

REVIEWS



ICONS OF SCIENCE

Alan J. Friedman and Carol C. Donley, *Einstein as Myth and Muse*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985 (pb 1989). xiv + 224 pp., £12.95 pb., 0 521 37963 6 pb.

The Gallery of the Great Heroes of Science clearly invites historiographical scepticism, but this does not diminish its significance in the processes of cultural transmission. The Great Heroes provide inspirational role models within scientific education, and vivid images of the scientist at work for society at large. It is therefore to be expected that at different times these Heroes become imbued with the resonances of contemporary images of science, often with scant regard for historical accuracy. It is important to trace these mythic elaborations, not just 'to set the record straight' but to reveal the influences shaping both science's public image and its image of itself.

The Icon of Classical Physics was Isaac Newton. He was seen in his own day as 'the Divine Newton' – Halley wrote 'nearer the gods no mortal may approach'. As President-for-Life of the Royal Society and Master of the Mint he simultaneously embodied rational order in Science and in Society. Symbolizing the triumph of Reason and Experiment he became the inspiration of the Enlightenment.

However, as Newtonian rationality became transmuted into the mechanistic materialism of the Industrial Revolution, Newton came to symbolize the loss of the direct experience of Nature. Blake's image of 'Mr Newton measuring the universe' shows a naked figure bent double on a rock, his gaze turned away from Nature, spanning a diagram on the ground with a pair of calipers. This is 'Newton the Enemy', the author of the 'tyrannic cogs' of the industrial machine.

A further twist in Newton's image occurred during the Tercentary Celebrations of his birth. John Maynard Keynes had delved into the dark recesses of the chest that contained the 'Portsmouth Manuscripts' and in a posthumously delivered paper declared Newton to be 'not the first of the Age of Reason' but 'the last of the magicians, the last of the Babylonians and Sumerians ... the last wonder-child to whom the Magi could do sincere and appropriate homage ... tempted by the Devil to believe ... that he could reach *all* the secrets of God and Nature by the pure power of mind – Copernicus and Faustus in one.'

By the time of Keynes's denouement, Newtonian theory had been overthrown by relativity theory and quantum mechanics, and a new and very different Genius had been elevated to share Newton's supreme position among the Olympians of science. Friedman and Donley's book shows ways in which Einstein has been equally subject to mythicisation.

They chart two dominant phases of myth-making about Einstein. In the earlier phase he is the 'St Francis Einstein of the daffodils' – the muse of poets, artists and musicians. The fact that this free-thinking revolutionary had undisputed authority enabled his Image to be invoked to justify radical experiments in the arts. In the later phase he becomes the Prometheus of the Atomic Age stealing the fire which powers the stars: the kindly sage who by discovering the Key to the Universe, unlocks the real Pandora's Box and looses humankind's nightmare fantasies of destruction into the world.

Friedman and Donley's book alternates between giving, on the one hand, accounts of the development of classical physics, relativity theory and quantum theory and, on the other hand, accounts of the ways in which ideas associated with these developments are reflected in other aspects of twentieth-century high and popular culture. They focus primarily on influences in literature, and document a rich vein of both allusion and specific reference to the revolution in physics in such diverse writers as William Carlos Williams, Lawrence Durrell, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. They suggest that similar links might be made with artistic movements such as cubism and futurism, and with the development of polytonal and atonal music.

In some cases the 'influence' of ideas in physics can be demonstrated just because the writers or artists explicitly claim such influence. In doing this, of course, they are often trading on the high cultural authority of mathematical physics to give credibility to their own enterprises. However, in many cases the resonances they claim are actually due to *misunderstandings*. Nevertheless it is clear that this halo of refracted appropriations of Einsteinian terminology had a wide influence on the way Einstein's ideas were seen.

It is a striking fact that the early twentieth century is marked out for its self-styled cultural revolutions. That is a fact which stands in need of explanation. The explanation cannot be found in terms of the 'impact' of ideas in physics, or misunderstandings of them, on other cultural domains. Such 'impact' occurs only because of the way one set of ideas is 'translated' to fit a *pre-existing* crisis in another field. To take a quite different approach one might examine whether these 'cultural revolutions' were associated with changes in the social organisation of the relevant activities. What determined how one was to make one's living? If prior traditions seemed to have been mined to exhaustion, this can only have been because of an emphasis on a particular sort of originality.

Nonetheless it is tempting to look for structural similarities in the way different symbolic codes changed at this time. Cubist pictures often involve the superimposition of different views of the same object. Is this a way of saying that all view points are of

equal value? Is the musical equivalent to try to undermine classical tonality by insisting that all twelve tones are used equally? Is the literary equivalent to write different versions of a novel from the viewpoint of each of the characters in turn? Finally is this the same as the Principle of Relativity in physics – the requirement that all inertial frames of reference are equivalent?

Unfortunately the Principle of Relativity, thus stated, is already embedded in *Newtonian* physics. And it is a striking fact that Einstein himself explicitly repudiated the suggestion that cubism did for art what relativity theory did for physics. When you use Relativity Theory you use one frame of reference at a time; cubism tries to superimpose them. Again when the Futurists talk about 'the fourth dimension' they show us classical time-lapse pictures. They don't give us insight into Minkowskian geometry. Einstein, indeed, was very wary of any attempts to 'translate' the results of physics in such a way. Often one suspects his theories were invited to serve causes which ran contrary to his own deepest beliefs about natural order.

What Friedman and Donley do is to give a vivid and informative account of the way images imperfectly drawn from physics were used, particularly in early twentieth-century literature. This does not show *why* these images were seized upon, but it shows how they became an important influence on the public image of physics.

When the authors come to discuss the myth of Einstein as the Prometheus of the Atomic Age, they focus on the widespread errors in popular belief about Einstein's role. The equation ' $E = mc^2$ ' features in calculations about nuclear power but did not prompt its discovery. (Indeed Einstein, like Rutherford, is on record as dismissing the idea.) The (in)famous letter to Roosevelt

which Einstein signed made use of his prestige to bring attention to fears about the Nazis' nuclear programme. However, the idea that a pacifist seeker for pure knowledge should inadvertently bring the threat of a nuclear holocaust down upon our heads, makes for an irresistible story.

Friedman and Donley look at the ways in which the Einstein image has been used by advertisers, to exemplify inscrutable and baffling intellectual ability, though, slightly surprisingly, they don't look at 'Einstein: Hero of the Sixties Counter Culture'. The counter-culture Einstein was a man with an untidy shock of white hair, open-toed sandals, and an old leather jacket. He never wore a tie. He had no time for authority or bureaucracy, but he was really 'tuned-in' to the rhythms of the universe. 'Einstein was a drop-out' was emblazoned on badges showing the Great Cultural Hero with his tongue stuck out at the camera. This 'interpretation' recently reached its apotheosis in the entirely absurd but often hilarious film *The Young Einstein*. In a blur of images Mr Serious' 'Einstein' becomes a wild Tasmanian apple farmer, taking bites out of Newtonian apples fallen from the Tree of Knowledge – with an Archimedean bath thrown in for good measure!

The significant thing is that 'Einstein' could be appropriated as a 'Counter-Culture' Hero, opposed to exploitative and militaristic uses of science and technology, and to 'authoritarian methods of instruction'. This attests to his symbolic importance as a twentieth-century figure, and simply reinforces one of the themes of this book – any widespread interpretation of the significance, promise and dangers of science is likely to make an Einstein in its own image.

Jonathan Powers

FAITH AND ART

Mikel Dufrenne, *In the Presence of the Sensuous*, eds. Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1990. xxv + 213 pp., £11.30 pb, 0 391 03663 7 pb.

It is indicative of the linguistic insularity of both Britain and the United States that the work of many authors becomes well known only when translated into English. The reputation of Derrida, for example, has depended largely on his being translated into English in the late '70s and '80s, despite the fact that some of his better known works date back to the '60s. To a great extent Mikel Dufrenne has suffered the same fate, remaining a shadowy figure to most, in spite of his prodigious output. Of his book-length studies, numbering some fifteen volumes, only three have been translated. Hence the publication of an English edition of his essays on aesthetics, collected here for the first time, is to be welcomed. As the editors state in the introduction, one can merely hope that as more of his work becomes available to English-speaking readers it will but add to the already 'burgeoning interest' in this lesser known phenomenologist. This volume, originally published in 1987 and now brought out in paperback for the first time, contains a wide variety of Dufrenne's essays written between 1948 and 1976, covering topics such as the imaginary, intentionality and aesthetics, the a priori, cinema and painting, to name but a few. They also deal with a large number of thinkers including the early Derrida, Barthes, Sartre, Metz, Freud, Lyotard and Merleau-Ponty.

In many respects these essays represent a *cri de coeur* on the part of the author, a humanist who laments the encroachment of

science, knowledge and meaning in the realm of Nature, or 'savage being' as he terms it, borrowing a phrase from Merleau-Ponty. In the sphere of aesthetics and literary criticism Dufrenne sees this mirrored in the growth of semiotics and structuralism, which he interprets as one more step on the road to absolute rationalisation, a step which takes us ever further from the sensible particularity of the work of art and its world disclosive potential.

Although he is ostensibly more interested in the thought of Merleau-Ponty, and the editors also see him as continuing Merleau-Ponty's work in aesthetics, even sharing his particular interest in painting, the general tenor and pathos of Dufrenne's work is deeply Heideggerian. Dufrenne seems to be aware of this, since he insists that his is not a reactionary call for a return to primitive life, which he knows to be misguided, but his own work still tends toward such nostalgic yearnings. In the first section, containing essays on the philosophical foundations of his aesthetics, he repeatedly affirms the immediate community of Man and Nature. Man is born of Nature, and one of the main achievements of phenomenology is to reveal the truth of intentionality as the pre-cognitive unity of the two subtending the secondary and derived relation of subject and object. In the essay entitled 'Eye and Mind' we are informed that truth is an unveiling, 'the bursting forth of originary being'. In 'The A Priori of Imagination' we learn that language comes from Nature, that Nature speaks to Man. Words have meaning thanks to the expressive force of Nature itself. The cosmos holds the constant promise of hierophany. One has the distinct impression that one could

substitute 'Being' for 'Nature' with little change in meaning, in spite of the author's protestations to the contrary. It comes as no surprise either that Dufrenne cites Jung with approval, speaking of archetypes and the imaginary, whose images have been inherited from Nature and Man's pre-historic primitive unity with the environment.

In the essays in this first section one experiences more than a little disappointment, for they hold the potential for tapping a rich vein of thought, a potential not fulfilled. This is most apparent in his treatment of the nature-culture opposition and the question of technology. In the second essay Dufrenne acknowledges the impossibility of ever stepping outside culture: as a product of the leisure civilisation, nature camps are just as much a cultural phenomenon as industrial capitalism. One can discern here an implicit critique of the Heideggerian reverence for Being free of domination by culture and technology. Elsewhere, however, he reinstates the opposition pleading for a return to Man's originary state. He is well aware of the dehumanising effects of technology, yet seems oblivious of the political dangers of such an anti-technological stance.

The second and third sections deal with the arts themselves, involving specific discussions of poetry, film, painting (both rare in philosophical aesthetics) and criticism. Though these essays treat diverse topics, they share a common theme. For Dufrenne,



the arts in the twentieth century, together with literary criticism, have forgotten the sensuous in art, concentrating overwhelmingly on its formal elements instead. Indeed he reads the formalism of Stravinsky, Mondrian or Robbe-Grillet as born of an ascetic 'distaste with respect to the work', an asceticism which nevertheless fails to smother the sensuous entirely. Formalism is merely a reflection of the more general technological movement which Dufrenne warns us against. Yet art has the potential of reuniting Man with his origins in Nature, of making explicit his sensuous bonding to the earth; it is Man's natural way of expressing his being-in-the-world. For this reason alone Dufrenne reserves his scorn for semiological approaches to the arts, which reduce meaning to 'mere' structure, and reduce the work to a corpse, robbing it of its physical materiality. Here, once again, he brings to bear a Heideggerian theory of linguistic meaning, one which asserts its non-arbitrary nature. In the essay 'The Phenomenological Approach to Poetry' he notes that 'signs are not yet arbitrary; they somehow imitate the object they refer to and conjure up its presence'. The artistic medium which in Dufrenne's view performs this task of expressing Man's being-in-the-world par excellence is painting, which appeals solely to the senses, avoiding the interference of any cognitive functions whatsoever. Cézanne in particular, and here Dufrenne shares an enthusiasm of Merleau-Ponty, evokes the pre-real, Nature before its becoming world, before its emergence into determinate things. As he states in 'Painting Forever' the painter 'allows being to be, he gives it time to appear'.

As might be expected the author has little time for Marxist aesthetics. The first half of 'Why Go to the Movies' offers little more than a series of vulgar, and frankly silly, jibes against notions of ideology and Barthes' semiotics before establishing the main argument which is to affirm the existence of a pre-cognitive, pre-ideological relation to the world, a relation to which cinema and all other art forms appeal. Consequently Dufrenne sees art as fundamentally opposed to ideology, in that it makes explicit a deeper level of human experience.

Dufrenne's work provokes an ambivalent response. On the one hand he is right to emphasise the sensuous aspects of art, aspects which aesthetics and criticism have tended to neglect. However, serious reservations must be expressed about his thought. In raising art above the level of rational discourse, in endowing it with a world-disclosive function he makes it into an object of reverence. Here one is reminded of Heidegger's *Origin of the Work of Art* which requires, quite simply, a leap of faith. To those who fail to make that leap it remains unintelligible and nonsensical. So too Dufrenne's work suffers from this fault. It may well be that language is more than just a system of signs, but Dufrenne's mimetic account of language is largely unsubstantiated and obscure. There are political dangers, too, in his thought. Although Dufrenne hopes that one day humankind will be liberated from its present repressive mode of existence, he risks replacing the fetish of technology with the fetish of nature in the false naturalisation of a view which by his own account would be an ideological one. In his critique of structuralist poetics the plea is for a release of the aesthetic object from economies of meaning to allow it to appear in its sensible and unique plenitude, restoring perception to its pre-lapsarian state. It is surprising that, given his admiration for Merleau-Ponty, he ignores the latter's acknowledgement that even the most primitive level of perception is structured around an economy of presence and absence, visible and invisible. Had he been more attentive to the other's work, Dufrenne might have produced a less worrying, less Heideggerian, aesthetic theory.

Matthew Rampley

AFTER ALTHUSSER

Louis Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays*, edited and with an introduction by G. Elliott, London and New York, Verso, 1990. xx + 285 pp., £39.95 hb, £12.95 pb, 0 86091 244 2 hb, 0 86091 956 0 pb.

Alison Assiter, *Althusser and Feminism*, London, Pluto, 1990. 192 pp., £17.50 hb, 0 7453 029 7.

Andrew Collier, *Scientific Realism and Socialist Thought*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. xi + 203 pp., £28.50 hb, 0 7108 1309 0.

In his introduction to this very valuable collection of essays by Althusser, Gregory Elliott offers three reasons for publishing these 'old texts' today: the insights they give into Althusser's own theoretical formation, the part they played in the intellectual formation of many currently important philosophers and social theories, and, third, their *continuing* theoretical significance. The death of Althusser in October of last year adds a fourth, poignant justification for the publication of this collection. It is, indeed, a worthy memorial to the greatest Marxist philosopher of his time.

The essays included by Gregory Elliott are well-chosen. The collection makes accessible several essays which have not been in print in English translation for some time, and makes others available in English for the first time. In this category belongs, extraordinarily enough, the very influential title-essay. The essays are also well-chosen in that they are representative of Althusser's shifts of position from 1965 through to 1978. Viewed in this chronological perspective, the essays fall into three main groups. The first two essays, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle' (1965) and 'On Theoretical Work: Difficulties and Resources' (1967) present some of the key arguments and conceptual innovations of Althusser's 'early' period. In these essays we find, though argued with a vivid clarity and directness not always characteristic of his work, the theses which have become personified in Althusser. There is the often repeated insistence upon the scientific status of historical materialism, the distinction between historical materialism and dialectical materialism (the scientific philosophy inaugurated by Marx's great scientific work *Capital*, but never elaborated by him), the distinctiveness of the Marxist concept of totality, the complexity of the social formation, and so on; but above all, Althusser's insistence on scientificity, and his rejection of Marxist moralism as an abandonment of Marx's scientific achievement for the terrain of ideology. But, also, at the centre of this insistence upon scientificity is Althusser's trenchant opposition to both empiricism and dogmatism. Knowledge cannot be 'read off' from the immediately observable 'data', nor does it consist in the mere application of ready-made concepts and principles. The latter is dogmatism, and Althusser is already clear that among the many costs of Stalinism has been the imposition of dogma in place of a living, creative and critical development of Marxism as science. Above all, science is intellectual *struggle* to make the world intelligible against the power of ideologies and the apparatuses which sustain and impose them.

