsing into experiments of social engineering and redemptive politics which have proved either futile or fatal? Satisfaction, the authors argue, can only be had when we are able to transform our contingency into self-determination. This needs to be construed not as an unrealisable condition of total and complete autonomy (the individualism of the Robinson Crusoe myth), but rather one which affirms the moral preconditions of participating in the good civic life. The great problem of living in modern societies is that one's autonomy (the capacity for free action and choice) is constantly subjected to external determination, to the ideology of 'want-satisfaction'.

The authors insist that if political nihilism and relativism are to be avoided it is necessary to broadly identify the ethical and political principles by which modern contingent selves can engage in a new democratic politics. Such political principles (moral maxims) should play the role of regulative ideas in defining political judgement here and now. Under the heading of 'citizen ethics and citizen virtues' the authors identify such principles as 'equal freedom for all' and 'equal life-chances for all', and such virtues as 'tolerance', 'courage', 'solidarity', and 'recognition' as positive principles and virtues of a genuinely liberal and democratic order. (I have no qualms here but wish that the authors had also included the right to rebel and the virtue of rebellion – although it should be said that the authors do recognize that with its 'anything goes' attitude postmodernism is not rebellious.)

Although it is not my intention to assess the validity of Heller and Feher's construal of the postmodern phenomenon, there are occasions when they are a little too ready to assume the ideological neutrality of the term – a history or genealogy is missing from their account. Their thesis is a highly speculative one and lacks the detailed, empirical analysis which would be necessary to properly answer the question whether the postmodern condition represents a genuinely new epoch or simply one more way of refashioning and intensifying the discontents of modernity.

In *Beyond Justice* (first published in 1987) Heller sets out to show that, although justice may well be a precondition of the good life, the good life itself is beyond justice. Thus, for example, Marx's vision of communism as a society in which the free development of each has become the condition for the free development of all is not a vision of the just society but of a society *beyond* justice – 'beyond' in the sense that the claim to justice is rooted in values other than justice itself (in Marx's case a vision of aesthetic freedom). The theme of the book has several meanings. On the one hand, it is argued that the standpoint of the good life is one which is ultimately beyond justice, although living in a society that practises justice is a necessary precondition of attaining the good life. On the other hand, however, it is maintained that a society beyond justice – 'beyond' this time in the sense that justice has been *realised* – would be a nightmare and is, therefore, neither possible nor desirable. The crucial distinction is between a static and a dynamic concept of justice. In a completely just society the static concept rules because citizens are not free to test and query moral norms and social rules. We must chase justice, Heller says, without ever fully embracing it. Heller has recourse to Habermas's notion of discourse ethics as a way of illustrating her conception of a 'contestation of justice' in which the dynamism of justice results in a social order where norms are constantly subjected to rational testing and debate and where alternative norms and rules can be validated.

In *A Philosophy of Morals* (part two of a planned trilogy on 'A Theory of Morals') Heller wishes to face head on the challenge of modernity as it bears on our moral sensibilities. How is it possible to affirm a condition of permanent modernity in which there nevertheless remains a healthy moral life consisting of the search for the good, mutual respect and dignity for all, and the cultivation of a plurality of lifestyles? Her book is a mixture of Kantian and Hegelian approaches to the problem of defining morality in the modern era and it contains an interesting defence of Kant's supreme principle of morality (autonomy). In the absence of pre-established norms and conventions the categorical imperative is seen as a universal maxim perfectly suited to the dilemmas of the modern condition where the emphasis is on creating the self by affirming contingency. Thus, the formalism of the categorical imperative is for Heller its great virtue once its relevance to the condition of modern contingent persons is fully appreciated. What is notable about Heller's endorsement of Kant's moral philosophy is that she shares Kant's insight that a notion of autonomy and a notion of morality (understood in the sense of universally prescribed and accepted norms) are closely linked. Thus, when we choose

ourselves as 'good' we necessarily make a universal claim to morality. Heller defines the link well when she argues that becoming what one is (a good person) is bound up with a sense of the *authenticity* of our actions. Pursuing the universal does not mean for Heller that difference becomes identity and the other becomes the same; rather, she maintains, 'Everyone can choose a cause, but not everyone the same cause (even less pursue the same cause with the same attachment) – yet everyone can destine himself or herself to be a good, decent person.' In other words, to be a singular and unique human being (which is clearly what we all are) does not preclude that one's actions can be universal in a moral sense.

Heller's attempt to develop a *philosophy* of morals is intriguing. However, she fails to address those difficult questions which attach themselves to any attempt to reconcile the antinomies of modern political life by formulating a notion of a general will. Chiefly, how is it possible to articulate a general will which does not result in the suppression of difference and forms of otherness? Perhaps a distinction between a static and a dynamic general will taken from the earlier work on justice would be useful here, but Heller does not explore the problem. The tensions of Heller's argument are the result of the conflict which must necessarily arise out of her attempt to combine a postmodern commitment to contingency with a pre-modern commitment to a notion of the good. She believes it is possible (and necessary) for moral philosophy to answer the traditional question asked of it: 'What is the right thing for an individual to do?' Her answer, which is to argue that we must follow the path of modern contingent persons who have chosen themselves existentially under the category of the universal (as 'good', where 'good' means that one lives by the maxim that it is always better to suffer injustice than to commit it), simply flies in the face of some of the most important challenges posed by key thinkers of the modern period who have radically problematised any attempt to define 'good' (and 'evil') in terms of universalisable maxims or rules. If only the matter were as simple as Heller believes!

Keith Ansell-Pearson

HISTORICISMS

John E. Grumley, *History and Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault*, London, Routledge, 1989. xii + 241pp., £30 hb, 0 415 01292 9

Marjorie Levinson, Marilyn Butler, Jerome McGann, Paul Hamilton, *Rethinking Historicism: Critical Readings in Romantic History*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989. 149pp., £22.50 hb, 0 631 16591 6

Robert D'Amico, *Historicism and Knowledge*, London, Routledge, 1989. xiv + 174pp., £8.95 pb, 0 415 90033 6

The word 'historicism' seems to lurch between two opposite meanings. Often, it stands for the attempt to avoid anachronism in the interpretation and evaluation of the past. Historicism, in this sense, is the attempt to understand past events in terms which would have made sense to those who were involved with them at the time. In addition, it has frequently been taken to imply a sceptical rejection of the idea that standards or values can transcend the people who believe in them.

Sceptical historicism has usually been seen as an evil and corurpting doctrine. Husserl, for instance, denounced it as a negation of the ideals of philosophy (see 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', 1911); and in *Natural Right and History* (1950) – a book which is still outlandishly influential amongst American conservatives – Leo Strauss cursed it as an assault on the classical idea of 'natural right'. 'Radical historicism', as he called it, was equivalent to 'relativism' and 'conventionalism'; it was the 'extreme form of modern this-worldliness', and an affront to 'philosophy in the full and original meaning of the term'. In recent years, however, defiant sceptics like Richard Rorty have come out and identified themselves as anti-philosophical 'historicists' in exactly the sense disparaged by Husserl and Strauss.

But the word 'historicism' has also been used to refer to the high-philosophical idea that human history is a single spiritual whole, distinct from nature, and developing dialectically toward the realisation of an ultimate truth. This kind of historicism is what Althusser had in mind when he announced, in *Reading Capital* (1967), that 'marxism is not a historicism'; it is associated with German Idealism, romanticism, and certain varieties of western marxism and, far from being an attack on metaphysical absolutes, it is a supple and powerful reaffirmation of them.