Then follow two texts of the late 1960s. The first, 'Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists' (1967) is a version of Althusser's introductory lectures to a course on philosophy for scientists, delivered at the École Normale Supérieure. The other, 'Lenin and Philosophy', was previously published in English as the title-essay of a New Left Books collection, now out of print. Both these essays focus, like virtually all the other pieces

in this collection, on the nature of philosophy itself, and, in particular, on the distinctiveness of Marxist philosophy. Because 'Lenin and Philosophy' is already familiar to us, it is the title-essay of the book which will, perhaps, excite the more fascination. In some ways, however, it is disappointing. As Gregory Elliott points out, it is a transitional work. It has none of the clarity or confidence of the earlier texts. It is easier to see what Althusser wants to leave behind than where he is going. The text is full of irritating rhetorical flourishes, detours and unfulfilled promises. One wonders what the audience of scientists made of the lectures. But, on second thoughts, perhaps this text, more than the others, fulfils Elliott's first justification for publishing these 'old texts'. Here is Althusser's non-dogmatic, non-empiricist practice of intellectual work as *struggle* open to view, on public display.

Althusser has already established a critical distance from his earlier positions, most especially his view of dialectical materialism as a 'scientific' philosophy. Philosophy was now acknowledged to have no 'object' or proofs, as the sciences do. It is, rather, a practice of *intervention* with a special relationship to the sciences. Central to philosophy in its materialist forms is the drawing of a line of demarcation between science and ideology (in this Althusser remains true to his earlier positions), but philosophy does not intervene *within* science. Rather, again in its materialist forms, philosophy intervenes *on behalf* of science, against those (idealist) philosophies which invade and exploit the sciences for non-scientific purposes. This is of special significance during periods of crisis and revolution in science, when what is idealist in the spontaneous philosophies of the scientists themselves is likely to get the upper hand as against the spontaneous materialism which is intrinsic to the practice of science.

'Lenin and Philosophy' develops and consolidates these themes by way of an extraordinary 'reading' of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Again, philosophy is a kind of theoretical practice quite distinct from science, but bearing a special relationship to it; again, the materialist 'tendency' in philosophy defends science against the idealist philosophies which threaten and besiege it. But now philosophy is more explicitly linked to politics – it involves a double intervention, mediating in both directions between science and politics.

The last three texts in the collection – 'Is it simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy?' (1975), 'The Transformation of Philosophy' (1976) and 'Marxism Today' (1978) are, in many ways, the most interesting. They show Althusser, in the last of his philosophically creative years, engaging simultaneously with the significance of his own earlier theoretical work and with the acute contemporary crisis of Marxist theory and politics. 'Is it simple ...?' is the revised version of a presentation given by Althusser to an audience of 500 at the University of Picardy. It is a retrospective view of many of the most significant of his earlier writings, placing them in their context, both intellectual and political. The text is a veritable *tour de force* on the relations between philosophy and politics; Marxism as a theoretical anti-humanism; the concept of theoretical practice; knowledge-as-production; problematic, and epistemological break; the Marxist concepts of totality and dialectic; the relation between historical materialism and structuralism, and more besides. Repeatedly, Althusser represents his work as a struggle against *both* Stalinist dogmatism and its right-wing critics. Here, too, is a striking metaphor for Althusser's practice of thinking in extremes, or 'at the limit':

If you want to change historically existing ideas, even in the apparently abstract domain called philosophy, you

cannot content yourself with simply preaching the naked truth, and waiting for its anatomical obviousness to 'enlighten' minds, as our eighteenth-century ancestors used to say: you are forced, since you want to force a change in ideas, to recognise the force which is keeping them being, by applying a counterforce capable of destroying this power and bending the stick in the opposite direction so as to put the ideas right. (p. 210)

This brilliant text alone would have justified the publication of Gregory Elliott's collection. If I were to recommend any single text as a way into Althusser's complex and puzzling thought-world this would be it.

The theme of philosophy as a practice of intervention, as the struggle of 'tendencies', relating both to the sciences and to the politics of class struggle, is continued in the final two texts. In 'The Transformation of Philosophy' Althusser returns to one of his favourite questions – why it was that Marx never 'found the time' to give us the philosophy he promised, why Marx's philosophy remained only in its 'practical' state. But now Althusser takes this to be a question which contains its own answer. Marx inaugurated a new *practice* of philosophy: he did not produce his philosophy as a philosophy, but as a 'non-philosophy'. Althusser now understands philosophy as a discourse which orders and unites the various particular ideologies under a 'Truth' which in turn secures the hegemony of the dominant class. If Marxist philosophy were to be produced as, in this sense, the 'Truth', organising the ideology of the ascendant, working-class movement, then this would prove the way to a whole new system of social domination. Instead:

This new practice of philosophy serves the proletarian class struggle without imposing upon it an oppressive ideological unity (we know where that oppression has its roots), but rather creating for it the ideological conditions for the liberation and free development of social practices.

'Marxism Today' is the last and most recent text in the collection (1978), and it coincides with Althusser's period of most extreme hostility to the leadership and direction of the French Communist Party. The recognition that Marxism could, and had, taken forms no less oppressive than those it intended to destroy was already a fundamental preoccupation for Althusser. His earlier work, as we have seen, was an attempt at a critique of Stalinism from the Left, whilst his later self-critical writings, and most especially the struggle to establish a new *practice* of philosophy for Marxism, as 'essentially critical and revolutionary' without the capacity to 'impose an oppressive ideological unity' can only be understood in terms of this continuing preoccupation. Now Althusser confronts the question how far the conditions for the subsequent history of Marxism as a system of oppression, no less than a means of liberation, were already present in the work of Marx himself. Marx, he says, 'was not in a position to conceive the possibility that his own thought might be diverted to serve the ends of the "omnipotence of ideas" and used as its politics'. To recommence and develop Marxism as a science entails a critical revaluation of Marx's own achievements, or settling the accounts with our former 'philosophical conscience', which includes, first of all, that of Marx himself. This is the depth of the crisis of Marxism as it was acknowledged by Althusser in 1978.

That Althusser's work is of more than passing interest for the historian of ideas is illustrated by two other recent texts by philosophers who continue to use elements of his thought as a means for the development of their own ideas. Alison Assiter's most recent book is a wide-ranging exploration of intersecting themes drawn from Althusser and some post-structuralist writers and her own feminist concerns. She argues that, whilst Althusser's

reading of Marx is deeply flawed, he nevertheless has considerable value for feminist theory. In her first chapter, Assiter investigates the vexed question of Althusser's 'structuralism'. If not an outright structuralism, she argues, Althusser's thought nevertheless has much in common with that intellectual tendency and, to the extent that Althusser's thought is structuralist, his position differs from that of Marx. In fact, Assiter herself sides broadly with G. A. Cohen's thesis of the primacy of the forces of production as the core of Marx's view of history, though her account of the nature of the forces differs somewhat from Cohen's. Rather provocatively and, I think, misleadingly, she *defends* historical materialism, in her version of it, as a form of economism, *contra* the Althusserian attempt to rescue Marxism from this taint. I think her position is *misleadingly* presented as 'economism' since, though she sometimes speaks of the level of the development of the forces as both necessary and sufficient for historical transformation, she qualifies this with the phrase 'in certain circumstances'. Depending on what those circumstances are held to be, the position may or may not turn out to be an 'economism'.

Althusser again comes in for criticism in Assiter's chapter on 'Needs and Production'. Here, what is objected to is Althusser's alleged rejection of any concept of needs as prior to and independent of the production process. Assiter argues for at least one major class of needs – 'basic' needs – which humans share with other animals, and which may be met, or fail to be met by social production. She commends Timpanaro for his recognition of this category of needs, and also tends to equate basic needs in her sense with 'biological needs'. There is, however, some equivocation in this section of the book between a view of needs as conditions of survival *per se*, or of 'survival as human beings'. Since she appears to counterpose social needs and needs for intellectual satisfaction, on the one hand, to biological or basic needs, on the other, then it would seem that mere 'survival' is what satisfaction of the 'basic' needs enables. An alternative view, consistent with some of the things she says, but not others, would be that 'basic' needs are requirements for survival as a human being (i.e. survival in a way fit for our status as humans, or, perhaps, in a way which enables formation and exercise of species-specific human powers). On this view, intellectual and social needs count as 'basic' needs, no less than nutrition shelter and the rest. There is, too, an interesting equivocation in the inclusion of sex as a need. Clearly sexual activity is not a survival-requirement of the individual (once she/he exists!), but is included as a 'basic need' by an *ad hoc* shift to *species*-survival as the frame of analysis. This, surely, gives us very little purchase on the place of sexuality in human well-being at the level of the individual.

The chapter on needs, notwithstanding its intrinsic interest, serves mainly as a prelude to the central argument of the remaining three chapters of the book. This is, broadly, that feminist practice requires an integrated theory of women's oppression as the outcome of three interrelated elements. These are the facts or 'data' of biological difference between the sexes, the uses to which these facts are put under various conditions of social life (e.g. class society) and, third, ideologies of gender (including gendered identity). Chapter 4 surveys existing accounts of women's oppression, counterposing class reductionist (e.g. Engels) views to those (e.g. Delphy and Firestone) which give causal primacy to gender-opposition in society. Both of these are found wanting, as is Hartmann's 'dual systems' (patriarchy plus capitalism) approach. Michèle Barrett and Pat and Hugh Armstrong are commended for attempting to go beyond the terms of these other positions in offering an 'integrated' account.

To some extent, Chapter 5 is a digression. It deals critically with an influential account of French feminist theory. The chapter focuses on the work of Irigaray, pointing out how much her



position owes to Lacan and Derrida. Central to what these three thinkers have in common (and symptomatic of their debt to a fourth – Saussure) is an attempt to exclude reference from the theory of symbolic meaning. This is linked to anti-realism in epistemology, which is opposed by Assiter in terms derived from Roy Bhaskar's realist theory of science. Irigaray's anti-realism makes it unsuitable as a vehicle for a feminist politics which seeks to change real social and economic relations.

Finally, Assiter returns to Althusser, this time to his famous ISAs essay. Suitably reworked, this piece has much to offer as a contribution to the third element in Assiter's project of an integrated approach to the explanation of women's oppression. The re-working which is required includes, first, detaching the question of the acquisition of self-identity as such from that of the acquisition of gender-identity. Here, as elsewhere, Althusser follows Lacan too closely. It is as an approach to the explanation of gender-identity that Althusser's essay is useful. But even here, what is needed is a Freudian, rather than a Lacanian account. So long as the scope of the Freudian account of the acquisition of gender-identity is revised to accommodate the specificity and historical/cultural variability of complexes of family relations and patterns of power and domination it is defensible against the main feminist objections to it. The value of the ISA's approach is that it enables us to situate specific family-forms both as conditions for the acquisition of gendered identity in their complex articulation with state and economy. One somewhat disconcerting feature of Assiter's presentation of this line of argument is her repeated designation of her own position as both 'economistic' and 'biologistic' (albeit with scare-quotes). On the one hand, both words are now widely used in vague and un-defined ways as casual terms of abuse. There may, indeed, be something to be said for self-consciously thinking within the 'forbidden' territory. On the other hand, there is *also* something to be said (I think, rather *more* to be said), for trying to use the terms 'biologism' and 'economism' more narrowly and precisely so as to designate positions which *have* been genuinely superseded. Seen in these terms, Assiter's position is neither biologistic nor economistic. It does, however, quite rightly assign causal importance to biological and economic mechanisms and relations in the determination of women's oppression. Any remotely plausible theory would have to do so.

Andrew Collier's book also situates itself in the intellectual space defined by Louis Althusser and Roy Bhaskar but, unlike

Assiter, Collier remains committed to what at first sight looks like a rather traditional conception of socialism as the politics of the 'workers' movement'. His final chapter is, indeed, an attempt to defend the distinctly unfashionable project of a 'scientific socialism'. But what is attractive in both books is their trenchant refusal to be carried along by currents of intellectual fashion.

Unfashionable though Collier's position is, it is nevertheless highly original. The book is short, but both densely and clearly argued. It contains a number of analytical clarifications and conceptual advances which deserve to acquire wide currency in radical thought and action. Chapter I is concerned to show that Althusser's and Bhaskar's critiques of empiricism run parallel to each other, whilst the latter's position is a major advance in providing us with an analysis and explanation of the distinctiveness of scientific explanation and experience *vis-a-vis* ideology. Collier insists that emancipatory politics has an interest in the truth; so that there are political as well as philosophical arguments which favour a defence of the science/ideology distinction. Collier's advance over Althusser is to defend this as an *analytical* distinction, rather than one between 'concrete' practices. Many 'radical', including feminist (and Stalinist, Nazi, and Islamic fundamentalist...) critiques of science turn out to be critiques of ideology in science which work by considering only questions concerning the relationship between the social conditions (or motives, values, etc.) of scientific research and its conclusions, rather than questions about the relation between scientific research and its *object*.

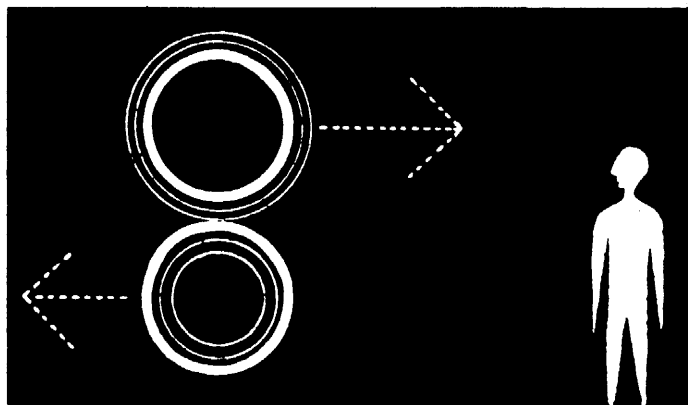
Chapters 2 and 3 also begin with expositions and qualified defences of positions established by Althusser and Bhaskar – this time in ontology, rather than epistemology. Both Althusser and Bhaskar oppose 'reductionist' accounts of the relations between the objects of different sciences, but Collier provides cogent reasons for preferring Bhaskar's metaphor of 'stratification' to Althusser's 'continents' of knowledge. Bhaskar's arguments from the practice of science to an ontology of nature as stratified and differentiated are adopted by Collier, and then used to provide an account of the base/superstructure distinction and of historical process as a flow of events co-determined by a multiplicity of causal mechanisms operating at different levels. This concept of multiple determination in open systems is needed, Collier argues, to do the work which Althusser tried unsuccessfully to do with the concept of 'overdetermination'.

The notion of a hierarchy of levels is also central to Collier's third chapter, on the question of structure and agency. Althusser's theoretical anti-humanism is defended as the thesis that history is a process without a subject, as, in other words, a negative formulation of the idea of 'structural causality'. Collier takes Althusser's reference to Spinoza seriously, and makes a qualified use of Spinoza's theory of composite bodies whose components are also composite to explicate the idea of structural causality. Here Collier makes an extremely useful distinction between the abstract 'structure' of such a being, and the concrete 'structuratum' (including both the elements and the structure of relations by which they 'compose' the composite being). Because the elements themselves are compound they are subject to causal mechanisms other than that of the structure by which they 'compose' the structuratum of which they are constituents. Elements are not, therefore, reducible to mere 'effects' of the structure, but must be recognised as distinct, irreducible 'levels' of the stratified whole. Any composite being will, further, be characterised by a 'conatus' – a tendency to stay in being, to preserve its identity through time. Collier defends this thesis of Spinoza's, arguing for a non-teleological rendering of its content.

With some modifications (e.g. to allow for internally contradictory compound beings, which have a tendency to dissolution as well as a tendency to preserve their identity), this scheme of

concepts is applied to societies and persons as composite beings, and to the relations between them. The resulting social ontology broadly sustains that offered by Roy Bhaskar in *The Possibility of Naturalism*. Collier uses it to support the idea of a common human nature as *consistent* with theoretical anti-humanism, to advance a number of criticisms of the slogan 'the personal is political', and to go some way towards a theory of the conditions under which collective agency may be effective in transforming social structures.

Reverting, in Chapter 4, to epistemology Collier marks significant differences between his position and that of Bhaskar, at the same time providing an original and provocative view of the nature and limits of theoretical knowledge in the human 'sciences'. One consequence of the view of the objects of science as hierarchically stratified in relation to one another, and of the co-existence of causal mechanisms in open systems, is that experimental closure, and hence rigorous testing of theories, precise prediction, quantification and so on become more difficult to achieve as one moves 'up' the hierarchy of strata. At these higher levels – the objects of psychological and social theories – the distinctive features of science, most notably experimentation, are impossible. These disciplines are not, therefore, and cannot



become, scientific. On the other hand, they do go beyond mere summations of the practical experience accumulated in the practices (psychotherapy, politics) to which they relate. They are induced by 'breakdowns' in those practices, and may be guided by the principles and ontology derived from reflection on the practice of the genuine sciences, all of which serves as a kind of 'background knowledge'.

Given Collier's epistemological pessimism about the prospects of the human 'sciences', his defence of 'scientific socialism' is not likely to be very alarming to the traditional opponents of this idea. Collier does not, and cannot, in consistency, defend historical materialism as a science. Instead, he defends a practice of socialist politics guided by a set of 'rules of thumb' which are in turn justified by appeal to a theory – 'epistemoid' – which is consistent in its *ontology* with the natural sciences, and which also is able to employ substantive natural scientific knowledge as a limit to social and psychological possibility.

Of course, the idea of a 'scientific socialism' is rejected by its opponents not only on the ground that there can be no such thing as a science of society, or of history, but also on the ground that even if there were, the question of the rightness of socialism as a political objective could not be derived from it. Here Collier expounds and defends Bhaskar's concept of an 'explanatory critique': some sets of social relations generate false ideas as a condition of their own reproduction. Commitment to the truth entails transforming these relations. Like Bhaskar, Collier argues that facts cannot be derived from values (wishful thinking is not and cannot produce scientific knowledge) but values *can* be

derived from 'facts'. In his final chapter Collier develops this theme by way of a defence of the idea of 'laws of history' not in the sense criticised by Popper and others, but in the sense of Bhaskarian generative mechanisms. These laws imply 'enabling constraints' on practices which transform and/or reproduce social structures. One implication is that capitalism cannot be transformed into socialism by way of the 'parliamentary road'. But this is not, as Collier recognises, an unconditional derivation of a practical imperative from a historical law. It has the form: 'if you want socialism, revolution is the only way to get it' (or something along those lines). So constraints on reproduction have to be brought into the picture. The choice is not between socialism, with all the enormous costs of social revolution, on the one hand, and staying with benign welfare-state monopoly capitalism on the other. The reproduction of capitalist social relations itself imposes constraints including recurrent economic and ecological crises, famine, the arms race and so on. The 'choice', as Luxemburg foresaw, is between socialism and barbarism. Recognising this, only a tiny perverse minority would be opposed to socialism as a broad political objective.

This is not the place for an extended critique of these more directly political conclusions of Collier's book, but I suspect the combination of novel and path-breaking philosophical argument with the defence of an 'orthodox' class politics will provoke many readers into wondering at which point the argument 'goes wrong'. Perhaps they – and I am one of them – are just so many more members of that large group of people whom Collier chastises for failing to be convinced by good arguments. But here, as a promissory note for some future engagement, are a couple of suggestions as to where the argument goes wrong. First, if historical materialism is an 'epistemoid' and not a 'science', how can Collier be so confident in his statement of the historical laws which generate his political rules of thumb? Second, Collier's social ontology seems to include nothing 'between' (so to speak) the level of gross social structures like the economy and the state, at one extreme, and people, individual social agents, at the other. 'Groups', such as political parties, seem to hover between the two. This makes structural transformation very much an 'all-or-nothing' kind of thing. The more local, provisional and partial structural changes which groups can and do achieve, but which stop short of the wholesale transformation to socialism, can only be conceptualised as changes 'of face' (as in socialism – or capitalism – with a 'human face') or as matters of style. Although he is at pains to concede that such changes do have effects on the quality of life, it is difficult to avoid the impression that they are mere sideshows, diversions from the central aims of the 'workers' movement' to bring about socialism. The problem, here, I think, is the 'person/society' couple, which leaves no space for the real ontological complexity and heterogeneity of the realm of the social itself. And one reason why Collier seems insensitive to this heterogeneity comes back to his epistemological pessimism. Though he is clearly right to see little or no place for experimentation in the human social sciences, he gives no strong arguments against the methodological substitutes for experimentation which have been developed in a century and a half of social science – sociology and political science, including Marxist sociology and political science – are treated as if they did not exist, presumably on the strength of an epistemological argument. Whilst it must be clear that I value Andrew Collier's book more for its philosophical discoveries and innovations than for its political conclusions, it is, nevertheless, important to have these unfashionable political positions defended with such clarity and vigour. The intellectual culture of the left would be deeply impoverished without such efforts.

Ted Benton

GAINED IN TRANSLATION

Andrew Benjamin, *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: a New Theory of Words*, London, Routledge, 1989. v + 193 pp., £8.99 pb., 0 415 04485 5pb.

Philosophers tend to treat translation as a post-Babel hindrance, whose necessity is due to the welcome fact that the philosophical tradition is international, and to the sad fact that most of us read no more than one or two languages. For how many of us read Danish? Translation is to be meekly borne, if it makes itself forgotten, and deplored, if it obtrudes. It is always with an uneasy sense of paradox, and a little thrill of excitement, that we confide *sotto voce* that Hyppolite's translation of the *Phenomenology of Mind* is somewhat clearer than the original. And it is with a strong sense of righteousness that we declare that X's translation of Y is a betrayal, which will spoil the work for generations of students (this was actually stated about a recent French translation of *Sein und Zeit*).

Behind these noble sentiments, there is a philosophy of translation, which revolves around the concepts of origin, faithfulness, literalness and authorial intention. This (usually implicit) philosophy is the object of Andrew Benjamin's critique, which takes three forms. The first is a reversal, announced in the title of the book, and made explicit in the quotation from Derrida which sums up the whole enterprise: 'with the problem of translation we are dealing with nothing less than the passage to philosophy' – far from philosophy casting light over an under-theorised field, it is translation that provides a point of entry into it. The second is the construction of a tradition, a controversial one, for, as Andrew Benjamin says, tradition must be defined as 'the belonging together of irreconcilable conflicts'; this takes him from Heidegger to Seneca, Walter Benjamin and psychoanalysis – the still centre of the book being, I believe, the essay on the homonymous predecessor. The third is the construction of a problematic, which emerges from the critique of the tradition, and which is expounded in the last chapter of the book, on 'philosophy and translation', which fulfils the programme of the title. There we find a 'new theory of words' in the form of a concept of the word and a related network of supporting concepts.

For Andrew has done Walter proud. I always thought that the famous essay on translation contained *in nuce* a philosophy of language that was both profound and urgently needed, only I was not clever, or cultivated, enough to extract it. I have the impression that this is exactly what Andrew Benjamin has done – a case of the name of the father being a source of inspiration rather than anxiety of influence. The rationale behind Walter's faithfulness to language, as opposed to the original text, appears clearly in the critical thrust in Andrew's book, against the supremacy of the literal, the singularity of the event and the originality of the origin.

Common sense has it that the figurative is a departure from the literal, that the event is an advent (and consequently translation an uneasy mimesis, the result of which is an idol in Plato's sense), that the origin originates and that the task of the translator is to capture and respect this origin in the author's intention. This, already made problematic in Walter Benjamin's transfer of faithfulness from the author to language, is problematised for good in Andrew Benjamin's deconstruction: the figurative, the plural (one of Andrew Benjamin's most interesting attempts is the construction of a philosophy of plurality, through the concept of an always-already plural event), the anoriginal, the non-equivalent, and the different all displace their opposite numbers and

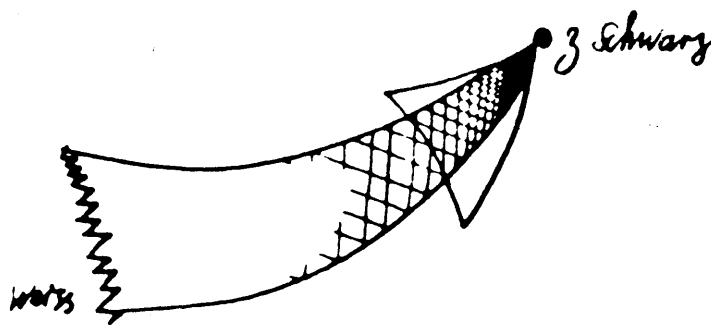
come to the foreground.

In turn this deconstruction of a tradition is comforted by a network of new or reinterpreted concepts – the pragma vs. the word, emplacement and tradition – the whole amounting to a full-fledged theory of meaning and interpretation. Andrew Benjamin does not, of course, deny that communication takes place and that translations are possible (or that some are better than others). What he does is show that the process of production and understanding of meaning is constitutively divided, between the pragma (the moment of comprehension and interpretation, and therefore of translation) and the word (the site of differential plurality and the anoriginal). The relationship between pragma and word is developed in a particularly convincing way in the last chapter, through an analysis of the translation of a sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* into German, English, French and Spanish. Much as I would like (for the sake of argument) to find fault with this theory of meaning, I cannot but agree with it – the hubristic subtitle of the book will not get its come-uppance, at least from this reviewer.

What shows that Andrew Benjamin is on to something important is that the tradition he explores could easily be extended. Indeed, translation is the stage on which the 'irreconcilable conflict' between analytic and Continental interpretations 'belongs together'. Thus, analytic philosophers other than Davidson could be cited. We should be grateful to Andrew Benjamin for not treating us to yet another version of the overworked 'Gavagai', but a critique of Searle on intentionality, for instance, could point at the anoriginality embedded in his conception of meaning as the transfer of conditions of satisfaction from an intentional state to the sounds of an utterance (which is not so far removed from Nietzsche's concept of the double metaphor, in which the traditional relationship between the figurative and the literal is made undecidable).

Andrew Benjamin's is undoubtedly an important book. As such, it should have been produced with a little more care. It contains more misprints than the average reader can forgive, Greek words being prime victims. And at times Andrew takes faithfulness to Walter's notoriously unspacious style too far – we can't all write like Austin (nor do we all want to write like Searle), but need we imitate the later Henry James? This is, of course, an unfair and reactionary comment. The pragma in Andrew Benjamin's text never forgets the complexity and the plurality of the word. And *The Wings of the Dove* will repay a little effort.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle



MYTHIC ANALOGUES

Clemens Lugowski, *Form, Individuality and the Novel*, translated by John Dixon Halliday, introduction by Heinz Schlaffer, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990. xx + 212 pp., £29.50 hb, 0 7456 0243 4.

Form, Individuality and the Novel is a new translation of a major work by the German literary scholar Clemens Lugowski. It was originally published in Berlin in 1932, shortly before the demise of the ill-fated Weimar Republic. One might have expected a work as original and provocative as this to have had a significant impact upon German (and Continental) literary theory, cultural criticism and philosophy. Yet it quickly passed into obscurity without a trace (its favourable reception could, of course, hardly be guaranteed given the Nazi succession to power the year after its appearance), and Lugowski died in 1942. (Other biographical details are unfortunately lacking here.) It was republished in West Germany in the 1970s but, aside from an occasional reference to it by certain reader-reception theorists, it has as yet received little attention.

As Heinz Schlaffer points out in his useful introduction, Lugowski conceived of this work as a sustained attack on the trends of romanticism and irrationalism which dominated German literary studies during this period. In particular, he wanted to challenge the notion that literature was a reflection of life, an embodiment or expression of the unique qualities of a given *Kultur*. Rather, he argues here that art is always artifice, a product of convention and not nature. Literary representations are 'always-already' mediated by textual form; as such, the proper focus of literary scholarship should be the formal construction of texts and the historical development of these forms (hence the description of his method as 'form-historical', which owes its biggest debt to Cassirer's notion of 'symbolic form'). In formalist parlance, Lugowski seeks to 'defamiliarize' the constructive principles of literary texts. By demystifying the habitual confusion of art and reality, he feels that criticism can supplant naive and unreflective readings. Lugowski is in effect advancing a version of *Ideologiekritik*, one that has numerous affinities with the critical project articulated by Benjamin, Adorno and others.

The *locus classicus* of his 'form-historical' approach is the narrative structure of poetic texts, especially as this pertains to the literary depiction of the self and the dynamics of historical time. For Lugowski, the delineation of the human being as a unique and autonomous individual within the 'world-picture' of the text is an important aesthetic problem, yet one which has hitherto been neglected. From an historical point of view, he argues that literary theory must account for the interrelationship between myth and literary form and the increasing separation between them since the Middle Ages. He suggests that in pre-modern Europe, consciousness was dominated by mythical modes of thought. The myth portrays the world as stable and timeless: by hearkening back to a 'Golden Age' of harmony and perfection, it creates a sense of shared experience and communal or national identity. Hence, myth fuses form and meaning into a higher totality, into an aesthetic unity. But there is no possibility of cognitive distance from myth, no capacity for reflecting upon the 'artificiality' of such mythological genres through theoretical abstraction. Lugowski asserts that by about the 16th century, the cohesion of myth came to an end under the impetus of a series of interlocking economic, political and socio-cultural developments. But, whilst myth had ceased to be a direct force in the social world, it had become sublimated into the aesthetic sphere where it continued to influence the architectonic construction of the

poetic world – what Lugowski describes as the 'mythic analogue'.

Again, Lugowski's specific concern is the 'figural construction' of the individual in the fictional text. When the text is eclipsed by the mythic analogue, the narrated self is presented as a static, timeless essence which is fully integrated into the external world. Moreover, events are depicted in an abstract and 'universal' fashion, which serves to preserve the absolute 'epic distance' perpetrated by myth. There is little portrayal of change or development on any level, no historicity as such: the narrative of the mythic analogue consists of a (potentially infinite) number of self-contained situations which are simply strung together like 'pearls on a string'. The *dénouement* of each situation is never in doubt; hence, there is no 'result-oriented suspense' characteristic of later fiction, no narratological unpredictability. Despite this, Lugowski insists that we are now in a position to recognize the mythical analogue for what it is, mainly because the monolithic cosmology of myth has disintegrated, and has left in its wake a plethora of competing world-views and perspectives. Because the world now lacks a unified, immanent meaning, we can distance ourselves from any particular world-view and theorize it in a more critical fashion. Moreover, in certain texts (he discusses Boccaccio, Cervantes and the early German prose stylist Georg Wickram, as well as several autobiographical writings from this era) we can witness the 'dream-like emanation of a burgeoning awareness in mankind of human individuality'. Temporality and 'futurity' take on real importance; events become more concrete and open-ended, and there is less 'distance' between the reader and the fictional world because the latter is depicted in an intimate and familiar manner. Likewise, individuals acquire 'three-dimensionality': they evince the rudiments of psychological depth, the capacity for self-reflection, and autonomy from the external world of people and things. Plot is no longer propelled forward by stock technical devices, but through the unpredictable words and actions of specific characters. In short, historiographic and reflexive knowledge increasingly influences the textual representation of life. In one sense, this 'realism' is still a literary product, and realism as a genre is of course no less 'artificial' than the mythic analogue. Yet such genres are aware of their own artificiality and, for Lugowski in any event, their emergence signals the final liberation of consciousness from the shackles of mythical thought. Post-mythical works depict 'the most concrete kind of existence, in which reality is experienced at close quarters rather than surveyed imperiously from on high'. It should be stressed that Lugowski is not celebrating the consolidation of the bourgeois social order, and he is not blind to the negative implications of modernity: for instance, he notes that the demise of the mythical world-view is accompanied by a certain degree of psychological dissonance and social fragmentation. Like Habermas, however, he seems to be optimistic about the emancipatory promise of the 'spirit of the Enlightenment'.

Lugowski's method is also of considerable interest, and has remarkable similarities with that of the roughly contemporaneous school of Russian formalism (of which he was apparently unaware). They share an interest in the formal construction of the text and the technical function of particular literary devices *vis-à-vis* plot, character, and narration, and both seek to expose the conventionality of literary discourse. Unlike the formalists, however, Lugowski is concerned to develop an understanding of textual meaning, which places him firmly in the hermeneutic camp. Yet at the same time he rejects the method of empathic projection (or *Einfühlung*) which was adopted by the foremost

hermeneuticists of his day (such as Dilthey). For Lugowski, *Einführung* reproduces the worst errors of 'naïve reading', and in a literal sense is impossible anyway. Echoing Paul Ricoeur, Lugowski argues that the interpreter must maintain a degree of alienating distance (*Verfremdung*) in order to subject the work to the 'cool, clear light of theoretical reflection'. Arguably, however, the thinker with whom Lugowski has the most affinities is the Soviet cultural and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (apart from the latter's distinctive metalinguistic paradigm). Some of the parallels are indeed uncanny: both privilege the prose novel as best able to portray the open-ended and dynamic nature of human history and the self; both attribute enormous importance to the dissolution of mythological thought and the impetus given by the proliferation of world-views and languages to the birth of

a critical consciousness; and they develop strikingly similar analyses of time-space, generic structure, narrative, and modes of artistic visualisation within the novel form.