The word entered the English language about a hundred years ago, as a translation of the German 'Historismus' (first used in the 1790s), but it was not included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1899. Of course, the Dictionary is notorious for neglecting philosophical technicalities and words which have gained currency as translations (hence, some say, its popularity amongst English philosophers), so 'historicism' was double bound to get a poor deal in its pages. The second edition has tried to make amends, but unfortunately it gives prominence to Karl Popper's idiosyncratic usage in *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957), which redefined the term to refer to the scientistic fallacy of seeking to predict the future course of human history by reference to 'laws' of sociology. The Dictionary's inventory of twentieth-century uses is very confusing, therefore, and the term's affiliations with romanticism and German idealism get completely ignored.

Open and closed totalities

John Grumley's *History and Totalities* emphatically reaffirms the idea of historicism as a ripe form of metaphysical thinking, rather than a sceptical departure from it. Grumley explains that he originally intended to write a study of Lukács, but the book 'exploded' as he wrote. An admirable exposition of 'the marxist Lukács' survives, however, as his central chapter. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács interpreted marxism as an application of the philosophical concept of 'totality'. He elaborated Marx's concept of commodity fetishism into a general theory of reification, according to which class societies embody the mistake of treating 'total', inextricable networks of social relations as if they were merely collections of disparate, unconnected, natural things. For Lukács, socialist revolution would put an end to the reification of the social totality, and the proletariat, guided by the party, was the agent which would bring this consummation about. 'The whole of Marxism,' Lukács wrote, 'stands or falls with the principle that revolution is a product of the point of view in which the category of totality is dominant.'

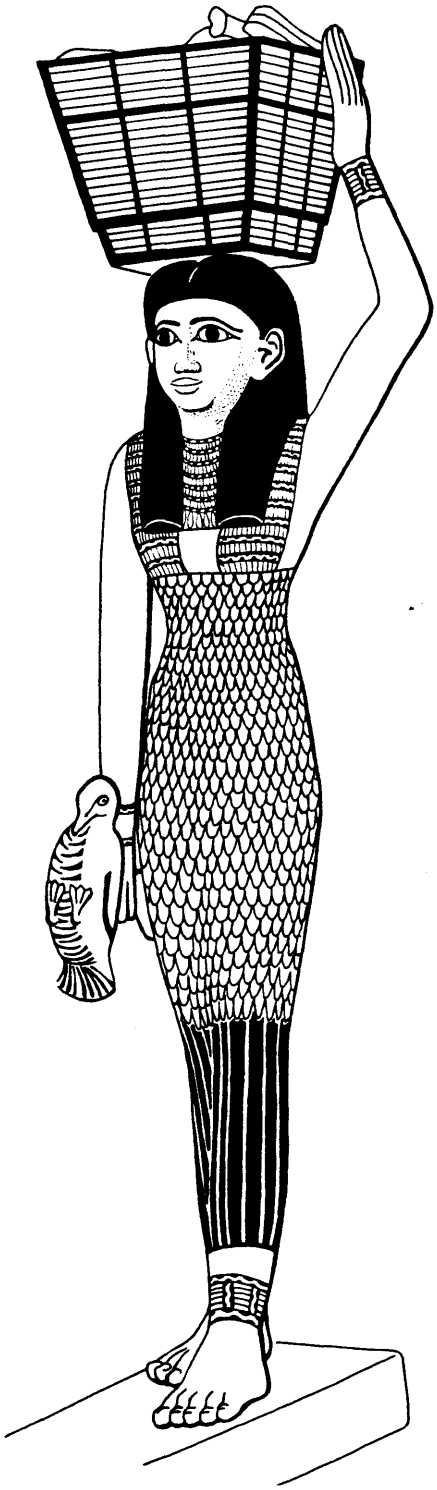
Many years later, Lukács criticised his own theory of reification for confounding two different concepts: alienation, which is contingent, historical, and (under socialism) eliminable; and objectification, which is a corollary of human finitude as such. Obviously some such distinction is necessary if Lukács's 'totality thinking' is to avoid inflating itself into a millenarian dream in which, as Grumley puts it, 'proletarian revolution is transformed into a metaphysical act upon which the meaningfulness of the whole of history depends.' Grumley also notes, however, that Lukács could not maintain the distinction between alienation and objectification without abandoning some of his most cherished assumptions.

Grumley explains Lukács's 'theoretical fiasco' by saying that he allowed his marxism to be perverted by the idea that totality is a 'closed theoretical truth'. The better and truer marxist tradition of historicist totality-thinking, according to Grumley, defines 'totality' more openly but less grandly: a 'present totalization from the viewpoint of a particular limited future perspective as the solution of a practically imposed historical task'. (This, by the way, sounds exactly like Sartre's idea of 'totalisation without a totaliser' in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*; however, Grumley does not mention Sartre.)

Grumley tries to justify his diagnosis not by direct argument, but by making Lukács's flawed historicism into the pivotal episode in a larger story. He begins by describing an ancient doctrine of 'totality' – that is to say, the Greek and Judaeo-Christian idea that there must be a point of view, presumably divine, from which all the shifting fragments of our experience can be seen to interlock as members of a single, all-encompassing, unchanging natural whole. Historicism, which appeared on the philosophical stage mainly as a response to the French Revolution, and which received its classic formulation in Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, revived this moribund traditional concept of totality by transfusing history into it. It made totality dynamic rather than static, and located it within the historical activity of humanity, not somewhere outside.

In the second chapter, Grumley portrays Marx taking over Hegel's historicist concept of totality, but replacing theological and theoreticist references to 'consciousness' and 'humanity' with the 'concrete strivings' through which individuals and classes try to cope with 'their present historical situation'. In this way he avoided the Hegelian trap of trying to ascribe a single meaning to 'history as a whole', defending instead a less optimistic, but more sensible, view of history as 'open-ended'.

For the next stage in the development, readers are taken through various attempts to combine Christian belief with value-free inquiry which led to the construction of History as an academic discipline in Germany and also, incidentally, gave currency to the word 'Historismus'. Then we meet Dilthey's conception of the 'Cultural Sciences' or *Geisteswissenschaften*, which appealed to a process of *Verstehen* or human understanding in order to explain how individuals can have access to historically remote experiences. We are shown how this resulted in Dilthey's conception of human history as essentially 'the activity of spirit' or 'the objectification of life', and how Dilthey came to see each historical human deed as deriving its 'significance' from its 'relationship to the whole of the epoch or age'. We then observe the Cultural Sciences going through further alterations in the



writings of Simmel and Rickert until Weber arrives on the scene with his tragic view of the modern world (a world dominated by a totality of impersonal mechanisms administered by professional 'specialists without spirit'), and his radically subjectivist theory of values.

The culminating figure in this stage of the evolution of the historicist concept of totality is the early Lukács, who turned to the 'Cultural Sciences' as practised by Dilthey, Simmel and Weber in the hope of resolving problems he had encountered during his youthful activities in popular theatre in Hungary. He regarded art and ethics not as private, subjective concerns but as means of retrieving something of the transparency and stability of traditional societies. At this time he saw modernity as an individualistic threat to culture and the community – to 'the unity of life, the life-enhancing, life-enriching power of unity ... the totality of life'.

Then there was the Russian Revolution, which astounded Lukács and caused him to nominate the proletariat to carry out a cultural revolution which would be the first fully-conscious political act in history. Unfortunately, though, Lukács saw totality as 'a closed theoretical truth to be bestowed on the oppressed class'; he overlooked the lessons of Marx's 'practical, open-ended' interpretation of historicism.

That, at any rate, is the story Grumley tells in support of his distinction between open and closed historicism. The remainder of his book explores some of the negative reactions provoked by Lukács's closed concept of totality. A chapter on the Frankfurt school explains how Horkheimer, Benjamin and Adorno assaulted Lukács's abiding hope for an ultimate restoration of a preconceived totality: for them, the only hope for human emancipation was to fragment the concept of totality by a supposed logic of 'non-identity'. And a chapter on Foucault – which also permits some discussion of Nietzsche – shows the battle against the idea of totality being carried into the very notion of subjectivity. In his epilogue, Grumley contrives to present these apparently depressing perspectives as further episodes in the development of the contept of totality. He is convinced that radical historicism has a liberating future ahead of it, provided it remembers the lessons of Marx's criticism of Hegel.