Such comparisons may, however, obscure an appreciation of Lugowski's achievements and innovations. *Form, Individuality and the Novel* is a remarkably prescient and provocative study (with the added attraction that it is written in a surprisingly lucid and straightforward manner), and is therefore of considerable interest. It deserves the widest possible readership not just in the sphere of literary theory but in the humanities and social sciences more generally. One genuinely hopes that its many years of neglect will now be over, and that the translation and re-publication of Lugowski's other works will be forthcoming.

Mike Gardiner

CONSERVATISM ANALYSED

Ted Honderich, *Conservatism*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1990. 255 pp., £16.99 hb, 0 241 129990.

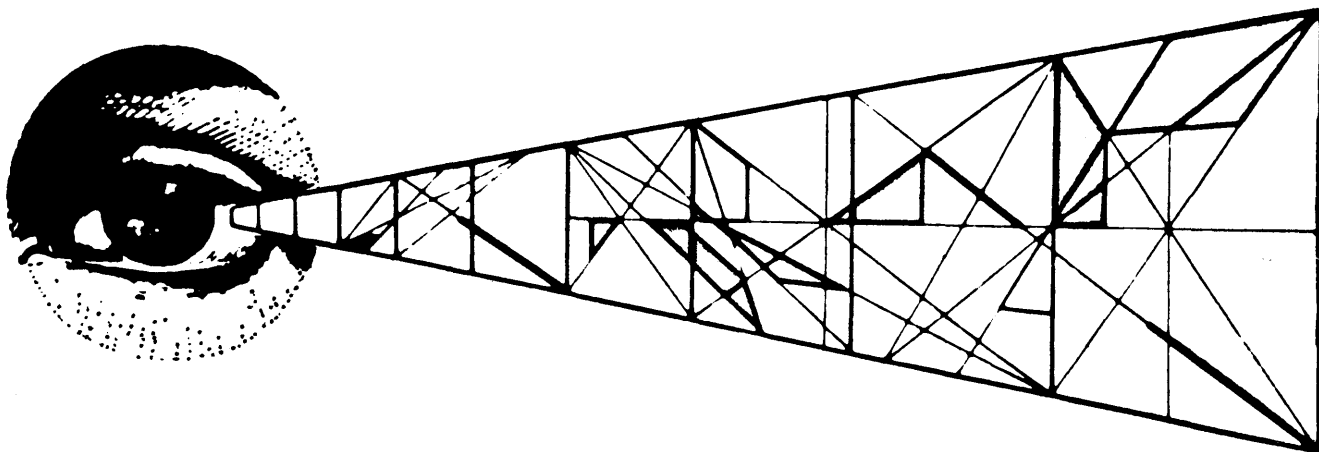
Questions abound about Conservatism. What is distinctive about it? What are its guiding principles? What gives it its appeal? What justifies it? Conservatives themselves have had a fair amount to say on the subject (indeed, more than is sometimes supposed), but readers of this journal might want more than a pinch of salt to go with those. Any socialist philosopher attempting the task, therefore, is to be commended.

Ted Honderich is a redoubtable analytic philosopher, and somewhere to the left in politics. The main aim of his book is to identify what is the rationale, or guiding principle, of Conservatism. He defines 'Conservatism' initially as that 'tradition of belief, feeling, policy, legislation and action exemplified by the Conservative Party in Britain and a main part of the Republican Party in the United States'. Might there be a problem with that? A problem, that is, about whether it is correct to talk of a singular tradition (even allowing that it 'has evolved and contains diversity', p. 2)? It has certainly been thought that the Thatcher governments have rather broken with tradition. And traditional British Conservatives might feel that while American Republicanism has some commendable features it stands at a distance from some of the things that they esteem. Nevertheless, in attempting to get a clear picture of what Conservatism is, Honderich does consider, in turn, a number of ideas which seem

readily identifiable with it, in the standard sense. The first of these is a well known opposition to change. Well known though it might be, however, it fails to stand up, since opposition to *all* change, as change, would be absurd, and Conservatives are in favour of some changes. These they call 'reforms', but, try as they might, they fail to supply any clear and unarguable criteria for distinguishing between 'change' (bad) and 'reform' (good). Likewise, a putative disdain for theory/intellectualising/using your brains etc., if not exactly shown to be self-refuting, is belied by the endeavours of Oakeshott, Scruton *et al.*

Conservative conceptions of Human Nature fare no better, according to Honderich. The most well known of these, and most anathematised by humanist and progressive thinkers, is the notion that our natures are 'low' or fallen – that we are entirely selfish, envious and egoistic. This Honderich takes to be unbelievable, even by its proponents, if it is understood as a claim that we are incapable of looking to the well-being of others. If instead, the claim is that human beings fall short of moral perfection, and are capable of selfishness etc., then it is not only Conservatives who think so. Or if, as seems more likely, Conservatives tend to take a more sceptical view of our natures, then they may be prudent to do so, but it hardly stands as a fundamental characterisation of Conservatism that they do.

This sceptical view of human nature is, however, given more concrete expression in the view that economic well-being requires cash incentives and an absence of 'social compulsion'. In



considering arguments such as this Honderich goes beyond the task of merely attempting to characterise Conservatism, and subjects its arguments to some hard analysis and evaluation. Why, he asks, should Conservatives be sanguine about the use of compulsion to secure obedience to the law, while forswearing it in the pursuit of altruistic goals? Why, in addition, do they reject incentives based on the satisfaction of work and of helping others? Conservatives, he argues, consistently fail to supply a principle governing their opposition to these things.

One reply which Conservatives will no doubt make to that, and a notable omission in Honderich's arguments about incentives, is the recent apparent lack of success in practice of social compulsion and alternative forms of incentives in achieving economic prosperity in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. There are a variety of replies that socialists can make to this (other, that is, than the tired old refrain that it was 'nothing to do with us'), and the claim ought to have been considered. Nevertheless, a number of effective criticisms of the Conservative attitude to incentives are developed, including, notably, their failure to give any clear account of what it is they have in mind when referring to 'economic well-being'.

Honderich goes on to consider, *inter alia*, freedom, democracy, the organic theory of society, deserts, and opposition to equality as contenders for Conservatism's elusive rationale. All, for various reasons, are found wanting, and in the course of considering them some incisive arguments are developed against an array of Conservative positions. He squarely refuses to be stared down by the sorts of appeals to intuition on which Conservatives often rely. Nozick, for instance, is reminded that to say that when society prevents people from spending their money however they please it is an infringement of their freedom, is not, by any means, to say that society is wrong to do so.

Conservatives are rightly identified as having an extremely narrow conception of freedom, characterised by an enthusiasm for property and market freedoms, and a disdain for social and civil freedoms, e.g. respectively, freedom to work and freedom of information. Conservatives are apt not to regard freedoms which they do not support as being freedoms, and thus Keith Joseph would have it that freedom to work cannot mean attempting to secure 'a state of affairs where everyone, with some obvious exceptions, is in fact able to act on a desire, the desire to have a job', but is, rather, just an absence of coercion. Honderich argues that if, rather tediously, Conservatives wish to insist upon this, socialists can say instead that securing genuine equality would require 'freedom to work' together with whatever else is needed in order for people to get jobs.

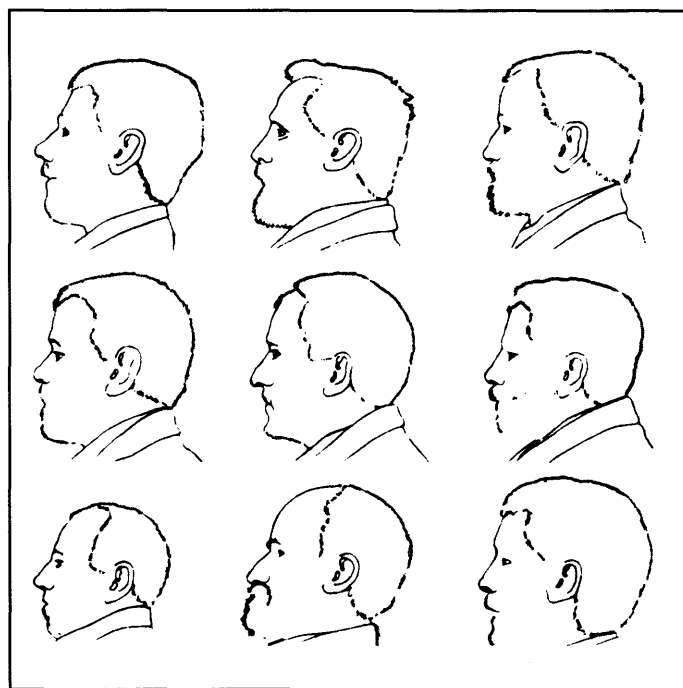
Eschewing arguments about whose conception of freedom is right might, at one level, signify a clear-headed refusal to become bogged down in hair-splitting, but may in fact yield ground to the right. In resisting the wider usage of 'freedom' Joseph is not merely indulging in semantic pedantry or 'rhetorical satisfactions' (p. 85) – in intent his argument is ideological. To interfere with a freedom in order to secure another freedom will, to many, seem rather more acceptable than interfering with a freedom (e.g. freedom to dispose of one's property as one sees fit) in order to secure a social good which is not a freedom. 'Freedom', in British political life, is a word that refers to something of overriding value. You cannot argue with Freedom, and the appeal to it will always carry the day within the real world of ideology. In addition to which, people *should* want freedom. There are good reasons for wanting it. It is a desirable thing to have. And the narrow conception fails to do justice to it. For these reasons arguments for the wider conception of freedom are more than just hair-splitting.

Honderich concludes that, although there is quite a list of

items which distinguish Conservatism, including authoritarianism, endorsement of property freedom, limited equality before the law, and 'want of enthusiasm' for social and civil freedoms, none of these items supplies a governing principle or rationale. An exhaustive search of Conservative thought, therefore, reveals nothing about what governs it. Perhaps something has been missed?

Although neither would serve to supply the elusive rationale for Conservatism, there are at least two notable omissions from Honderich's list of distinguishing features. The first is the Family, or, rather, a much trumpeted commitment to a certain sort of family, with a father, a mother and children (with a preference, perhaps, for two or more of the latter).

What Honderich might have had to say of this, judging from what he does have to say of other things, is that the family, which is to say *the* family, is not a good in itself and, therefore, stands in need of justification according to whether it accords with or realises some principle or other, e.g. that human nature is such that people need to live in a family, or that the stability of society requires that people should do so. That he fails to consider this



might lead one to suspect a certain lack of reflectiveness about his own conservative (note the small 'c') commitments.

The second omission is the sort of parochial nationalism of which Powell is such a forthright exponent. It is the view that the Nation is a thing of high value, perhaps even of supreme value, and that the National Interest should be the ultimate end of politics. This, because membership of the nation is crucial to the well being of its citizens and fundamental to personal identity. In addition the Nation is the stuff of *realpolitik*: the sort of thing to which trustworthy low motives can be expected to attend. In consequence, Foreign and defence policy should be directed to the National Interest, rather than to the vain pursuit of Internationalistic ethical abstractions, and sovereignty should be carefully guarded.

If it had been subjected to Honderich's criticisms, this notion would perhaps have been found to amount to nothing very much. Nevertheless, the omission is notable. The longest-serving prime minister of this century, if we are to take these matters at face value, was brought down for not remaining true to it. This raises

a significant problem about any analysis of what is called 'Conservatism'. For any practising Conservative politician, Conservatism must be an ideology before it is a philosophy. As such it will not only inform his or her political practice, but in turn be conditioned by the pace and the demands of that practice. Thus Conservatism, and certainly British Conservatism, is apt to change in response to changes in what is required of it.

Historically Conservatives could not for long have sustained themselves with the doctrine as it was given to them in its purest Burkean form, since, as we know, the society which Burke would have preserved had ceased to be before he spoke in its defence. Likewise the parochial nationalism of Thatcher and Powell, if it continues to persist as a feature of Conservatism, will do so in a modified form – mainstream Conservatives having concluded that a European future is a brighter prospect than a resolutely British one. It is unlikely, however, that this sort of nationalism should disappear altogether, since, in spite of a good deal of recent loose talk to the contrary, the Nation state has a lot of life left in it.

If it were to disappear, however, it would make sense to ask whether what was left could properly be described as 'Conservatism' – which raises a further problem about identifying Conservatism in the way that Honderich does. The Conservative Party is a modern historical phenomenon. Conservatism, as an ideology, has emerged and flourished with the modern nation state (Honderich takes Burke as his starting point). There are elements of it which are much older than that, just as there are elements of it which are part of Liberalism and Social Democracy as well. Conservatism, as we have known it, is an amalgam of several features. Those features include, as Honderich suggests, a commitment to certain property rights and a hostility to equality. But a hostility to equality was a feature of the politics of the ancient world. Are we to conclude that there is an identifiably ancient-world Conservatism? I doubt that it would illuminate our modern political enquiries to think so. Attitudes to equality and the like would be a feature of any class-divided society at any time. What is distinctive of Conservatism is what it does with those attitudes – what shape they are given by amalgamation with Conservatism's other elements.

Those other elements include a commitment, as I have indicated, to the Nation and several of the social institutions which help to make that what it is. They also include a commitment to Conservative Philosophy and to an identifiably British pragmatism (which could be called 'pragmaticism' to avoid any misassociation with Pragmatism in philosophy). In Chapter 2 Honderich considers that pragmatism, which he calls empiricism, cannot meaningfully be taken as a distinguishing feature of Conservatism. If it means 'paying attention to the facts' then it is scarcely distinctive of Conservatism. Nor will it do to say that it means the attitude that social institutions should not be tampered with, willy nilly, because they have stood the test of time, since history has not been a laboratory or an inquiry, but a struggle.

While there is certainly much truth in that, hamstringing a metaphor or two falls somewhere short of a careful analysis of the idea which they seek to express. The idea is that caution should be adopted towards large-scale social reform, and some respect should be shown towards institutions which have persisted as important constituents of the social fabric. Many bad arguments have been advanced in support of the idea, involving claims about human intellectual imperfection and the like; and Honderich sees off no small number of those. It has, in addition, been an infamous resort of greedy reactionaries. But for all that it expresses something intelligible: that if a social institution has stood the test of time then it must function; that it may, as an established institution, carry more weight in maintaining social

cohesion than is apparent on the surface; and that consideration should be given to that when contemplating its reform.

One does not have to be a Conservative to take that idea seriously. As a feature of British pragmatism, it is well entrenched within the Labour Party – particularly its right wing. But the idea is, for all that, a Conservative one and most readily embraced by people who are Conservatives. It is not a hard principle which will determine in advance exactly how its adherents should respond to any particular proposed change, but is more of an habitual attitude towards change. Honderich suggests that caution about change on the part of Conservatives is scarcely credible, given some of the large-scale changes which they have engineered. That he should say so, however, is indicative of his misidentification of the New Right and the British and US governments of the '80s as typically Conservative. They contained numbers of Conservatives and a certain amount of Conservatism, but their bent was more properly identified as Liberal.

Of course, given that Conservatives and right-wing Liberals have participated in Conservative governments and been members of the Conservative Party, the notion that they are all part of what the person on the street would be happy enough to call Conservatism should, perhaps, be not too lightly put aside. It is true that these two tendencies, finding themselves in the same party, and even the same governments (in Thatcher's case, seemingly, they even inhabit the same mind), must have an endurable *modus vivendi* (and an examination of that is an important task of political analysis). But for all that they are different. They think differently. They have different objectives. They are different ideologies.

Honderich, if I understand him, takes these ideologies to be different tendencies within the larger entity that is Conservatism, and it is this that is the subject of its book. But say that, instead of a tradition in which two ideologies lived within one party, there had been two parties which had traditionally been in alliance: would it be reasonable to expect an overall rationale governing the alliance? Or would we instead expect only a coincidence of interests, with different principles battling for position? If we say, as I think we should, that it is the latter, then, given that modern political parties are themselves alliances (the Conservative Party especially), it may well hinder understanding and evaluation to seek a governing principle.

Trying to find a unified rationale or principle underlying what are in fact two ideologies, it is hardly surprising that Honderich should be unsuccessful. But a unified rationale is, in any event, the wrong means to understanding an ideology. To understand that one needs to ask how it works. How, that is, it articulates the real and perceived interests of its supporters. How it guides and expresses the policies and decisions of Conservative politicians. And how differently it does those things from other ideologies.

Having failed to identify a rationale for Conservatism from among the several likely contenders, Honderich concludes that it must be plain selfishness, not because Conservatives are selfish: 'It is that they are nothing else.' Which is just what we all thought anyway – the rotters! However, while it may be that selfishness (or 'material interest' if you prefer) is what motivates them, to conclude that this is the only rationale of their politics will not do. Ideologies do not work like that. There are many people who are Conservatives, and selfish, but a good many other things besides. Conservatives – a few of them – do good deeds and seek to improve the lives of their fellow human beings. They do this without in any way feeling that they have been untrue to Conservatism. We may certainly feel that they are mistaken in that, and we should say so. But we need also to know why they believe what they believe. What seems plausible about it to them? How is it that they do not, at least in some cases, recognise what

Honderich takes to be as clear as day – that the ‘Conservative’ governments of the ’80s have not made everyone better off? How does Conservatism function as a credo by which to live and think? Why, if it really is all down to selfishness, do working-class people continue to vote for it? To defeat Conservatism polemically, if indeed you do, is not, by a long chalk, to understand it or explain it.

Honderich might have realised this given that the features which he takes to be distinctive of Conservatism seem to be poorly supplied with cohesion by taking selfishness (or very bad argument) as their underlying rationale, and some of them seem to have a rather tenuous connection with it, e.g. ‘the assumption of *Free Will*’.

Conservatives are, indeed, motivated by selfishness, as are the misidentified Liberals against whom Honderich also inveighs; but neither of them are just selfish and nothing more, and their respective ‘selfishnesses’ might well have their own distinctive Liberal and Conservative features reflecting their differing relationships with the other elements of the respective ideologies.

To function as an ideology Conservatism must articulate the aspirations, values and beliefs of very disparate forces, and the single unified rationale which Honderich seeks would prevent it from doing so. One might reasonably demand of any individual Conservative thinker that their commitment to Conservatism be governed by a principle, but it will be fruitless to approach social or collective thought in that way.

Conservatism as an ideology, therefore, should be seen as a collection of positions and attitudes, not governed by an overall rationale or principle, but deriving some cohesiveness from certain key elements in the collection, including an ongoing attitude towards equality, change, methods of political decision making, the Family and, perhaps, the Nation. Approaching Conservatism in this way has the added advantage of enabling clarification of different strands within it – what distinguishes

them from each other and what unites them. That Honderich does not adopt this approach may account for the lack of any detailed consideration in his book of differences between right wing and ‘moderate’ Conservatism. (Though if moderate Conservatives such as Ian Gilmour consider themselves misrepresented by Honderich (see *London Review of Books*, 12 July 1990), they might count themselves fortunate not to have been as lightly dismissed as are Marx and Hegel.)

Had he aimed for an unabashedly polemical attack on the philosophy behind Thatcherism, rather than an analysis of Conservatism, Honderich might have hit his target more tellingly; since it did derive intellectual sustenance from both the right wing Liberals and some of the Conservatives whom he attacks. And the book does contain some excellent blasts of invective against the Thatcher governments (although his arguments are not well served by his contrasting of the Thatcherite ’80s with the ‘decent’ England of 1959).

Ultimately, however, the book lacks a distinct direction, just because it lacks a distinct subject (or, in so far as a subject is distinguished, it corresponds to nothing in political reality). Conservatism, as a phenomenon in the political life of this country, is not properly identified. The subject ought really to have been right wing anti-egalitarianism. (And the adequacy of terms like ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ for contemporary political analysis does need to be reviewed, given that they are now applied across the political spectrum.) Read with that in mind it contains much that is substantial and useful. Given that a good part of the anti-egalitarian case is Conservative, it *can* be read with profit by the student of Conservatism, but its larger contribution will be to the philosophical examination of the case for equality. We must wait a while yet for a definitive socialist philosophical examination of Conservatism.

Kevin Magill

THE UNINVITED GUEST

Julia Kristeva, *Language, the Unknown: an Initiation into Linguistics*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. 366 pp., £25 hb, 0 7450 0629 9.

Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987. 548 pp., £11.95 pb, 0 674 51028 3.

Julie Tetel Andresen, *Linguistics in America 1784-1924, a Critical History*, London, Routledge, 1990. 308 pp., £35 hb, 0 415 02228 2.

Perhaps his tone was a bit too sharp and sarcastic, but surely Althusser had a good point, back in 1967, about the ‘myth’ of interdisciplinarity and the current mania for ‘round table discussions’ of theoretical issues. (The remarks occur in lectures only recently translated into English: see *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, reviewed by Ted Benton elsewhere in this issue.) ‘All the neighbours are invited,’ Althusser said, ‘no one is forgotten – one never knows.’ The result was predictable: proceedings would be dominated by ‘a character no one has invited,’ but who turns up anyway. This self-invited guest is the ‘common theoretical ideology’ of the specialists. Its secret is contained, according to Althusser, in the following formula: ‘when one does not know what the world does not

know, it suffices to assemble all the ignorant: science will emerge from an assembly of the ignorant.’

What Althusser had particularly in mind were the ‘literary disciplines’, as he called them, which were playing with vague analogies between different fields of knowledge and wishfully proclaiming themselves to be *sciences* or *human sciences*. But ‘true sciences never need to let the world know that they have found the key to becoming sciences,’ as Althusser sternly recalled. ‘The most aberrant contemporary example’, of course, was structuralism, as it attempted an ‘external’ application of the methods of linguistics to every other domain. As far back as 1945, Lévi-Strauss had been speculating that ‘structural linguistics will certainly play the same innovating role with respect to the social sciences that nuclear physics, for example, has played for the physical sciences’. Envisaging a new science that would be formed out of ‘a close cooperation between anthropologists and linguists’, Lévi-Strauss exactly anticipated Althusser’s metaphor, though with a positive intent: there would be a new anthropology, which ‘incorporates all the different approaches which can be used and that will provide a clue to the way our uninvited guest, the human mind, works’.

This uninvited ideological guest was calling all the shots in certain parts of Paris in the 1960s. Neo-structuralists (as they might be called today) were engaged in blending Freud, Marx, Mao and Saussure into a *nouveau mélange* which they hoped

would function as a 'science' dealing with an elusive theme called 'language'. Such interdisciplinarity was not only dreadfully difficult, but also eye-catchingly popular. In fact one typical document of this movement appeared in a series of rexine-covered trade books called 'Le Point de la Question', each convening a kind of ideal round table of some of the world's greatest brains and condensing it into a pocket format, complete with pictures of the facts behind, so to speak, the brains. The book was called *Le langage, cet inconnu*, and it appeared in 1969, over the name of an otherwise unknown author called Julia Joyaux.

Joyaux's purpose was to prove that structuralism was not interdisciplinary enough, and to persuade her readers that, even as she wrote, a 'new science' of 'semiotics' was giving birth to an exciting new concept of language which would exceed the comprehension of structural linguistics. 'The general science of signs and signifying systems,' according to Joyaux, 'impregnates all the human sciences: anthropology, psychoanalysis, the theory of art, etc.' It would integrate the latest *philosophy*, whose categories were just now becoming 'linguistic or logical'; *psychoanalysis*, which had recently 'found in language the real objects of its investigation'; *literature*, which was on the point of turning itself into an 'implicit research into the rules of literary language'; and *modern art*, which was 'pulverising the descriptive opacity of the previous type of painting and exposing its components and laws'.

Joyaux reached her conclusion – as Althusser might have anticipated – without recourse to any specific theoretical arguments. In its place she presented a panoramic survey which was intended to cover the entire history of human thought about language. It included 'primitive societies', ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, the Phoenicians, and the Hebrews, all of whom displayed, according to Joyaux, a commendable materialism. Then there was Plato and 'logical Greece', whose idealism pervaded linguistic thought from Rome and the Arab world, through medieval Europe, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism right up to structural linguistics and transformational grammar. This entire history, according to Joyaux, had finally – 'in the last few years' – begun to unravel. A new style of thought – materialistic and anti-metaphysical – was 'already beginning'. Chomskyan linguistics was the culmination of the old idealistic style of thought, and Chomsky's unabashed allegiance to Descartes had been an implicit acknowledgement of its obsolescence: 'Cartesian linguistics is a contradiction in terms,' said Joyaux; what, she demanded, could Chomsky's theories 'mean today after Marx and Freud'?

Joyaux's high-altitude historicist vistas may strike readers as sublime. But it is hard to see how they could have been expected to cut any theoretical ice. Would anyone have imagined that a journalistic review of up-and-coming trends could resolve debates in linguistic theory? And would anyone have failed to see a contradiction looming in Joyaux's own definition of semiotics, far more threatening than the one she claimed to have found in transformational grammar? For on the one hand she was insisting that semiotics was a Freudian discipline – a universal science of 'what was common to the signifying system of the dream and the unconscious'. It was 'at once ultralinguistic and supralinguistic, or *translinguistic*,' and had 'a universality that "traverses" constituted national languages, for it is definitely a question of a *function of language* belonging to all languages'. The object of semiotics was constituted by 'the universal laws (common to all languages) of the unconscious'. But, on the other hand, she claimed that it was becoming 'more and more' evident that there

was no such thing as language, only a plurality of languages; all that could be said about them was that they are different, so that *language* was 'a word that from now on must be written in the plural'. A universal science, then, but without any uniform subject matter.

La langage, cet inconnu was the kind of book – surprisingly common – that combines popularisation with intimidation. It bludgeoned its readers into accepting conclusions for which it offered no arguments at all, by putting on show an imperious view of 'the human mind' which was apparently enjoying the hospitality of various different disciplines at the time. Although not much noticed when it came out, this piece of interdisciplinary fug-stirring has a certain fascination as an ideological specimen. But unfortunately for all of us, and most particularly for its author, that is not why we are being invited to commemorate it



today. For when it was reissued in French in 1981 (this time without the photographs), it appeared as the work of a major celebrity. Julia Joyaux, it appeared, was none other than Julia Kristeva. And now her book has been conscientiously translated into English, without any explanation of its history but with an absurd blurb saying that 'Kristeva fans, students of linguistics, and anyone with an interest in the roots of epistemology will want to read *Language: The Unknown*. It would have been kinder to forget it.

The story makes you think, though, about linguistics. Grammars, dictionaries, and cognitive psychologies are all very interesting, no doubt, but it is remarkable how they keep having extravagant epistemological hopes pinned upon them, and by some of the most interesting thinkers in the world. Roman Jakobson is a case in point. He was born in Moscow in 1896, and was part of the Russian avant-garde; he studied and taught in Czechoslovakia until forced out by the Nazi invasion of 1939, and then worked in America until his death in 1982. His theory of 'distinctive features' produced a great simplification in the theory of linguistic sound-patterns, but his interests ranged far wider. In particular, he worked for the application of concepts from linguistic theory to music and film, and especially to literature, or to what he called 'the poetic function of language', and here his distinction between the combinatory or metonymic aspect of language, and the selective or metaphorical aspect has proved very productive.

But, as the recent paperback collection of his essays shows,

Jakobson's achievement lies as much in his knowledge of detail as in his general theories: for example his argument that Pushkin is a poet of grammar rather than of tropism, or his marvellous analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet *'Th'expence of Spirit'*. The collection is also a moving record of a battered life. The essays were originally written in Russian, Czech, French, German or English, between 1919 and 1975, and the earlier ones are mostly about contemporary art. Jakobson was convinced that poetry – which can occur, he says, in streetcar conversations as well as in slim volumes – must be 'autonomous' if it is to be politically responsible. The personal poignancy of this conviction is revealed in the superb essay 'On a generation that squandered its poets', which was written in Russian in 1931. It is about Jakobson's close friend and associate Vladimir Mayakovsky, the revolutionary poet who had taken his own life in 1930. Jakobson defines his theme as 'not the rhythm but the death of the poet'. The recent deaths of Mayakovsky and of several other Russian poets of about the same age constituted a loss for a whole generation: for all those who had entered into the Russian revolution 'still not hardened, still capable of adapting to experience and change'. Jakobson explains that Mayakovsky's poetry was about irrational love and political hope, and that its constant topic was the future; and he remembers how, in Moscow in 1920, Mayakovsky had been obsessed with the idea of sending Einstein a telegram 'from the art of the future to the science of the future'. But they had been in their early twenties at the time, and ten years had passed since then. The poet was dead; and so, it seemed to Jakobson, was poetry and the future. 'Poeticity,' as he said in a lecture in 1933, 'is present when the word is felt as a word'; it leads to a 'direct awareness' not only of 'the identity between sign and object' but also of 'the inadequacy of that identity'.

Poetry exists to keep that antinomy alive, to prevent language from becoming 'automatized'; without it, he said, 'activity comes to a halt, and the awareness of reality dies out.'

The connections between linguistics and political history, so vividly displayed in Jakobson's essays, are brought into a sharp focus in Julie Tetel Andresen's fascinating *Linguistics in America*. Andresen shows in detail how the preoccupations of American linguistics over two hundred years were decisively shaped by local interests and perspectives. Academic linguistic theory in nineteenth-century Europe was built around the hypothesis of an original common 'Indo-European' source-language. The procedures and institutions of the German university system, which were to be copied all over America, were centred on Indo-European philology. But this all posed a problem for American linguists, who had at their disposal a range of living 'Indian' languages which did not fit into the European scheme at all: in the event, Indian studies in American universities was to mean Sanskrit rather than Cherokee. Similar difficulties surrounded the anguished question of whether American English should conform to the Johnsonian norms of British English, or whether it could incorporate local inventions like Jefferson's controversial coinages of 'lengthy' and 'belittle'. The history of American nationality, it turns out, can be read in the development of American linguistics. Andresen, unlike Kristeva, does not see herself as ushering in a new era; nor does she claim, as Kristeva does, to have comprehended 'the adventure of man in his encounter with meaning and societies', or to have traced this development 'in many different civilizations'. Her precise and informative work has not been taken over by uninvited guests.

Jonathan Rée

FEMINISM – A USER'S GUIDE

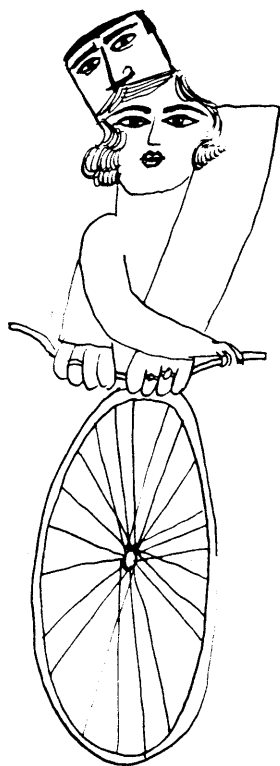
Nicole Ward Jouve, *White Woman Speaks with Forked Tongue: Criticism as Autobiography*, London, Routledge, 1991. xi + 201 pp., £9.99, 0 415 04953 9.

Oh, of course, theoretically, I knew the answers. All the post-Joyce-Proust-Kafka, post-existentialism, post-nouveau roman, post-Tel Quel, post-Saussure, post-Freud, post-Marx, post-Barthes, post-etc., etc., arguments: 'We know now that language cannot pretend to "imitate" reality.' 'Language as production.' 'Language that pretends to be mimetic is ideological language.' But somehow that sort of talk got on my nerves. It did not click, where it matters.

To anyone with the slightest predilection for the theoretical, the awareness of this idiot voice, with its nagging 'what is all this highflying stuff, anyway?' questionings, is worrying, and opens up a choice: either suppressing and ignoring its disparaging mutterings, or granting it a respectful audience, using it to prompt an exploration of the relation between two very different kinds of language; the personal and the everyday and the academic and theoretical. In *White Woman Speaks with Forked Tongue* this is precisely what Nicole Ward Jouve sets out to do, bringing into confrontation what she calls a writing of the 'here and now' with the critical voice espoused by the theoretician. This is a risky project, and the reader might be forgiven for fearing, from her unashamed intention to write 'out of what I am, what life has made me' a semi-opaque, personalised prose whose relevance to the problems of representing the diversity of the women's movement would be difficult to see.

Ward Jouve does not fall into this trap, and the result is a book which is both intellectually and politically challenging, and which is possessed of a quality rare in a book on the academic market these days – charm. Much of this is due to nothing less than the impression one has, in the course of reading the book, of having met a 'real' person, with all the pleasure and challenges to one's own selfhood involved. Rather like the 'old days' before the heavyweight theory when we all read novels in a straightforward, credulous way, with the happy feeling that the characters there in were in fact friends whose lives were to be shared and identified with.