For all Grumley's advocacy, however, one may still wonder whether Grumley's announcement (or Sartre's) of an 'open' historicism may not be mere wishful thinking. The idea of open totality-thinking might be mere whistling in the dark, a contradiction in terms, despite the enthusiastic hopes of its proponents. But even if he is wrong, and historicism is a thing of the past, *History and Totality* is an appropriate and informative memorial to a world we have lost.

New Historicism and New Criticism

Grumley's optimism about the future of something called historicism may strike a chord in an unexpected quarter. For in recent years the word has become a rallying-cry amongst academic teachers of English Literature. The story goes back to Leavis's polemics against the traditionalists who controlled English Literature when he entered it in Cambridge in the 1920s. He accused them of subjugating literary criticism to literary history. Instead of promoting lively literary discrimination, and interesting themselves in new writing, the old guard were turning English literature into an occasion for dusty antiquarianism, stony-hearted philology, snobbish aestheticism, and biographical sentimentality; or – worst of all – they were making it into a province of the history of philosophy. Leavisism flowed into the American New Criticism and, despite numerous complaints about their neglect of 'history', Leavisites and New Critics were to rule the English Literature departments almost unchallenged for the next forty years.

In the early '70s, a movement identifying itself as 'New Historicism' began to get organised. The word 'New' was not intended to make a contrast with 'Old Historicism', so much as to lay down a challenge to 'New Criticism'. New Historicism would curb the fetishism of Great Literature which issued from the Leavisites in Cambridge and the New Critics at Yale and, according to its first manifesto, it was going to 'return us to the sanity of a historical perspective' (Wesley Morris, *Toward a New Historicism*, 1972).

New Historicism did not become a powerful force until the late 1980s, however, and it has turned out to involve more than a return to the kind of literary history against which Leavis and the New Critics had rebelled. The movement has taken its lead not from literary but from social historians, including Foucauldian historians of women, minorities, and marginal political groups. It has also taken note of recent developments in the history of political thought, which treat politics as a 'linguistically constituted activity'. As a result New Historicism typically presents literary works as 'political' actions performed in definite social situations. It has burgeoned during the 1980s, particularly in connection with Shakespeare and the Renaissance. And now that the trend-watchers are agreeing that Deconstructionism is over, and that it was only the swansong of New Criticism anyway, the New Historicists are mustering as the next avant-garde establishment of the English departments.

Rethinking Historicism is a diverse collection of essays in which four professors of English speak up for the New Historicism. They are all specialists in Romanticism, and the real rub (as far as an outsider like me can see) is that Renaissance studies have so far had more than their fair share of New Historicist action, whilst Romanticism has remained the bailiwick of obsolescent Deconstructionists.

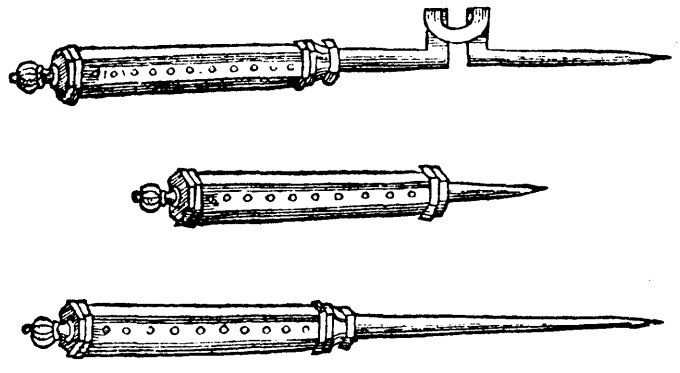
Marilyn Butler's interesting (previously published) essay makes New Historicism sound very moderate and sensible. Her main point is that there must be something wrong with 'the model many of us seem to work with, of a timeless, desocialized, ahistorical literary community'. In particular, she queries the 'recent American Romanticist orthodoxy', which 'declares the great Romantic topic to be the alienated individual consciousness; the great work, Wordsworth's *Prelude*'. The 'New England canon', as she calls it, places 'German thinkers' like Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud alongside Wordsworth and the rest of the standard English Romantic Poets. This, she says, is an improvement on the 'Victorian canon in its depleted modern version', even if it remains appallingly Eurocentric; and it has the additional attraction of supplying 'the modern East-coast intellectual' with an 'appropriate intellectual genealogy'. Nevertheless, she says, the New England canon ought to be rejected, because it is historically misleading. Under its auspices 'meaningful relations' are established between big authors in a variety of periods and traditions; the English romantics are bracketed with heavyweight poets of other epochs and with the pantheon of Great Dead Philosophers; but 'minor' contemporaries (her example is Southey) are neglected with, as she demonstrates in detail, damaging effects on everyone's understanding of what it was really like in the literary past.

The other contributors to the volume are somewhat out of line with Butler's historical good sense. Although they agree in calling themselves New Historicists, and seem very conscious of their audacity, they seem to be appealing for a perpetuation of the same Old Unhistoricist habits for which Butler reproaches the

'American Romanticist Orthodoxy'. In particular, they do not share her quizzical attitude to the recruitment of German philosophers to the canon of English Romantic poetry. Paul Hamilton unveils a Keats obsessed not only with politics and monetary policy, but also with 'metaphysical and epistemological problems' which were articulated by Kant and Hegel and Adorno. Keats, he alleges, was engaged in an 'immanent critique of the Romantic aesthetic'; and, whilst this may be true, or better than true, it is surely a long way from the 'sanity of historical perspective' which was once the boast of New Historicism.

Jerome McGann is another surprising member of the New Historicist party. In his essay (another reprint) he says he agrees with the idea of approaching poetry historically, but it emerges that actual history is not good enough for him, since poetry is 'more "historical" than history, as Nietzsche argued'. Fortified by this nip of Nietzsche, McGann states that as far as he is concerned the historical context of a work includes 'those future contexts of reality it had not discussed and did not desire'. For McGann, indeed, 'the "history" that poems touch and re-present encompasses a far greater scale of possible, and therefore (*sic.*) real, human times and events than the most careful and scholarly historical text'. This kind of 'history', which is veiled in demure quotation marks whenever McGann mentions it, shows that, contrary to the New Historicism of Marilyn Butler, the English romantics were actually doing exactly what the old American Romanticist orthodoxy always said they were doing: namely, engaging with the 'Romantic ideology', or in other words with 'the Kantian "aesthetic"'. It is hard to see why, after all his confident philosophising, McGann does not cast off all his inhibitions and indulge in complete critical license, reading poems as most of us do, in whatever contexts please us, however fantastic, unhistorical, or unreal. And it is a deeper mystery still that, whilst he claims to rise above the trivialities of 'careful and scholarly' historical work (in which, incidentally, he has a distinguished record), he should still be pledging allegiance to the flag of the New Historicism.

Marjorie Levinson's contributions to *Rethinking Historicism* are a complicated attempt to give some rational unity to this diverse movement. She begins her reflections on New Historicism by declaring that 'we have had more than enough reflections on "the new historicism"', which would be hard to deny. With enviable nerve, she names herself, along with ther three co-authors and four others, as the leading romantic new historicists: eight vanguard academics, all united by 'our resistance to Yale, our revisionary interest in historical scholarship, the historiographic forms of the nineteenth century, and the Marxian methodology'. Levinson says that she and her colleagues collectively 'inscribe' themselves in what she calls 'our multiply pregnant self-designation' as the 'new historicism'. Their fruitfulness arises from the fact that, as Levinson shows – very interestingly, but with lavish sophistication – current ideas of history arise from the 'dominant form of nineteenth-century historiography' (she also calls it 'the old historicism'), which is itself a product of 'Romanticism'. In this rather convoluted way, therefore, New Historicism gets kitted out with a new sense of its own history. But what sense?