Or perhaps not. For this effect, achieved by the apparently effortless altercation in the book between the two registers of the authoritative critical voice and the personal, confessional one, is due to no whim on the part of its author. Rather, it is the concrete expression of the theoretical underside of the book, in the form of an insistence on two things: firstly on the necessity of facing up to the disparity between a traditional academic discourse and the concrete issues which it treats, and secondly on the desirability of linking writing with the personal biography of its author. Hence the book's sub-title, 'criticism as autobiography': Ward Jouve advocating the interpretation, and, if necessary, the taking to task of critical writing in the light of its author's personal and cultural background. This, on the face of it, she is well aware, runs counter to recent theoretical injunctions against such naive assumptions of subjectivity and the making of fallacious links between the teller and the tale; but the value and effectiveness of such an approach, if taken with care, is amply demonstrated at the beginning of the book by the quotation of two kinds of writing



apparently at opposite poles from each other. The first, a commentary on Nozick, is attributed, in spite of its classically 'objective' critical stance, to the author's need to justify his own political convictions, whereas the second, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, is shown to be fiction functioning as criticism, or political critique. What Ward Jouve draws out of this is the need for a greater self-awareness – or a greater critical suspicion, depending on which language you use – towards the motivations informing both the writer's writing and the reader's interpretation.

In advocating the re-situation of writing in its context, Ward Jouve takes a leaf out of her own book with very engaging results. Thus the first chapter opens in an overtly autobiographical way, giving an account of her own personal background and circumstances, which, as her name suggests, are those of someone straddling two cultures, two countries

– Britain and France. This prompts some reflections on the nature and difficulties of translation which are interesting in themselves; out of this lived experience, however, she draws a tentative generalisation that there are indeed some things which don't translate, that split identity is a universal condition, and that 'white woman always speaks with bilingual tongue'.

Contrary to what might be expected from this, what follows is not a meditation which focuses directly on the issue of Western feminism's hypocrisy in its assumed universalization and hence (mis)representation of women of other cultures. Instead, the 'politics' of this is understood in both a wider and a more local sense and, consequently, the priority, it is implied, is with putting one's own house in order: '*Charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même.*' What this involves is re-locating feminist thinking in the particular context out of which it arose; Ward Jouve's first step in this direction is to point out the misunderstandings that arose in the reception and interpretation of French feminism by the Anglo-American community. While claiming that such distortions are not only inevitable but productive and enriching, she takes the opportunity to give an alternative account – made possible by her insider's 'French' eye – of what those movements were about. In the notable case of the French women's group 'Psychanalyse et Politique', she sees a parallel between the silencing of the views of Sonia Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper's wife, and the misrepresentation of the group by the Anglo-American community. In both cases, she points to a phenomenon of 'hostile witnesses', or, even more tellingly, 'in-law'. This hostility towards the feminist group manifested itself in the form of criticisms levelled at its absence of coherence and resulting political ineffectiveness. In pointing out that at the heart of such a movement was the desire to move away from the attempt to produce an account of the female condition which would in any way claim to be universal, Ward Jouve manages to turn the argument on its head and neutralise the criticisms directed at the internal contradictions within the women's movement. She represents the work of the group as precisely the attempt to find a

non-universal means of representation, while at the same time rooting it in terms of the particular concrete circumstances of its time. Along with this goes a salutary suspiciousness of the waxing and waning of intellectual fashions: do fewer women suffer from economic and political under-privileging when feminist theory is not in vogue?

The same rejection of universality motivates a long chapter on Doris Lessing, in which the latter is taken to task for her unacknowledged 'trans-individual' ideas and contempt of specificity. This reading is achieved in an unusual way, placing extracts from different novels in such a way that the author's personal biography and 'white settler' position becomes evident as determining the nature of her fiction. The book's final chapter moves towards a kind of writing which puts into play the claims made in a theoretical form, interweaving between a commentary on Virginia Woolf and autobiographical prose drawn from her own 'her and now'. A hybrid text? Perhaps, but even so, or maybe because of its diverse form, it makes no small contribution towards setting questions of the rights and representations of women back into the historically and politically specific contexts from which they were born.

Alex Klaushofer

CRITIQUE OF PURE FREEDOM

Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. xii + 304 pp., £30 hb, £10.95 pb, 0 521 38270 X hb, 0 521 38708 6 pb.

Perhaps the most difficult and confusing notion of Kant's critical philosophy is his theory of freedom. Allison provides an account and defence of this perplexing notion in *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. In this book Allison goes further than many insofar as he attempts to defend the most controversial aspects of Kant's account, e.g. the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal 'worlds', a strongly incompatibilist (transcendental) account of freedom and the fact of reason. Indeed, in this task he concedes very little to Kant's critics. However, Allison's defence presupposes the truth of transcendental idealism and, in particular, his own account of it in his earlier book, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. This approach has the virtue of bringing to light and emphasising the systematic nature of Kant's philosophy against those who seek to 'rescue' fragments and dump the rest as metaphysical 'excess baggage'. However, it has the disadvantage of making his defence rather internal at key points. Nevertheless, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* is, for the most part, both impressive and informative. Allison sifts through a large number of secondary materials, laying out their arguments concisely and clearly and responding with equal precision. Furthermore, by focussing upon the most important aspect of Kant's ethical philosophy he helps to make the overall theory more coherent and convincing.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, Allison deals with Kant's account of freedom and agency in the first *Critique*. It is here that he provides a convincing way of understanding Kant's distinction between man's empirical and intelligible character. This understanding makes sense of how we can apply two apparently opposed descriptions to one agent. The empirical account gives an *explanation* of an action, in terms of upbringing, character traits, etc. The intelligible character gives an account of

how *imputation* can be understood. Allison goes on to argue that these two descriptions of the one action can be understood non-exclusively if one rejects an ontological, two-world understanding of transcendental idealism.

This two-fold account of rational agency provides the basis of what Allison calls the 'Incorporation Thesis' – that is, that acts are not causally determined, but spontaneous. On this account actions are not conceived of as completely uncaused, i.e. random. Rather, reason is conceived of as having causality insofar as it provides the guiding rule for action which has to be *incorporated* into a maxim by a free act. It is this non-compatibilist account of freedom which Allison sees as the profound insight of Kant's theory of freedom. However, although he argues that Kant's theory of rational agency was already an incompatibilist account by 1781, he suggests that Kant's account of morality only required 'practical' (negative) freedom at this time. This limited requirement was all that was needed, according to Allison, because Kant had not developed his account of autonomy and thus the corresponding requirement of 'transcendental' (positive) freedom. Consequently, Allison describes Kant's moral theory circa 1781 as 'semi-critical'.

In the second part Allison deals with Kant's 'moral psychology' from the *Groundwork* on. He begins by giving an account of rational agency as it is described in *Groundwork* II. The crucial point here is how one understands the notion of a 'maxim'. In chapter five Allison proposes a qualified acceptance of the interpretation offered by Bittner, Höffe and O'Neill, that maxims should be understood as *Lebensregeln* (Bittner/Höffe) or underlying (as opposed to specific) intentions (O'Neill). However, he denies that an understanding of maxims as 'general policies of action' is exhaustive and suggests that maxims can be understood in various degrees of generality from a specific intention description to *Lebensregeln* or underlying intentions. Although this supplementation of Bittner's, Höffe's and O'Neill's account seems to offer a richer understanding of maxims, it leaves certain crucial questions unanswered. If maxims can be understood in various degrees of generality, which 'sort' should be used in relation to the categorical imperative? If it is maxims understood as specific intention descriptions, then the criticism that the categorical imperative is empty cannot be answered. However, if one uses the conception of a maxim as a general policy of action (which Allison acknowledges answers the above criticism) then the account of maxims as specific intention descriptions seems to be both redundant and confusing. Indeed, Allison himself acknowledges that his account complicates the testing procedure of the categorical imperative, but, nevertheless, maintains that something like his account is required for an adequate understanding of Kant's theory.

Further confusion follows in Chapter Seven where Allison fails to take up aspects of his understanding of maxims developed in Chapter Five. Here he states that Kant's 'moral psychology' remains seriously incomplete in the *Groundwork* because the multitude of maxims upon which an agent acts cannot be explained as belonging to an 'enduring moral agent'. This lack, he

argues, is made good implicitly in the second *Critique*, and explicitly in the *Religion* with the notion of a *Gesinnung* (disposition). However, although the notion of a *Gesinnung* is a genuine development of Kant's moral theory, it is not clear that it was intended to address the problem which Allison claims. This problem is already accounted for with the understanding of a maxim as a general policy of action. Indeed, it is strange that Allison should think this problem remains after the *Groundwork*, since he accepted this more general understanding of a maxim in Chapter Five. This understanding of maxims is not mentioned in Chapter Seven, thus making the *distinction* between the general understanding of a maxim and a *Gesinnung* unclear. The failure to distinguish explicitly between these two notions has the further consequence that the relation between them in Kant's overall theory of agency is not made clear. Nevertheless, this chapter (as well as Chapters Eight and Nine) is a significant improvement on

many commentaries insofar as it acknowledges the importance of the *Religion* for an adequate understanding of Kant's moral theory.

Despite problems with certain details of Allison's account in the first two parts of the book, the main theses worked out here are basically convincing. However, the problems with the third part of Allison's book seem to be more fundamental.

In part three Allison argues that Kant's attempt to 'deduce' morality from freedom in the third book of the *Groundwork* fails, and urges the superiority of the account in the second *Critique*. The latter, it is argued, reverses the strategy in the *Groundwork* and attempts to establish the reality of freedom from the moral law by means of the fact of reason. Allison

understands the fact of reason as *consciousness* of standing under the moral law. This fact would show that pure reason is practical if it could show that the moral law is not empirically conditioned and that the consciousness of it is enough to create an interest. Allison argues that the former is achieved in the first two parts of the *Groundwork* and the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason of the second *Critique*. This analysis thus provides a partial deduction of the moral law by establishing its validity. The latter follows from the acceptance of the autonomous nature of the moral law. If, Allison argues, one is conscious of such an autonomous principle, one would have a reason to obey it and thus an interest in it. This interest, according to Allison, completes the deduction given in the first two parts of the *Groundwork* and the Analytic of the second *Critique* by testifying to the *reality* of the moral law. From this 'fact' Allison claims that Kant derives, first, transcendental freedom, second, an assurance of our intelligible existence and finally infers our negative freedom. In this way, it is claimed, Kant reverses his argument of *Groundwork* III.

However, despite the subtlety of Allison's account, his argument for the reality of our consciousness of freedom seems either to beg the question or to make the notion of consciousness redundant. He sums up his main point by saying that if the consciousness of freedom (which he argues follows from the fact of reason) 'were illusory, then our autonomy or positive freedom and with it the whole conception of ourselves as moral agents



would be also'. However, this merely states that our consciousness of freedom cannot be illusory because freedom would then be illusory. But this is precisely the point at issue, since, on Allison's account, this consciousness is supposed to establish such freedom. However, Allison goes on to qualify his argument in the next paragraph by conceding that the consciousness of freedom might be illusory, but that 'what is denied is merely the possibility of considering it as illusory from the practical point of view, that is, the point of view from which we regard ourselves as rational agents'. But what is necessary 'from a practical point of view' is simply the *presupposition* of transcendental freedom: the references to 'consciousness' here merely obscure the transcendental nature of Kant's claim. It is true that Kant himself occasionally refers to the fact of reason as both consciousness of the moral law and as consciousness of freedom. But these are only two out of six accounts of the fact of reason which can be found in the second *Critique* and, thus, cannot be taken as decisive.

Philip Stratton-Lake

MENTALITIES

Michel Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, translated by Eamon O'Flaherty, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990. 253 pp., £29.50 hb, 0 7456 0344 0.

History is one of the few growth areas in French publishing at the moment. The popularity of writing on history and historiography is in no small part a reflection of the success of the *Annales* school, recently surveyed with a sympathetic lucidity by Peter Burke in his *The French Historical Revolution* (Polity, 1990). *Annales*, the journal founded by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch in 1929, has given rise to a form of historiography in which events are played down in favour of an examination of long-term structures which may not change for centuries. *Annales* historiography is also characterised by the rigour of its quantitative methodology. The latter aspect can be startling; Vovelle speaks of a study based on the analysis of a corpus of 5,000 individual ex-votoes from Provence as though it were a routine matter. The results of *Annales* historiography can vary from mind-numbing studies of the movement of grain prices over the centuries to books with the almost novelistic fascination and excitement of Leroy Ladurie's best-selling *Montaillou*.

Vovelle is a distinguished member of the third generation of *Annales* historians and specialises in the study of 'mentalities' or collective attitudes to phenomena such as death. He remains close to the Marxist tradition, shares Althusser's views of the differential nature of, say, the time of economics and the time of literary production, but shuns the notion of 'ideology' because of the ever-present possibility of reductionism or crude determinism. Although he does not make the point explicitly, the foregrounding of mentality helps to avoid the problem of 'correctness'. Even in Althusser's formulation, ideology implies a dichotomous relationship with the non-ideological, however defined. Mentalities may be alien, but they are never 'incorrect'.

A mentality can be described as a collective mental experience which obeys its own rhythms and causations. For historians such as Ariès, of whom Vovelle is respectfully critical, a mentality is the product of a collective unconscious, not in any psycho-analytic sense, but in the sense that it is largely outside individual awareness. To that extent, Vovelle can claim a kinship with Marx and his views on the conditions in which men make their own

history. Changes in attitudes to death describe a long process of evolution in the *longue durée*, the *almost* motionless time of deeply-rooted mental and intellectual structures. Such developments can, in Vovelle's view, be studied by examining anonymous sources such as wills, the iconography and archaeology of religious artefacts, and by interpreting long series of demographic statistics. In a sense this is a history of silences – the silence surrounding the slow shift from a mental world in which death is a familiar, almost homely, figure to what Mitford calls the 'American way of death', to the mentality that sees death as the final obscenity.

The eighteen pieces collected in the present volume are mainly conference papers delivered over a period of some fifteen years and inevitably display a degree of repetition. They deal with such topics as popular religion in the rural south, death and intermediaries between popular and élite cultures, but in many cases are primarily of methodological interest. The longer studies of the 'prerevolutionary sensibility' and of the French Revolution itself examine the interplay between the long-term decay of a predominantly Christian mentality and the immediacy of the revolutionary explosion itself by looking at such indicators as the shifting image of the family, the evidence for the use of contraception and the iconography of the grandiosely staged festivals of the post-1789 period.

It is a pity that Polity chose to translate a collection of essays and papers rather than one of Vovelle's more substantial works, such as his 1973 *Piété baroque et déchristianisation*, which caused something of a sensation, not least because of the author's sophisticated analysis and interpretation of new fewer than 30,000 wills. It is an even greater pity that no one thought fit to compile a bibliography. Had one been compiled, the translator might have discovered the correct titles of the English versions of major works by Furet and Leroy Ladurie rather than translating the French titles literally. Even so, the appearance of Vovelle in English is greatly to be welcomed. As history teaching in British schools seems likely to be reduced to the inculcation of lists of dates and names, it is important to consider just why an important European school of historiography has turned away from 'events' and 'yesterday's headlines'.

David Macey

NEWS FROM NOWHERE

Michael Redhead, *Incompleteness, Nonlocality and Realism: A Prolegomenon to the Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987 (pb 1989). viii + 191 pp., £9.95 pb, 0 19 824238 7.

In 1935 Einstein played his last desperate card in an unavailing struggle against the rise of the new quantum mechanics. With the aid of two young collaborators, Podolsky and Rosen, he contrived a thought-experiment which seemed to show that quantum mechanics was 'incomplete'. Despite all its technical success, Einstein argued, quantum mechanics demonstrably fails to tell us the values of some physical qualities it admits to be 'real'. One day therefore it must be superseded by a better and more complete theory.

Starting in the 1920s Einstein had repeatedly tried to undermine belief in quantum mechanics as an adequate theory. But time after time his ingenious arguments had been countered by

Niels Bohr, whose interpretation of the new theory in terms of 'complementarity' was hailed as a profound insight. Bohr now returned to the tournament one last time and with baffling dexterity seemed to leave the Grand Old Man of Relativity Theory tilting at thin air. Thus Einstein, who in popular thought epitomised the intellectual revolutionary, and who was in fact one of the progenitors of the theory he now rejected, found himself irrevocably consigned to history – an old reactionary by-passed by the advance of science.