New Historicism and New Philosophism

When Levinson and her fellow New Historicists praise history, they do not seem to be referring to anything so humdrum as the work of ordinary historians. For McGann, of course 'poetry is more "historical" than history'; but – to judge by their manifestoes – most of the New Historicists believe, just as the old Hegelian historicists did, that history has an essence, and that this essence is essentially philosophical. When they are not doing old-fashioned literary criticism, they are borrowing chronologies, categories and classifications from old-fashioned Histories of Western Philosophy and applying them to works and movements in the history of English literature. It might be called New Philosophism rather than New Historicism.

Romanticism, for Levinson, is essentially a phase in the history of philosophy: an offshoot of the 'Kantian Subject' and the 'Kantian sublime'. Together with old historicism, it is sandwiched between 'Cartesian idealism' and 'Enlightenment materialism' on one side, and 'Marx's dialectically historical materialism' on the other. Levinson feels that this puts her colleagues and herself into an exquisite predicament: 'what goes by the name "new historicism" in nineteenth-century studies,' she says, is really 'our own Romanticism.' And this is vital since, as Levinson sees it, the crises of 'the post-modern age' are internally related to those of 'that intertextual conversation poem we call "the Romantic age"'. Levinson states that 'as we all know ... such keynote Romantic works as *The Prelude*, "The Cenci" and "The Fall of Hyperion"' are, in fact, shaped by a 'Hegelian inflection of a Kantian theme'. Kantianism, in fact, is simply '*the* ethico-epistemological feature subtending our formal use of the category-term, Romantic'.

At this point Levinson appeals to the most famous modern exponent of New Philosophism, Jean-Franáois Lyotard, impressed by his view that the essence of 'the postmodern' is the Kantian problem of 'the conceivable which cannot be presented'. The solution of this essentially post-modern problem is, of course, 'precisely the office of Kant's sublime'. From this philosophistic chronology it follows that 'the postmodern' belongs, in essence, to 'the Romantic age', and, no less reassuringly, that Levinson and her colleagues are the supreme arbiters of the 'different but related crises' of 'the post-modern age'.

All this assumes, however, that the discourses of philosophy give us access to the essence of history. It is useful to be reminded, therefore, in Robert D'Amico's *Historicism and Knowledge*, of the appalling instability of the whole vocabulary of historicism. D'Amico surveys the work of many recent philosophers of science, from Popper, Kuhn and Lakatos to Feyerabend and Foucault. In a free but often persuasive way, D'Amico tries to elicit an emerging sceptical consensus – which he calls 'historicism' (why not?) – to the effect that all knowledge is historically relative, but that this is no threat to any values worth caring for. His portrayal of Popper as a 'relativist' and Foucault as an 'objectivist' is unconventional, to say the least. But perhaps D'Amico's main achievement is to have turned the tables on Popper's *Poverty of Historicism*. Everyone agrees that if Popper was aiming to refute metaphysical historicism in that book then his attacks were largely misdirected. He shows that the rise of

sceptical historicism in the philosophy of science, especially since Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), can actually be traced to Popper's own attacks on 'essentialism' and on all 'totalising' styles of thought. Thus *The Poverty of Historicism* turns out to be the founding document of ... historicism, and Popper is unmasked as the ring-leader of the historicists, not their scourge. This all points to a couple of morals: first, the extravagent fickleness of the word 'historicism'; and secondly, the patient instructiveness of plain, empirical history, with its inexhaustible store of ironies and surprises. It also suggests the dangers of expecting too much from philosophy: the Poverty, in short, of Philosophism.

Jonathan Rée

NARRATIVE AS OPPOSED TO WHAT?

Narrative in Culture. The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature, edited by Cristopher Nash, London, Routledge (Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature), 1990. xv + 228pp. £30 hb, 0 415 14156 2.

The nine essays collected here focus in various ways on the centrality of narrative to human existence, looking in turn at economics (McCloskey), legal discourse (Jackson), Habermas's reading of Freud (Bernstein), the physical sciences (Harris, Myers) and aspects of the philosophy-literature-narrative spectrum (Lamarque, Brooke-Rose, Bell and Nash). Arguably the more philosophical-literary essays are the more interesting. The novelist Christine Brooke-Rose takes a witty look at the distinctly improbable sentences constructed by philosophers such as Austin ('He persuaded me to shoot her'). Nash's exploration of self-defeating narratives and the modern tradition helps to explode some widespread misapprehensions by demonstrating that the dismantling of the subject is part of a long-standing tradition going back to at least the 1930s, whilst Bell's discussion of the primordial nature of narration traces that tradition further back to Sterne and Cervantes.

That narrative can be a structure of understanding is beyond doubt. The construction of plausible narratives is one of the ways in which human subjects, and not only patients in psychoanalysis, assess and interpret their lives. Economists, lawyers, philosophers and scientists all tell stories. The application of narrative theory to their productions is not, however, unproblematical. An account of the discovery of genetic codes is by definition narrative, but does narratology tell us anything about the non-linguistic phenomena of genetics as such? Sartre's Roquentin discovers in *Nausea* that one does not have or live adventures; they are narrative constructs governed by a logic that is not that of crude existence. Arguably the same is true of crude science. This, however, is the 'post'-age, and the issues raised by Sartre and Roquentin are not addressed here.

Essays on narrative also tend to take a narrative form, and it is tempting to speak of metanarratives, Lyotard and the supposed demise of the genre notwithstanding. Indeed, the narrative element in these studies generates some strange effects. Nash argues, and convincingly so, that rhetorical devices designed to establish the personal identity and veracity of scientists help to underpin the

credibility of their narratives. The list of contributors to the present volume signals, apparently without a trace of irony, the presence of vital figures, seminal scholars and distinguished and forcefully acute figures, each endowed with an equally distinguished bio-bibliography. Authors become authorities. Whether or not this establishes credibility, or whether it is simply a case of academic overkill, is a matter for the reader's judgement. Nash justifies his description of *Don Quixote* as a founding text for the European novel by observing that 'it is no accident that Cervantes is centrally concerned with the elusive relations of narrative to life' (an interesting return to authorial intentionality; is it Cervantes who displays this concern, or is it 'his' text?), whilst McCloskey observes that it is 'no accident' that the novel and economic science were born at the same time (surely open to question on historical grounds alone?). There is something disquieting about narratologists whose own narratives use the rhetoric of 'it is no accident...' to justify their assertions. A novelist like Perec, whose masterly explorations of the omnipresence of narrative are sadly not mentioned here, would not make the same mistake. Or if he did, he would signal the fact and exploit it.

Much of the volume reads like a rerun of discursive structure arguments. As in those earlier arguments, where discourse often came to be equated with language, there are many terminological ambiguities which suggest a certain uncertainty as to the precise object of analysis. Harré's acute observation on the use of speech-act conventions in scientific discourse are closer to a form of socio-linguistics than to the tradition of Propp and Greimas, whilst his decision to personify logic as 'Big Ell' is merely tiresomely twee. Lamarque writes on 'Narrative and invention', but takes as one of his examples Russell's 'Piccadilly is a pleasant street' – surely a proposition, and not necessarily a narrative element. It is baldly asserted by McCloskey that the utterance 'Because ... the genes are arranged along pairs of chromosomes...' is a narrative. At such points, 'narrative', like 'discourse' and 'structure' before it, is in danger of becoming meaningless.

As in arguments about the centrality of discursive structures, there is, finally, the unresolved problem of the differential effectiveness of discourses or narratives. Balzac's financiers tell stories (and lies), and Balzac tells stories about their stories. Chancellors of the Exchequer also tell stories, and may on occasion be economical with the truth. A Budget speech contains narrative elements, and can therefore be analysed in terms of a story grammar. It may, however, fuel inflation or trigger a recession. Few novelists can claim to do the same. Narrative may well be omnipresent, but not all narratives have the same effects. That, no doubt, is a different story.

David Macey

WORDPOWER

Dick Leith and George Myerson, *The Power of Address: Explorations in Rhetoric*, London and New York, Routledge, 1989. xv + 272pp., £30 hb, £12.99 pb, 0 415 03932 0 hb, 0 415 02938 4 pb.

The Power of Address explores the rhetoric of human communication not in terms of persuasion alone, but in terms of the materiality of language and its signs. From children's playground banter, to a Wordsworth poem, from the television news to a philosophical dialogue, the categories of Rhetorical thinking (with a capital R), in the authors' hands, become a potent interpretive tool. Underlying their analyses is an awareness that dominant forms of discourse are naturalized through usage: Rhetorical questioning undercuts the seeming fixity of all ideologies. The authors provide the Rhetorical tools by which readers may read the signs for themselves.

Three principles inform the authors' Rhetorical approach: Address, Argument, and Play. The first reminds us of the irreducibly social dimensions of communicative acts: words are addressed to audiences or readers. The second reminds us of the dialogical nature of language, its argumentative structures: 'argument is about the relations between one voice and others ... when views conflict.' The third marks the surplus meaning generated by the materiality of language. Meaning exceeds intention and interpretation.

The authors argue that a 'great advantage of a Rhetorical approach ... is that it can call into question the categories of text and language that are dominant with a particular culture at a particular time'. This is borne out by the discussions that follow. We witness the opening of texts to plural readings under the impact of Rhetorical questioning. 'A major aim ... is to encourage readers to examine, and question, the ways in which different kinds of texts are conventionally received and interpreted.' This aim makes the book unapologetically polemical. The authors stress the value of open-ended argument and dialogue as a prerequisite of democracy.

There is another polemical strand to the book, one which engages the Enlightenment prejudice against rhetoric and all its works. This post-Enlightenment stand involves the authors in a revival of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis. The point is not to replace other forms of investigation, but to increase our awareness of the techniques of persuasion and meaning-creation involved in arguments of all kinds.

The book begins with interesting discussions of rhetoric as performance. Lecturing, preaching, political speech-making, storytelling, legal oratory, songs, singing and drama make up the contents of the first two chapters. These are followed by chapters on argument, the pervasiveness of Rhetoric, interpreting stories, and finally a chapter on the question of the revival of Rhetoric. In all of these chapters Rhetoric is seen as 'a *process* in the production, transmission and interpretation of utterances, spoken or written, scripted or unprepared'.

Central to the chapter on argument is the discussion of *topics* as a Rhetorical category. Finding a topic makes a beginning in the invention of something to say. However, a topic of discussion is not static and one-dimensional. Topics are 'sites of controversy' which 'give rise to vistas of contention'. This Aristotelian idea is used to show us that, whenever anyone has anything to say on a topic, there is more than one possible opinion to take upon it. A topic is a site around which voices gather. It may sound as if one voice speaks alone, but in the background the attentive ear will hear other voices clamouring for attention. The job of the Rhetorician is to tease out the topic through the juxtaposition of contrasting voices. In a nutshell 'to argue is not merely to put forward a view, but also to speak, or write, *in the awareness of a differing or opposint view*'. It is 'all about encountering the "reasons on the opposite side" as fully as possible'.

The question of interpretation is another aspect of the position developed during the discussion of argument. We are asked to take two questions to our reading and conversations: 'Whose words are these?' and 'To what (or to whom) are these words a reply?' The next chapters explore various examples from literature, popular culture, news and philosophy.

The last chapter aims to revive the spirit of ancient rhetorical training, not its letter. 'The purpose of Rhetoric, ultimately, is to encourage thinking.' Rhetorical questioning opens up a field of meaning which is not restricted to fixed patterns. Rhetoric is conceived not so much as a system of figures of speech, but more as an attitude towards language, writing and speech, one which may 'create openings for thought'. This attitude has much to recommend it, not least its detachment from preoccupations with language and meaning that have dominated both sides of the philosophical divide in this century.

If there can be said to be a philosophy of rhetoric in the book, it is one which treats it as 'a way of thinking about meaning'. It is a world in which 'we tend to judge representations of reality, and even reality itself, against other representations rather than against our own personal encounter with the "real"'. It is thus aligned with trends towards anti-realism in philosophy.

A difficulty arises with an argument in chapter six which starts unproblematically: 'in a Rhetorical view, there is no way of standing outside the constraints and compulsions of address.'. And 'no message will convey the truth, the truth alone and in isolation'. But it does not follow that 'truth is never distinct from the text which conveys it'. A much better approach is one which is mentioned but not explored by the authors, that 'when Rhetoric is in play, then claims to truth are not being tested'. This invites us to explore the ways in which meanings become accessible within texts and utterances of all kinds.

The Power of Address is clearly written, readable, and should appeal to a wide audience. It provides not only much well-ordered information about Rhetoric, but also tools to interpret the rich semiological fields in which we live, work, politic and play. It invites and enables us to elicit meanings which would otherwise remain concealed. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in the problems of language and communication.

Jeff Mason

REAL HYPE

Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Post-Modernism and Beyond*, Cambridge, Polity, 1989. 246pp. £8.95 pb, 0745605621.

Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism & Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 1989. 270pp., £8.95 pb, 0745604390

The debate over 'post-modernism' dominates these two books from Kellner. Post-modernism is premised upon a radical break from the historical epoch known as modernity. As theorized by Baudrillard, this break is stylized as a 'catastrophe', a cataclysmic emergence of a new order following the demise of all the classic philosophical referents – subject, power, reality, and meaning.

Post-modernism, says Baudrillard, is a radically implosive society – a culture of spectacle. Because of the proliferation of mass communications, we know we have more images than meanings, more signs than referents: the machinery of communication communicates little except itself, and culture is to consigned the ceaseless production of imagery that has no reference to the real world, for this is a world of signs. These signs just refer to one another, combining in 'simulacra' (images) of reality to produce an insatiable need in the audience. Capitalism, argues Baudrillard, must multiply desire by multiplying signs ad infinitum – a process which has led to 'the disappearance of power' and 'the collapse of the political'. 'Power,' he concludes, 'is no longer present

except to conceal that there is none.'

This is the position Douglass Kellner attempts to explain and critically evaluate in *Jean Baudrillard*. The book consists of several sections which serve to introduce the reader to Baudrillard's most important themes, while at the same time noting the development of his work from the radicalism of the French New Left in the '60s to the internationalism of the late '80s. Thus, one moves from a discussion of Baudrillard's critique of Marxism to the 'hyper-reality' (and real hype) of *America*. Kellner's tone is critical; indeed, as the book is dedicated to Adorno, Kellner's conclusiosn are not particularly surprising: 'Baudrillard's work points to the failure of a type of French ultra-radicalism typical of the late 1960s to bring about significant social change and to its subsequent disillusionment and turn to either the Right or apolitical cynicism.' Baudrillard is described by Kellner as 'the Walt Disney of contemporary metaphysics'. The question left unanswered is why such a figure was deemed worthy of such a serious book (and the other Polity text – a reverential 'selected writings' edition). The irritated tone of Kellner's final remarks tends to undermine his earlier, more enthusiastic comments.