What was Einstein's problem with the theory? It wasn't that he didn't 'understand' it or denied the evidence that it worked. The problem was much deeper, so much so that Einstein constantly had recourse to theological language to express his doubts – 'God does not play dice!' Quantum mechanics is clever 'but it does not bring us close to the secrets of the Old One!' 'The Lord is subtle, but he is not malicious!' In Einstein's view to embrace quantum mechanics was to abandon the search for an understanding of 'objective reality'.

Einstein believed that what is in the world exists independently of us; that the properties of things are independent of our observation of them; and that there are objective law-like regularities. The orthodox 'Copenhagen' interpretation of quantum mechanics, forged by Bohr, insisted that the 'quantum mechanical entities' and the experimental apparatus always formed an indivisible 'whole'. Different experimental arrangements are needed to measure different 'properties'. Where such arrangements are mutually exclusive the 'properties' cannot be simultaneously realised and so are 'complementary'. Because of the holistic character of the phenomena, speculation about 'what was going on behind the scenes', independently of measurement and observation, was denounced as 'meaningless'. Einstein denounced this as 'a tranquillizing philosophy' blunting the edge of enquiry.



The Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen thought-experiment envisages a composite system which divides into completely separate parts. The initial composite system is described by a single quantum mechanical state function. If the system is allowed to divide then, Einstein argued, the two parts of the system can become separated to such an extent that they are *physically* independent of one another. However, quantum mechanics continues to treat them as if they were a composite whole. Thus, if we now make a measurement on one of the separated sub-systems, we will be able to calculate the corresponding property of the other sub-system. Since we can do this without interfering with the second system in any way, Einstein argued, it follows quantum mechanics admits that this property is *intrinsic* to it. What is more, since we can *choose* to measure *any* property of the one system, and then

calculate the corresponding property of the other, it follows that *all* the properties of the second system are 'real' (i.e. independent of our observation of them).

Bohr tried to counter this in two ways. Firstly he argued that until measurements were *actually* carried out on the second system we had no way of knowing whether the system had the properties we had calculated. Though this may have appealed to the positivistically inclined professionals who were tiring of these 'philosophical' arguments with Einstein and simply wanted to get on with the job, it is a pretty unconvincing riposte to Einstein's argument since it seems to miss the point. His second argument was simply that quantum mechanics continues to treat the two sub-systems as a composite whole until an interaction (such as an observation or measurement) occurs and allows them to be treated as separate systems. This holds *no matter how great the apparent separation between the two sub-systems*. For Einstein this was simply unbelievable – it implied instantaneous 'telepathic' communication between the two sub-systems. Causal connections have to be 'local' (or as Hume would have put it 'contiguous'), i.e. a cause can only have a direct effect on its immediate neighbourhood, and the maximum speed of propagation of a causal influence (thanks to the Theory of Relativity) is the velocity of light.

The scientific community declared Bohr the winner: after all he allowed them to get on with the job of applying the theory instead of worrying about its 'foundations'. In any case a few years earlier von Neumann had 'shown', so it was believed, that there could never be a return to the kind of realist and determinist theory which Einstein desired. For the next thirty years it was simply accepted by most people that von Neumann's theorem blocked alternatives to quantum mechanics, and the Copenhagen interpretation reigned supreme.

So long as such arguments were confined to 'meta-discourses' on the fringes of science – where people talk but do not *do* anything – no one had to face up to the real impact of what had emerged from the argument between Bohr and Einstein. However, in the mid 1960s John Bell critically examined the assumptions of von Neumann's argument, and consequently established a very remarkable 'meta-theorem' of quantum mechanics, which has ushered in a period of what has been aptly named 'experimental metaphysics'.

What Bell showed is that quantum mechanics predicts a level of 'cooperation' between the measurements made on 'parts' of a composite system which cannot be mimicked by *any* 'local realistic' theory. A local realistic theory is one which assumes that causal action is always 'local' and that the properties of a system are 'real' (i.e. independent of measurement). According to such a theory the parts of a composite system may be 'correlated' before they separate, and they may remain fixed in this state, but their subsequent interactions with distant measuring devices must be independent of one another. Bell was able to give quantitative expression to the limit this sets on the degree of cooperation between the results of measurement and thus in principle opened up the issue to experimental test.

By the early 1980s Alain Aspect had completed an elegant series of experiments which showed that the level of cooperation was way beyond the limits Bell had derived for 'local realism'. Aspect found that the level of cooperation matched the predictions of quantum theory, and was about five times what could be produced by any local realist alternative. At a stroke the Aspect experiment refuted a whole class of theories – not just alternatives we had to hand, but any similar theories as yet unborn. Methodologically this was a remarkable enough event; metaphysically it was utterly perplexing for the 'untravelling'.

Bell's theorem and Aspect's experiment have rescued the final phase of the Bohr-Einstein dialogue from the margins of

science. However, it is one thing to see that there is a problem; it is quite another to identify exactly what is the character of that problem, let alone to arrive at an intuitive appreciation of the implications of quantum mechanics for our understanding of the nature of 'matter'. This is why the careful sifting of the issues in Michael Redhead's book is so important. When it was first issued it won the Imre Lakatos Memorial Prize as the outstanding book on the philosophy of science for the year 1985. It has now been reissued in paperback with some addenda.

It is not a light book and those who do not have, or are not prepared to acquire, an understanding of the formalism of quantum mechanics will find it pretty impenetrable. It is concerned with the most perplexing problem in the philosophy of physics. This review has tried to sketch part of the problem in a way which may tempt some readers to invest in the effort needed to get to grips with the issue. After all it concerns nothing less than the nature of the physical world, and our possible knowledge of it.

Michael Redhead's arguments are presented with masterly care. Every twist and turn is explored in the meaning of 'locality', the problems quantum mechanics poses for 'realism', and the relationship between 'contextuality' and 'realism'. He neatly rebuts the crude attempts to explain Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle in terms of interactions with measuring instruments, and shows that it is more deeply rooted in the theory. He also examines the claim that quantum mechanics requires a new 'logic', and shows persuasively that the proposals for 'quantum logic' just entrench the problems about 'realism' in a different way. In short – without giving the plot away – the conclusion is that the phenomena of nonlocality are ineradicable. He modestly subtitles the book 'a prolegomenon to the philosophy of quantum mechanics', but like an earlier prolegomenon it heralds a very fundamental shift in our way of looking at things.

Jonathan Powers

MARX'S LOGIC

Tony Smith, *The Logic of Marx's 'Capital': Replies to Hegelian Criticisms*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 1990. 0 7914 0267 3.

This is a very important work because it not only re-asserts the vital importance of dialectical logic in Marx's *Capital* but demonstrates in detail how thoroughgoing and central to Marx's thought it is. This is something quite new on this scale. The book is all the more to be praised because it is written with exceptional lucidity, such that no one can be in any doubt about the nature of the claims made.

A striking feature of Smith's procedure is to defend Marx against Hegelian critics who hold that Marx did not properly conform to the canons of dialectical argument. In view of the anti-Hegelian conjuncture we are in, this seems a little unnecessary; but it does allow Smith to deepen the exposition, as well as to clarify the differences between Marxists and Hegelians.

The book is in two unequal parts. The first part is on method in general, setting out the Hegelian dialectic, Marx's response to it, and the argument for reading *Capital* in terms of it. The larger part works systematically through *Capital*, elucidating and defending its key transitions.

The basic theme is that '*Capital* is a systematic theory of economic categories ordered according to a dialectical logic taken over from Hegel'. According to Smith this allows Marx to appropriate critically the categories employed unreflectively in empirical studies, to assert strong claims of necessity such as that 'capital of necessity involves exploitation', and to ground revolutionary politics.

Smith takes a firm position that there is nothing much wrong with Hegel's method; problems arise merely at the level of its substantive application to modern society. The main lesson of Hegelian dialectic is the importance of appropriating and reconstructing empirical material in a logical categorial ordering. For Smith the key movement in such a development is that from categories of simple unity, through those of difference, to those of unity-in-difference.

While conceding that there are defects in Hegel's philosophy, Smith is mainly concerned to defend Hegel. He rejects most of Marx's criticisms as based on misunderstandings. With regard to the vexed question of those passages that seem to refer to an idealistic super-subject – God or whatever – Smith ingeniously

asserts that such passages must not be taken literally, but as 'picture thoughts' that would ease a Christian audience into his system. This is the same move as the Young Hegelians made; more recently Walter Kaufmann put it by saying Hegel poured new wine into old skins.

It is noticeable that Smith uses the same device later with regard to Marx, arguing that Marx deliberately played down the dialectical systematicity of *Capital*, and brought forward much historical evidence, in order to reach the public.

When Smith turns to Marx's *Capital* he sets himself two tasks: to demonstrate that it has to be considered as a work of systematic dialectics; and to show that Marx was right to attempt such a project, and succeeds. Smith argues convincingly for his interpretation on both counts.

Finally, according to Smith systematic dialectics has 'a normative, practical component'. If one associates the previously mentioned sequence with the broad divisions of Hegel's *Logic*, then the simplest categories are those of being (*Sein*); the emergence of polar categories is characteristic of essence (*Wesen*); and categories of unity-in-difference appear at the level of the notion (*Begriff*). Structures characterised in these ways have very different implications for human freedom. 'On the level of spirit the earlier categories fix structures within which relatively simpler and more abstract forms of freedom are possible, while within the structures that can be grasped in notion terms, more complex and concrete forms are in principle possible.'

Smith's conclusion is that Hegel and Hegelians are wrong to see modern society as structured according to a *Begriffslogik* and thus fully actualising freedom. Smith holds that if Marx is right it is caught up in a *Wesenslogik*. To that extent the interpretation is immanently critical of its object, and points to the necessity for a transition to a form of socialism structured as a unity-in-difference which really makes human freedom possible.

Such a brief outline as I have given does not do justice to a book which at every turn sheds fresh light on contentious issues in the interpretation and assessment of Marx's work. The scholarship is of the highest order. Even those who do not accept its theses must acknowledge that we have been presented with a brilliant, and original, contribution to the literature of Marxism, which demands to be taken seriously.

Chris Arthur

FORM AND REFORM

Ian Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*, London, Routledge, 1990. 246pp., £30.00 hb, 0 4 15 04382 4

John Grierson occupies a distinguished place in the history of the cinema. Along with the documentary film movement he helped establish, Grierson had a profound influence on British film culture, and his ideas continue to have relevance in the light of current debates on the nature of current affairs television and the claims to objectivity of contemporary documentary reporting. Ian Aitken's serious and ambitious study of Grierson and his legacy is, therefore, a welcome contribution to our understanding of the social and political significance of the documentary movement. Grierson was certainly not the most likeable of film-makers, and probably not among the most gifted, but his organizational and critical skills can hardly be over-stressed.

The British documentary movement began in 1928, when the government set up the Empire Marketing Board which included, among its forty-five departments, a film unit organised by Grierson. The Empire Marketing Board did not last long, but the film section was transferred to the Post Office where, as the G.P.O. Film Unit, it continued to train young film-makers. Aitken's account of this period leaves one in little doubt about the importance of Grierson's contribution to inter-war cultural politics. *Housing Problems* (1935), for example, is regarded by many as the beginning of *cinéma-verité*; *Night Mail* (1936) was a beautifully-edited study of the human pattern of the daily round; and *Enough to Eat?* (1936) was probably the first movie to feature sociological methods, screening animated diagrams of shocking statistics alongside the personal accounts of victims of deprivation. These movies were either produced under Grierson's supervision or made by people he had personally trained. Grierson helped establish the documentary maker's basic filmic vocabulary, alerting us to the social uses (and abuses) of the form.

Film and Reform challenges the conventional interpretations of Grierson's work because they fail to appreciate the implications of his intellectual position. The concern, therefore, is with the relationship of theory to practice, philosophy to film, in Grierson's project. According to Aitken, Grierson's conception of film as an instrument of social persuasion was derived from an aesthetic tradition based upon philosophical idealism ('synthesizing' neo-Hegelian and neo-Kantian elements). Grierson's ultimate definition for the documentary form was 'the creative interpretation of actuality'. This was to combine with apparently disparate styles as Russian montage, Robert Flaherty's poetically intuitive camerawork, and Cavalcanti's eloquent orchestration of factual images with natural sounds and music. Through movies (always a collaborative effort) Grierson sought to reveal and celebrate the neglected qualities of people as a collective producer and the builder of a more affectionate civilization.

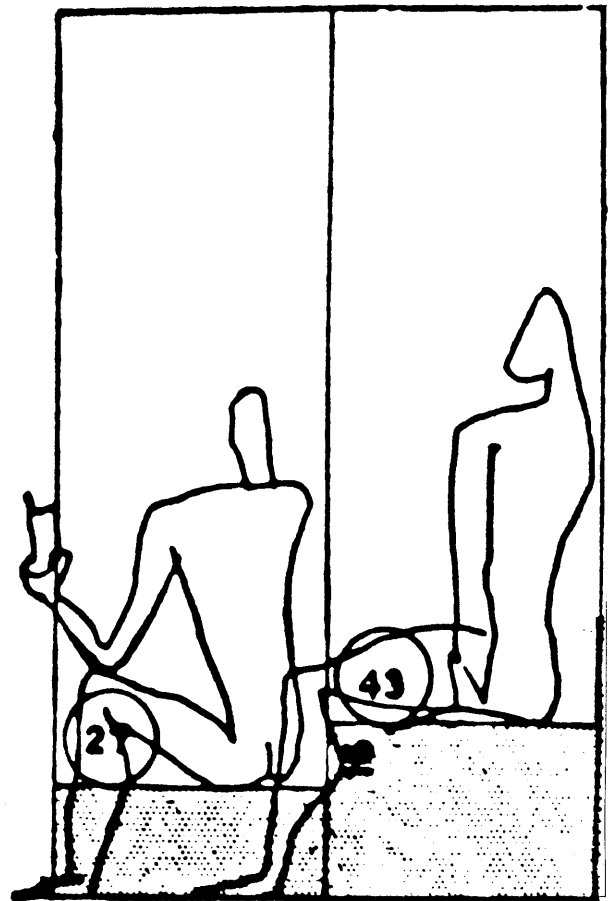
Generally, Aitken is admirably honest in his treatment of Grierson, refusing to ignore those aspects of his subject which seem so unappealing. Many critics have been offended by Grierson's self-righteousness and his arrogant attacks on other approaches to the filmic medium. There is certainly plenty of evidence to support the view of Grierson as a vulgar radical with little real understanding of working people's tastes and needs. He was unwilling to acknowledge the merits of commercial movies, claiming his documentaries 'achieve the intimacy of knowledge and effect impossible to the shim-sham mechanics of the studio and the lily-fingered interpretations of the metropolitan actor'.

John Mortimer, an erstwhile colleague, responded thus: 'How wrong he was! In fact the truth told about wartime in England by documentary films was far less, and even less courageous, than the truth told about 1930s America by the box office movies which Grierson despised. We falsified the whole feeling of a great period of history.'

The problem with *Film and Reform* concerns its structure; there is simply too much to say in too short a book. Aitken is excellent in his early discussion of Grierson's career (the influence of his schoolteacher parents, the academic stimulus of Glasgow University, the Scottish legacy of economic liberalism, and the persistence of Calvinism); it is good to see someone discuss the social role of the film maker in such a thoughtful and constructive manner. The book begins to falter when the intellectual biography drifts into several disorientating byways of cultural history. There are two potentially-fascinating books here compressed into one unsatisfactory text. When, for example, Aitken tries to argue that during the inter-war period in Britain 'the establishment attempted to re-establish the more hierarchical society which had existed before the [First] war', he has no room to substantiate the point; we are repeatedly obliged to tolerate serious over-simplifications where careful explanation is required.

Film and Reform has much to engage the reader's interest. Aitken has written one of the most provocative accounts of the documentary movement and, although his arguments are sometimes too elliptical to be entirely convincing, one is grateful to have it. One hopes that Aitken will develop his later themes in future books.

Graham McCann



THE DEFENCE OF RHETORIC

Berel Lang, *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990. vii + 277 pp., £37.50 hb, £12.95 pb, 0 631 16494 4 hb, 0 631 17546 6 pb.