Critical Theory, Marxism & Modernity, on the other hand, finds Kellner in a much more confident frame of mind. This is an area he is very familiar with, having written extensively on the Frankfurt School (and, specifically, on Marcuse). The book is part historical, part programmatic: its early sections chart the emergence of Critical Theory in the context of Second International Marxism and the crisis of the German-Jewish intellectuals – a solid account of the era, but lacking the elegance of Martin Jay's *Dialectical Imagination*; the later sections are more original and provocative, offering a critical examination of the work of Habermas and Offe, and arguing for a 're-politicized' Critical Theory which might form part of a 'Left turn' that redeems the political hopes of the '60s and overcomes the losses of the '80s. How does Kellner envisage this occurring? He says that a re-politicized theory must 'return to history' and analyse the crises of recent decades. It must provide 'a systematic and dialectical analysis of the economy, the state and the political realm and its linkages to culture, ideology and everyday life'. Kellner's argument is high on promise but low on prudence; he does not afford himself enough space to consider seriously how these revisions could take place, and what kind of practical consequences they might invite.

The powerful link between both books is Kellner's insistent belief in the continuing relevance of Critical Theory as a means of interpreting and understanding the complexities of late-twentieth-century societies. The Frankfurt School preserved the Marxist concern for social change; Baudrillard, intriguingly, is typically concerned with himself. Reading the quotations from Baudrillard reproduced in Kellner's text, one is struck by the inwardness, the sheer self-obsession, of the theorist: he discusses how he feels about the media, consumerism, America, and how he relates to nihilism and post-structuralism. The problem – let alone the plight – of other people rarely intrudes on these musings. Baudrillard's agnosticism ('who could say what the reality is that these signs simulate?') is, as Kellner demonstrates, intolerable. The project of interpretation has traditionally been based upon the distinction between surface and depth, manifest and latent-meaning, falsehood and truth, illusion and reality. It has been premised on the belief, the wager, that there is more to the world than is immediately given to the senses or the understanding. Baudrillard, on the contrary, is 'against interpretation'; all is chaos, continually changing and arbitrary. Yet what Baudrillard calls 'a vertigo of interpretation' is not vertigo at all, but something rather like complacency. Whereas the critical theorists acknowledge an intellectual anxiety, Baudrillard accepts a moral anaesthesia. The idea that four possible alternative reasons for a terrorist bombing can be 'equally true' is not a 'logic of simulation', but simply an abandonment of logic. Baudrillard's theory is of little help to those who are suffering; indeed, it is a theory that seems unaware that people are suffering and in need of help.

Baudrillard's effort to collapse all cultural meaning into mere simulacra certainly lends credibility to the underlying assumption of the market – that art no longer has any purpose beyond its own promotion. What Kellner stresses in *Critical Theory, Marxism & Modernity* is the belief that, since texts are not simple manifestations of ideology and false consciousness, a truly constructive theory must strive to reveal how they advance desires for a qualitatively better life, critically contrast these moments to the real poverty of life under capitalism, and politicize the difference between what is and what could be. Adorno argued: 'The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth.' Baudrillard contends: 'All that remains to be done is to play with the pieces'. Kellner's two books furnish one with a sharp sense of these rival positions. It is left up to the reader to decide which position one can bear to live with.

Graham McCann

VISIBLE INFLUENCES

Gary Werskey, *The Visible College – A Collective Biography of British Scientists and Socialists of the 1930s* (1978), Second Edition, London, Free Association Books, 1988. xxiii + 376pp., £30 hb, £14.95 pb, 1 85343 050 1 hb, 1 85343 014 5 pb.

Not so long ago the public's image of Science, and indeed the scientific community's own self-image, focussed exclusively on science as an aspect of High Culture. In this sense science appeared as the repository of esoteric theoretical knowledge gained by an intellectual élite. The members of this élite were seen as belonging to an unbroken tradition of disinterested enquirers stretching back through a succession of Great Heroes to Science's Founding Fathers, venerated for rescuing mankind from superstitious darkness. The authority of the tradition was taken to be underpinned by its adherence to canons of proof and disproof which guaranteed the objectivity of science's methods and the certainty of its conclusions.

It is now (almost) a commonplace that this image has to be understood as an 'ideology'. Science is (also) a set of institutions and practices, which interacts not only with the belief systems of society but also with society's productive processes. That such observations are now widely accepted is in part the achievement of the five radical scientists of whom this book provides a collective biography: J. D. Bernal, J. B. S. Haldane, Lancelot Hogben, Hyman Levy, and Joseph Needham.

Their backgrounds were strikingly different. Gary Werskey gives a memorable categorisation of their different routes into socialism before the 1930s: Levy comes as a 'Worker'; Haldane as a 'Warrior'; Hogben as a 'Citizen'; and Bernal and Needham as 'Idealists'. These differences continued to influence their subsequent careers. They became to a greater or lesser extent 'outsiders' who had to work for acceptance in their contrasting professional and political *milieux*. To be effective as *scientists* they had to achieve scientific respectability, and they came to see this search for professional recognition as a 'socialist duty'. They were committed to the view that science is ideologically neutral, though they also claimed, perhaps with strained consistency, that science could achieve its true potential only under socialism. Bernal, in particular, developed a variant of Marxism in which 'science' – itself claimed as an exemplar of practical socialism – was understood as a relatively autonomous progressive force, driving society towards socialism.

According to Werskey, though they were already committed to socialism, a single decisive event was responsible for their 'political coming of age'. This was the famous sudden visit, to the 1931 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, of a high level delegation from the USSR, led by Bukharin. This event and the publication, in five days from start to finish, of *Science at the Cross-Roads* had a tremendous impact through its insistence that science be seen as part of the total productive activity of society whose direction and objectives were inevitably a political matter. Ironically the ideas developed at this meeting were reintroduced to the Soviet Union in the '50s by Bernal, who was a staunch defender of Stalin, at a time when Bukharin (executed by Stalin) was still an 'unperson'.

During the 1930s the members of the quintet were involved at different times and in different ways in attempts to unionize scientific research workers, and, through books, newspapers and radio, in scientific popularisation and in debates about the uses of science and the need for political support for scientific research. During the Second World War their scientific talents and independent casts of mind were put to good use in the fight against fascism, where for once their personal political commitments and the interests of the British establishment coincided. Indeed Bernal is often regarded as the scientist who made the widest range of important contributions to the Allied war effort – for which he received the USA's Medal of Freedom (unusual among winners of the Stalin Peace Prize!). Needham was sent to China as Director of the Sino-British Science Co-operation Office, and is credited with putting the 'S' in UNESCO.

After the war they might have hoped that the Labour government would involve them in the development of a rational science policy, geared to improving human welfare. But the Cold War in general and the Lysenko affair in particular seriously compromised their position. In the end all but Bernal broke with the CPGB, and their political base in other organisations was gradually eroded, so they found themselves on the margins – relics of a past radicalism amongst an unreceptive younger generation. However, there is a sense in which their objective of creating public awareness of science policy was achieved. Werskey charts how Bernalism had a direct influence on Harold Wilson's vision of a 'white hot technological revolution'. But, no longer able directly to influence the course of politics, the quintet's activities shifted in different directions. Haldane, for example, moved to India, and dug deep into the Hindu tradition, while Needham launched on his monumental *Science and Civilisation in China*, arguably 'the greatest ever work of individual intercultural scholarship'.

Four of the quintet (along with other left-inclined scientists featured in Werskey's narrative) were associated with the founding of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science in 1969. Like many of the groupings with which they had been concerned in the 1930s, this was originally an alliance of Marxists and 'concerned liberals'. As Gary Werskey sees it, with the BSSRS the members of the Old Left celebrated in this book were able to pass on the torch of their vision to a new generation. But when this Society adopted a more distinctly radical perspective it split its membership and now, as it approaches its twenty-first year, there is a question mark over its continued existence.

The past twenty years have seen the assimilation of work on 'science, technology and society' into the curriculum in schools and at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This very success may in part account for the withering away of some STS organisations. A future history of the rise and decline of such movements may have to ask whether an 'issue based' organisation, which falls between being a Political Party on the one hand and a Learned Society on the other, can outlast the assimilation of its message by groups which are more clearly rooted in institutions which give people social or professional identity. Will radical criticism in science always chiefly have its effect by being assimilated into the 'received wisdom'? That is one reading of the story of this book and it is noteworthy that its radical author now spends his time discussing issues of science and technology policy within the context of what he calls 'mildly reformist' engineering degrees. Whether this story has a moral, and if so what it is, is a matter on which the reader may care to reflect.