In the now famous exchange between Jacques Derrida and John Searle documented in the pages of *Glyph*, what most evidently infuriated the latter philosopher was Derrida's refusal to engage him on equal terms with logical and rational argument, indulging instead in a playfulness with his opponent, to the extent of wilfully misspelling his name. To those better acquainted with Post-Structuralist thought, such a tactic is hardly surprising, given Deconstruction's relentless attacks on rational philosophy as such. The enormous gulf between the two philosophers' methods, together with their lack of mutual comprehension, brought into sharp focus the radical nature of the anti-rationalist stance which has been the hallmark particularly of the more recent work of Derrida, such as *The Postcard*, but also of critics such as Geoffrey Hartman and the later Barthes. In *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style*, Berel Lang addresses the issues motivating this aesthetic turn, concentrating on the problematic and complex relation between philosophy and literature, fact and fiction. Though desirous to distance himself from Derrida and Deconstructive 'purists', the sympathies of the author are clear, for the book represents a concerted effort to undermine the traditional opposition between conceptually pure philosophical discourse on the one hand, and rhetorically seductive literary style on the other. As such, it is divided into two parts: the first examines the way in which even the most rigorous philosophical writing is inherently literary, while the second reveals the factual, conceptual elements which constitute any literary work. The goal which Lang aims for is the demonstration that one cannot speak of a purely philosophical or literary discourse, a conclusion which also disturbs the hitherto cosy opposition of fiction and non-fiction.

On the whole the book is an enjoyable one. Lang has an eminently readable style, and it is refreshing not to be confronted by the opaque neologisms and stylistic pretensions which so often pervade philosophical writing on this topic. However, with the exception of the third chapter, on the style of Descartes's *Meditations*, the book fails to really challenge the reader. Undoubtedly the main reason for this lies in its structure: it is less a book-length study than a collection of loosely related essays on such diverse subjects as Descartes, Rorty, the genre of autobiography, the meaning of fables, and Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Consequently, Lang never really explores the problems adequately, since he fails to devote substantial space to any single topic. More importantly, the lack of detailed, rigorous discussion means that the book doesn't offer a convincing explanation as to why we should abandon our hitherto cherished ideal of a philosophy subject to scrutiny as to its truth value. Instead, the reader is offered the overly familiar story of the role of philosophical rhetoric which Deconstructive critics have been preaching for some twenty years or more.

The main thrust of the first half of the book is the well known claim that style makes a philosophical difference. A work written in one philosophical genre, e.g. Descartes' *Meditations*, cannot be translated into the form of, say, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, without considerable loss of conceptual content. On the basis of this initial premise, which even Plato had acknowledged, Lang feels entitled to level the distinction between philosophy and

literature. To support this view he draws on the parallels between literary history and the history of philosophy as a 'history of genres', additionally pointing out the structural similarities between many philosophical and literary works (Lang gives the examples of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and the Bildungsroman, and Leibniz's *Monadology* and the comic Romance), to demonstrate that philosophy and literature are not *a priori* distinguishable.

Certainly one cannot deny the similarities between literature and philosophy, stemming from the fact that both are linguistic entities. Yet similarity should not be confused with identity, and moreover should alert us to empirical differences between the two. Although the realisation that rhetoric is more than mere ornament to conceptual argument will have important ramifications for the interpretation of philosophical texts, it does not address the relation of philosophical to literary discourse, their respective relations to the 'truth', and the more general difference between fact and fiction. On reading Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* we feel we have the right to subject the argument to critical analysis, to dispute or to agree with its claims about the world. Even Deconstruction consists in a tight analysis of the logic of any philosophical work, if only to reveal its inconsistencies. However, to approach Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* trilogy in the same manner is singularly inappropriate. Wilhelm Meister is a creation of his author and there are no criteria whereby we can judge the verisimilitude of Goethe's novel. We may lay bare the ideology supporting the Bildungsroman as a genre, but such a process represents a different level of analysis, one that avoids grappling with the literariness of the work.

Lang tries to support his argument by showing in the second part of the book the way in which fiction incorporates facts, thus precluding all talk of aesthetic autonomy. This is the least convincing part of the book. It opens with a peculiar chapter on Hamlet, where speculation about his grandmother is interpreted as a non-literary intrusion into the fiction of the play, thus undermining its artistic autonomy. Obviously the issue at stake is that of reference, and Lang seems unclear about his own views. The deconstruction of philosophical discourse, with its roots in Saussurean linguistics and the aesthetic Modernism of the late nineteenth century, assumes language and texts to be self-referential, hence Derrida's much quoted 'There is nothing beyond the text'. But in order to deconstruct the category of fiction Lang assumes them to be referring to a reality of some kind, albeit an ideological construct. Yet does inclusion of factual material into a work of fiction, the fact that it might refer to a reality, rob it of its fictional status? Lang thinks so, and expects us to be persuaded without more ado. However, the more critical reader will demur. Is mimesis a mere reflection of an ideologically constructed reality, or does mimetic art use factual material to other ends? A historical drama such as Büchner's *Death of Danton* may include a great deal of historical material yet it would seem peculiar if one were to ask whether Danton actually exchanged the same words with Robespierre, Saint-Just or his wife that he does in the play. Unfortunately Lang doesn't even consider such issues.

Lang himself admits that he does not seek to assimilate literature and philosophy, fact and fiction to one another, yet his own argument pulls inexorably toward that goal. There is no *a priori* difference between literary and philosophical discourse, but Lang fails to recognise the empirical difference between philosophical works and literary ones. There is much work to be done on this topic but, while Lang's book offers a lucid account of the Deconstructive onslaught on the pretensions of rationalist philosophy, it remains largely uncritical of this onslaught, and hence fails to add much that is substantially new to the debate.

Matthew Rampley

Jean Baudrillard, *Revenge of the Crystal: Selected Writings on the Modern Object and its Destiny, 1968-1988*, edited and translated by Paul Foss and Julian Pefanis, London, Pluto Press, 1990. 198 pp., £24.95 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 7453 0298 X hb, 0 7453 0305 6 pb.

Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, edited by Jim Fleming and translated by Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Niesluchowski, London, Pluto Press/Semiotext(e), 1990. 191 pp., £24.95 hb., £8.95 pb., 0 7453 0404 4 Pluto, 093656 50 0 Semiotext(e).

Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong With Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990. viii + 287 pp., £35 hb, 0 7450 0714 7 hb.

These three recently published books provide directions for those who would wish to be, in a sense, first past the 'post'. Chris Norris's collection of provocative essays, with two new, reflective pieces providing the bookends, was – I think – originally entitled *Against Postmodernism* but someone else had already published such a title, so it became *What's Wrong With Postmodernism*.

The first title might have been more accurate. Norris is, as ever, brilliant at exposition of dense and difficult theoretical developments in literary, cultural and philosophical debates about and within postmodernism. Where exposition becomes critique, however, there seems to be a marked tendency to hold fast to old shibboleths ('truth', 'historical materialism' etc.) which the earlier critical expositions had rendered extremely shaky. The best example of this is 'Lost in the Funhouse: Baudrillard and the Politics of Postmodernism', a review essay which is now available in several different places. Baudrillard, like Lyotard and Foucault (but significantly *not* Derrida) in other parts of the book, is thrown to the wolves, absolutely beyond the pale. The 'postmodernists' are condemned, eventually, as irredeemably conservative (especially in the 'political' introductory essay), echoing the 1970s debates in France about their part in the swing towards the new right in philosophy, only this time it is their supposed part in the creation of the 'Thatcherite' condition which has raised Norris's ire. This blanket, swingeing attack – throwing everything out with the bathwater – seems in marked contrast to the careful, playful deconstruction of contemporary theoretical texts in the remainder of the book.

Jean Baudrillard's two 'latest' books are effectively both titled *The Revenge of the Crystal*. The subtitle of the original 1983 French edition of *Fatal Strategies* has been used by Pluto Press as a title for several different book extracts and interviews. The most interesting is a 1983 interview, mainly about the French publication of *Fatal Strategies*, where there is much discussion about whether Baudrillard still regards himself as a sociologist, and how he relates his work to that of Pierre Bourdieu. As usual with Baudrillard nothing is resolved. Nevertheless, we should be grateful to Pluto Press for collaborating with, respectively, the Power Institute of Fine Art, Sydney and Semiotext(e), New York, the two organisations which have done most to introduce Baudrillard to an international audience over the last decade.

Steve Redhead

'The Force of Reason' is an apt title for a book which attempts to summarise the central claims of Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (Arie Brand, *The Force of Reason: An Introduction to Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990. xiv + 152 pp., £7.95 pb, 004 370190 6). Brand manages his task with efficiency. It is written for a specific audience: 'advanced students' of social theory, with no previous knowledge of Habermas's work, preparing themselves to face the first of the Theory's thousand pages. Brand divides his book into two parts. In part one, he offers a sixty-five page tour of the key ideas which shape Habermas's Theory. In part two, he takes the reader on excursions into the interpretations of Mead, Durkheim, Weber, Parsons, and Marx, through which Habermas fills out these ideas. His exposition complete, Brand concludes with a chapter collecting some of the meatiest bones of contention picked over by Habermas and his critics.

There are several good introductions to Habermas's work already available in English, so why read Brand's? It deserves recommendation primarily because of the way it bridges what is sociologically and what is philosophically interesting in Habermas's Theory. Habermas's reading of the sociological tradition is shown to lean *from* certain philosophical commitments, while these commitments are shown to lean *towards* empirical social study. Further, Brand's exposition has the merit of clarifying a distinction, crucial to Habermas, which tends to be obscured in other introductory commentaries: the dis-

inction between the logic and dynamics of development. Furthermore, Brand's willingness to illustrate this distinction (and others) with concrete examples will be appreciated by those students who go on to find this quality frustratingly lacking in Habermas's own writings.

If these are good reasons for reading this book, are they compelling ones? Brand's outline of Habermas's Theory is clear and economical, but then so is Thomas McCarthy's introductory *chapter* to the English translation of Habermas's text, an introduction which is not much shorter than part one of Brand's commentary. As opposed to McCarthy's introduction, Brand's book is written in the light of predominantly 'didactic aims' taken to be appropriate for a student guide. This makes for a rather flat, lacklustre style, which could be excused if it were not for the *excessive* didacticism of sentences like: 'We believe that Habermas' interpretation of Weber's views on the rationalization of law is rather one-sided.' I, for one, don't like being told what I believe. To put the same point another way, the book sometimes reads as if the author is trying to get his students to pass an exam, thus encouraging the assimilation of critical theory into academicism. But perhaps responsibility for this lies less with Brand than with Habermas himself.

Nick Smith

Feminist commentaries on political theory normally provide a catalogue of misogynies which, though invaluable from a feminist point of view, relegates them to the intellectual margins. *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, edited by Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991. x + 288 pp., £39.50 hb, £10.95 pb, 0 7456 07047 hb, 0 7456 07055 pb) is an attempt to push feminist perspectives into the mainstream. Based around the conviction that sexual difference is of fundamental importance to modern political theory and practice, it introduces a diversity of feminist approaches. Its aim is to reconstruct the discipline of political theory, without swamping it with a unitary feminist perspective.

The fourteen essays of which the book consists can be read as pairs beginning with Aristotle and Plato and ending with Arendt and Habermas. A refreshing exception to the conventional format is the inclusion of Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir whose work is commonly neglected by standard works of political theory in favour of their 'counter-

parts', William Godwin and Jean-Paul Sartre. The book provides some surprising and stimulating challenges to political theory. Its authors not only point to fundamental weaknesses in the theories that they discuss but suggest useful tactics for their adaptation into a new practice of political theory. Jana Sawicki's chapter on Foucault, for example, criticises his androcentrism but suggests that a Foucauldian politics of difference is of value to the current feminist debate on sexuality.

The inclusion of many different (feminist) political stances prevents the dominance of any one feminist view. Susan Moller Okin's discussion of Rawls, for example, points to his failure to address sexual difference coherently and argues for the application of a gender-neutral justice to the private as well as the public realm. The chapter by Elizabeth Spelman provides a striking contrast to this liberal position. Spelman offers an introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* whilst pointing to some disturbing contradictions within it. She argues, for instance, rightly or wrongly, that de Beauvoir simultaneously notes the differences amongst women whilst stressing their common position as Other; that she compares women to Blacks whilst forgetting that half the black population are women. Spelman contends that de Beauvoir's failure fully to consider the differences between women has led to a theory that applies only to white Western middle-class women. This touches an issue of concern to many contemporary feminists: namely that multiplicity and difference must be celebrated in feminist theory if it is to avoid creating and oppressing Others of its own. This book provides coherent and accessible introductions as well as constructive discussions, and shows that feminist political theory includes as much richness and diversity as the classic texts that it addresses.

Lucinda Sargisson

H. T. Wilson's book on *Marx's Critical/Dialectical Procedure* (London and New York, Routledge, 1991. xvii + 242 pp., £40, 0 415 05547 4) advertises itself as a demonstration that Marx was the founder of the critical theory of society, in understanding 'humans as collective, cultural and historical beings', and in thinking 'by dynamic, active reflection, rather than by more passive forms of contemplation'. The main source discussed is Marx's unfinished 1857 'Introduction'. This is interpreted with the aid of a bit of phenomenol-

ogy, a bit of Aristotle (on cause), and a bit of Hegel (on the concrete universal).

One central contention is that Marx attacked the 'perceptual abstraction' of empiricist thinking; his procedure is to reach the essence through 'reflection' and 'concretion'. There is undoubtedly something to this; but the discussion never concretises itself sufficiently to show what it really means. In the last chapter an attempt is made to apply it to 'abstract labour'. The discussion does not sufficiently distinguish the 'abstraction' and 'inversion' in the mind of the empiricist, and what Marx called 'the real abstraction made every day' when the value-form impresses itself on the matter and 'inverts' the concrete and abstract.

We are solemnly informed that 'Marx "capitalises" nature (Nature) for a reason in *Capital*, Volume 1 and elsewhere as well'. The true reason is perfectly simple: in German *all* nouns are capitalised as a matter of course – 'Bug' and 'Bear' as much as 'Nature'. From a ridiculous error to a sublime one: we are used to 'Note that even in the English editions of *Capital*, vol. 1, Marx always insists on capitalising "nature"'. It should have been added that this insistence was all the more remarkable in that he was dead at the time.

Wilson's writing is both turgid and careless; he chooses the wrong word or misspells the one he has chosen ('imminent' for 'immanent'; 'intention' for 'intension', etc.). The peculiar North American habit of pressing nouns into service as verbs evidences, e.g. 'hostages' as a transitive verb. In sum, this is a book of doubtful value.

Chris Arthur

It is unusual to find a philosophy of science book written in dialogue form. This is probably because most of recent philosophy of science has been involved with historical case studies which are difficult to present in dialogue. This has not always been the case. Plato, Berkeley and Hume, although not strictly speaking philosophers of science, all wrote in dialogue. Larry Laudan, however, follows Galileo who wrote dialogue in the vernacular to overcome confusion over what the new science was about. In *Science and Relativism* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1991. 180 pp., £25.50 hb, £10.25 pb., 0 226 46948 4 hb, 0 226 46949 2 pb) he writes in dialogue in order to dispel confusion created by the new philosophy of science.

The popular image of recent philosophy of science is that the era of positivism,

from Comte to Carnap, reigned for over a century but was overthrown, and by the early 1960s was replaced by a post-positivist philosophy of science in both the natural and the social sciences. Positivist concepts of progress, objectivity and rationality were transformed in the hands of a motley collection of philosophers, social critics, sociologists and historians of science which include Rorty, Quine, Winch, Kuhn, Feyerabend, Barnes and Collins. The post-positivists raised questions concerning relativism, the social basis of knowledge and the incommensurability of theories. Whatever its form relativism emerged as a central characteristic of post-positivism. For Laudan relativism adopts the slogan 'The way we take things to be is quite independent of the way things are.' Laudan opposes relativism, arguing that it derives 'scant support from a clear-headed understanding of the contemporary state of the art in philosophy of science'. Yet he acknowledges that the relativist critique of the idea that science represents a superior form of knowing has considerable force as well as popularity.

To appreciate Laudan's refutation of relativism it is important to note that he sees two types of philosophy of science: 'philosophy of science proper' (which is what Laudan is engaged in) and the rag tag and bobtail versions of philosophy of science which flirt with relativism. This latter group includes 'feminists, creationists, counter-culturalists, neo-conservatives and a host of other curious fellow travellers'. Whilst those in first group eschew relativism their arguments have not been appreciated because, says Laudan, they need to be written in a language that makes them 'accessible to those outside the philosophy of science proper'. The dialogue form is Laudan's response to a state of ideological *laissez faire*. It works well. The participants, who represent composites of familiar philosophers of science, include a positivist, a realist, a relativist and a pragmatist. The outcome: strong versions of relativism fail to achieve conviction with a seeming victory for Laudan's pragmatic account of progress in science. Well, at least that is Laudan's opinion!

This is a lively and good humoured introduction to some of the key epistemological issues in recent philosophy of science. The dialogues, which are pleasantly free from jargon, cover topics such as progress and cumulativeness, conceptual loss during revolutions, theory ladenness, underdetermination of theories, holism, standards of success, incommensurability, and the social determinants of belief.

David Lamb