Jonathan Powers

KEEPING THE QUESTION OPEN

Shoshana Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, Harvard University Press (1987), pb 1989. viii + 169pp., £7.25 pb, 0 674 47120 2.

The words 'revolutionary', 'radical', and 'originality' reverberate throughout *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight*. Yet these terms both celebrate the 'path breaking' implications of Lacan's thought – which Felman grounds, against the grain, in clinical praxis – and pattern a text which argues that psychoanalysis revolutionizes the very notions of revolution and originality. Each chapter elaborates questions raised in her preface to a double issue of *Yale French Studies* (1977), in which she argued that the encounter between psychoanalysis and literature proglematizes the notion that psychoanalysis – and thus, I would argue, any theory – can be simply applied to a literary text since they always implicate and are implicated within one another.

In *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight* Felman demonstrates that she is one of the most adventurous and powerful of contemporary readers of Lacan. This is because – and here she differs from Jacques Derrida – she is the most Lacanian of Lacan's readers. For her, psychoanalysis is 'first and foremost' a praxis which calls into question its own status as method and theory by 'radically displacing the very point of observation' from which a theory or method might seek to apply itself. As Felman puts it in her second chapter, 'The Case of Poe: Applications/Implications of Psychoanalysis', 'the radicality of Freud's psychoanalytic insights' is 'their self-critical potential, their power to return upon themselves and to unseat the critic from any guaranteed, authoritative stance of truth'. This is why Lacan's 'return to Freud' becomes an 'exemplary lesson of reading', as Althusser puts it, with far-reaching implications for contemporary Western culture. Felman, in her turn, returns to Lacan in order to take up the invitation implicit in his praxis 'to go beyond itself'. In the introduction, she suggests that her book 'is perhaps less about Lacan than it is about a contemporary way of reading that psychoanalysis has made possible: a way of reading I have learned from Lacan, and which my reading of him on one level constantly enacts (puts into effect, plays out) while, on another level, it attempts to analyze it and account for its difference'.

Felman argues that 'dialogic psychoanalytic discourse is not so much informative as it is performative', and that Freud's or Lacan's revolution is more a matter of 'a style' than a content. Similarly, the question to be asked of a literary narrative 'is not what does the story *mean*, but what does the story *do*?' If this is so, then Felman's own discourse participates within the theory it speculates about, undoing ready-made distinctions between theory and practice, psychoanalysis and literature. The overwhelming impression produced by this collection arises precisely out of its performance, its style, its effect. In the introduction, Felman 'interimplicates' autobiography and theory by narrating how she first encountered Lacan's 'obscure and enigmatic, yet powerful and effective, poetic prose' and how it made a difference to her life and work. Her own writing, while not obscure and enigmatic, is a poetic prose whose turns and returns of phrase and metaphor continually surprise and implicate the reader within a quest which ceaselessly questions its subject (in every sense of the term), radically displacing each point of observation which it establishes.

Perhaps the most unsettling and crucial question is raised in chapter four, 'Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable', in which Felman works through the implications of Freud's and Lacan's teaching (and, more importantly, their teaching performance) for pedagogy. Psychoanalysis provides a way of understanding how institutional figures (the teacher, the doctor, the analyst) are positioned as 'the subject presumed to know', and how that position is both seductive and destructive. But it has also shown how such a position is radically impossible – because the subject is never master in its own home, because teaching/analysis is always dialogical, and because the knowledge of the analyst or the teacher of literature is not a knowledge which can be 'acquired (or possessed) once and for all' but a 'textual knowledge' which differs for each text or analytic dialogue or teaching situation. Thus the effect of Lacan's becoming 'a student of Freud's revolutionary way of learning' is to subvert the very concept of knowledge as power and property. This applies to the 'masters' of psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan) as much as it does to any of the other 'masters':

> Through Lacan we can understand that the psychoanalytic discipline is an unprecedented one in that its teaching does not just reflect upon itself but turns back upon itself so as to subvert itself, and truly teaches only insofar as it subverts itself.

Tom Furniss

AIDS AND AUTONOMY

Patricia Illingworth, *AIDS and the Good Society*, London, Routledge, 1990. 197pp, £25 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 415 00023 8 hb, 0 415 00024 6 pb.

'Straight Sex Cannot Give You AIDS – Official' ran the notorious *Sun* headline of 17 November 1989. The question remains, what to do with the 'woofters and junkies' who insist on wandering around threatening innocent normal people with their deadly disease? The surprising but cogently-argued answer of Patricia

Illingworth is that people with HIV infection should be compensated financially by society, which is responsible for the conditions in which some people have to adopt high-risk life styles.

Several hundred books have by now been written about aspects of the AIDS crisis, but very few of them by philosophers. Patricia Illingworth's *AIDS and the Good Society*, the first in a new series called *Points of Conflict* from Routledge which 'probes beneath the shibboleths of day-to-day debate and controversy', is therefore welcome. It engagingly addresses socio-ethical issues from a liberal philosophical perspective, which is to say in a tradition coming down to us through J. S. Mill, where the balance between liberty and state interference is weighted strongly towards the individual unless there are pressing, carefully-defined and justifiable reasons to the contrary.

Illingworth is especially concerned with *autonomy*, and the extent to which individuals under certain social constraints – such as gay men and IV drug users – can be said to be acting autonomously. Her argument leads to a strong prescription that society compensate people with HIV infection, because of the social responsibility for the situation in which they acquired the infection. The conclusion here is not unwelcome, but the argument leading up to it may attract reservations. For instance, when Illingworth claims that 'although HIV/AIDS is a self-inflicted disease, the *self* involved here is not the autonomous *self*' she seems too distracted by issues of autonomy to notice how conceptually problematic, politically-charged, and open to abuse is the notion of 'self-inflicted' in the HIV/AIDS context. Nor am I especially happy with arguments which sometimes suggest that she knows what I *really* want better than I do.

Nevertheless, this is a very valuable book because it tests philosophical concepts and arguments against a pressing contemporary issue. Many possible counter-arguments are anticipated and followed through, and in the process quite a lot of different philosophical positions are investigated. Working with this book in schools would lead to helpful classroom discussion of gay feelings and behaviour, in a context which the most benighted of school governors could not regard as *promoting homosexuality*. Illingworth displays, for example, a remarkable empathy with the behaviour and motivations of men in situations which she is unlikely to have encountered personally.

John Fauvel

SWAMPS

Andrew N. Leak, *The Perverted Consciousness: Sexuality and Sartre*, London, Macmillan, 1989. xii + 164pp., £35 hb, 0 333 46432 X.

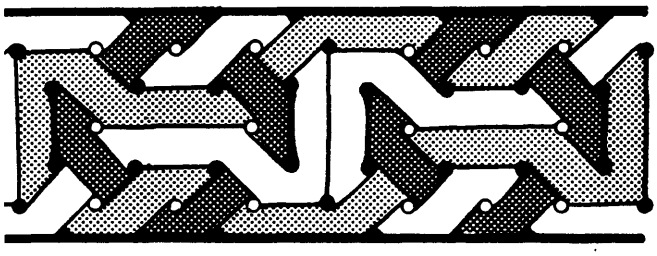
In what is basically a thematic study of *Being and Nothingness* and of Sartre's fiction and biographies, Leak traces the development of Sartre's theorization of sexuality, showing that he ultimately defines masculinity and femininity as attitudes of consciousness towards the other, regardless of their somatic roots or inscription. The non-somatic origins of gender identity notwithstanding, the ontological category of the viscous is on the whole equated with femininity. The viscous is the twilight realm in which an erupting 'masculine' consciousness is 'feminized' as it becomes contaminated by substance, in which the human is recuperated by nature. The horror inspired by the viscous is, however, in Sartre's view, a universal and not a gender-specific phenomenon. Tracing the parallels – and differences – between Sartre's theories and psychoanalysis, the author establishes some fascinating intersections with Lacan's comments on the illusory stability of the ego and on the manner in which desire is necessarily doomed to fail. The absence of any mention of Stekel on frigidity is, on the other hand, quite startling, given the importance accorded him in *Being and Nothingness*. Finally, the author establishes the existence of a phantasmatic, or a staging of desire, centred on images of woman as swamp, woman as mirage, on myths of genitors and on an inability to come to terms with the threat of castration.

As an exercise in close reading, *The Perverted Consciousness* is rarely less than fascinating, if somewhat austere. Yet it is perhaps its very closeness that raises some doubts. The viscous-feminine-nature-castration continuum is conspicuous in Sartre, but Malraux's fiction is full of similar imagery, which suggests that this phantasmatic or thematic may not be specific to Sartre. Although Leak eschews character psychology, and claims not to be discussing Sartre as individual psyche, one has the definite feeling that the real object of fascination is the man himself. Psychoanalytic criticism rarely resists all the temptations of author-based theories, perhaps simply because desires and phantasies do not exist in themselves or in the abstract. And given the intimacy of, say, *The Words*, it is almost impossible to avoid reference to the author, except by adopting a higher degree of structural formalism. Nor does the identification or construction of a phantasmatic entirely overcome the traditional objection that Sartre's plays and fiction are little more than illustrations of philosophical theses.

Leak writes that the text is born of the sense of unease inspired in him by Sartre. It inspires an unease of its own. Sexual politics are bracketed out, and this unflinching examination of the female – and homosexual – monsters who inhabit Sartre's texts, and perhaps psyche, is not for the squeamish. It may not be necessary or desirable to indulge in the essentialism that claims that Sartre's sexual imagery puts him beyond the ideological pale (though one sometimes wonders), but Leaks apparent ability to examine it with such clinical neutrality is at times uncannily disturbing.

The text is densely written, is obviously based upon a very intimate knowledge of the texts and, despite the inclusion of a useful terminological glossary, makes few concessions to any reader who does not know Sartre's writings in some detail. It is obviously intended to be read by Sartre specialists, and especially those of a literary rather than a political or strictly philosophical persuasion. Leak unfortunately further restricts his potential audience by choosing not to translate French quotations. Macmillan's pricing policies complete the circuit of exclusivity. That, obviously, is outside any authorial control. For this price, it is possible to purchase the wonderful Pléiade edition of Sartre's complete fictional output. Price inflation on this level is distinctly ominous.

David Macey



SHORT REVIEWS

Georges Canguilhem's ***The Normal and the Pathological*** is a gem of French historical epistemology. It comprises his 1943 doctoral thesis plus chapters added for its first publication in French in 1966. By that time, the ideas it contained had already achieved considerable influence in France. The 1978 English translation by Carolyn Fawcett has not been reissued (New York: Zone Books, 1989, 329pp., 0 942299 58 2 hb or 0 942299 59 0 pb). Canguilhem critically examined the theorising of a range of nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers and researchers. He showed how they wrongly made pathology (the science of the diagnosis of pathological states) dependent upon a positivistic physiology (the science of normal bodily processes). Parochial as this finding may seem, Canguilhem had touched a nerve in philosophy. Over the subsequent decades, it had extraordinarily subversive effect. He had undermined the optimistic view that the normal was ontologically stable and complete within itself. Instead, he himself defined the normal in terms of life's way of positing evolving values for its environment and for itself. But Canguilhem had licensed the idea that illness could be a projection of pathology. Others set to work in the space that Canguilhem had opened up around positivism. Foucault explored how practices and institutions, too, might define the norm of health – and even of reason itself. More broadly, as Foucault pointed out in his 1966 introduction (reprinted here), Canguilhem had built a bridge from the study of science and objective rationality to the phenomenological exploration of consciousness and personal identity. In the 1970s, that was to lead post-structuralism to a radical problematization of *all* rational subjectivity. As the old adage has it, great oaks from little acorns grow.

A book which encompasses both detailed readings of Euclid's *elements* and a critique of post-modernism is likely to attract fewer readers than it deserves. David Rapport Lachterman's ***The Ethics of Geometry: a genealogy of modernity*** (Routledge, 1989, 255pp, £25 hb, 0 415 90053 o) is, for those with courage and a breadth of enthusiasm matching the author's, a remarkably exciting and rewarding attempt to reassert that there was indeed an epistemological break between the ancient and modern worlds. This break widened from the time of Descartes, and was complete in the work of Kant. What characterises and symbolises it is something which sounds rather technical, but is, the author persuasively argues, quite fundamental: the changing meaning and significance of 'construction' from its Euclidean origins, through the seventeenth-century mathematicians Descartes and Leibniz, down to Kant's 'construction of a concept' and later constructivism and deconstruction. On this reading, post-modernism is nothing special, merely an epiphenomenon of the radical modernism that we owe to Descartes and Kant.

Lachterman is a stimulating writer, passing easily from careful analysis of the construction of problems in Descartes' ***Geometry*** to hinting at the extent to which contemporary philosophy may be seen as 'a family quarrel among Nietzsche's descendants'. Not all such lively ideas may stand up to closer scrutiny – but any effort a reader can put in, to share the author's sense of how intellectual forces moulding our culture are not demarcated by present disciplinary boundaries, will be amply repaid by added depth of insight. The book's epigraph is from Kant: 'Mathematics is pure poetry' – and the author's analysis makes good sense of a puzzling statement by that shrewd cultural observer Alexander Pope: 'Mad Mathesis alone was unconfined.' This, for Lacheterman, is the essence of the radical modernist vision.

The second volume of papers by Isabel Menzies-Lyth, ***The Dynamics of the Social***, London, Free Association Books, 1989. xii + 274pp., £30 hb, £12.95 pb, 1 85343 051 X hb, 1 85343 052 8 pb, contains a number of reports written on behalf of private organisations and local government: on work with families in post-war London, on the marketing of ice-cream and chocolate, on road safety, on day-care facilities, on recruitment into the London Fire Brigade, on the relationship between Epsom and its five surrounding mental hospitals and on the aftermath of disaster. Each deploys a range of psychoanalytic insights into practical organisational problems and social work, and they were all written as part of Menzies-Lyth's work with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. These are supplemented by three more theoretically oriented papers on groups, group experiences and Menzies-Lyth's debt to the work of Wilfrid Bion, a comparatively unknown but unusually interesting British psychoanalyst.

It may not be widely known that Wittgenstein was at school with Adolf Hitler – they both attended the *Realschule* in Linz in 1903–04. This and much more is to be found in the biography, now out in paperback, of the man who was perhaps this century's most influential, perplexing and uncomfortable philosopher. Brian McGuinness's ***Wittgenstein A Life: Young Ludwig 1889–1921*** (Penguin, 1990, xiv + 322pp., £6.99, 0 14 012517 5) has been justly acclaimed for its clarity, readability and balance. It is good to receive authoritative confirmation of how closely Wittgenstein's life and philosophy were intertwined. McGuinness writes sensitively of the parallel between his emotional life and his philosophical development, commenting, for example (p. 193): 'What he looked for in philosophy was *das erlîsende Wort* – the formulation that would solve a problem, but also the word of redemption, the word that would deliver us from evil.' Wittgenstein's extraordinary family, straight out of Aeschylus, was clearly the sort you either survived or didn't. He and his brother Paul – a distinguished concert pianist – survived, while three of his brothers committed suicide. This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand Wittgenstein's work.