REVIEWS

Wishful thinking

Simone de Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, edited by Margaret A. Simons with Marybeth Timmerman and Mary Beth Mader, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2004. xii + 351 pp., £13.95 hb., 0 252 02982 8 hb.

For more than a decade much of the anglophone literature on Simone de Beauvoir has been preoccupied with the question of her intellectual status, attacking the still prevailing presumptions that her work is not philosophical or that it is philosophically wholly indebted to Sartre. The publication of this volume – the first in the Beauvoir Series, a huge project with an exhaustive aim – is clearly intended to trounce those foes once and for all. From the inside of a discipline which (in the UK at least) still shows little sign of caring much about its predominantly masculine face, there is, at first glance, something triumphant about the very existence of this book. This one will *have* to be shelved in the philosophy section – the title and the publisher's classification are unequivocal.

Yet this is more than a matter of correct classification. The volume 'aims at nothing less than the transformation of Simone de Beauvoir's place in the [philosophical] canon'; which is to say, it aims to forge her a place there for the first time. It is a heavy burden for one volume to bear. In this regard, the editor, Margaret A. Simons, has been astute enough to recognize that academic reception is not a pure reflection of intellectual merit but a cultural-political phenomenon, and that the scholarly apparatus and commentary on a primary text are performatively constitutive of its emergence as canonical. Each of the twelve works included here is introduced by one or other of some of Beauvoir's most prominent commentators, including Kristina Arp, Nancy Bauer, Debra Bergoffen, Sara Heinämaa, Eleanore Holveck, Sonia Kruks and Karen Vintges, all authors of well-received books on Beauvoir in the last ten years. A commonality of purpose in each introduction presents a united front of formidable supporters. The editing of the volume is strong and coherent.

In her general Introduction, Simons, who has perhaps done more than anyone else in Beauvoir's defence, identifies three reasons why 'Beauvoir's philosophy remains relatively unanalyzed and widely misunderstood', a deficiency which this book is obviously designed to put right. One is that much of it has either not been translated (especially the early work) or has been only partially or poorly translated. Another – and this, unlike the first point, applies to the francophone world too – is that Beauvoir's work has been obscured by Sartre's long shadow, not just because of the recognition he received but because of the sexist presumption that a woman (and especially a male philosopher's female lover) could only conceivably be an acolyte or disciple. Finally, Beauvoir's 'highly original philosophical methodology' has not been recognized, to the extent that her philosophy has not been recognized at all as such. That the volume provides an important (if necessarily incomplete) solution to the first two problems is clear. Ultimately, however, it is in making good the third point – the identification of an original philosophical oeuvre – that attention must be focused. With sexist presumptions and blindnesses derided and put aside, the serious work of scrutiny and criticism must begin.

Unfortunately, this volume contains some of Beauvoir's very worst work and some which does not appear to justify inclusion in a volume of philosophical writings at all. On the basis of the unexceptional claim that an understanding of Beauvoir's philosophical work requires knowledge of her philosophical influences, and a principle of inclusivity, the first piece is a translation of one of her schoolgirl essays, a review of Claude Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la medicine expérimentale*, written in 1924, for her senior level philosophy class, when she was sixteen. It is, as Simons and Hélène N. Peters say in their introduction to the piece, an elementary-level summary exposition. No doubt it is possible to identify in this essay themes (for example, the valuing of philosophical doubt, rejection of scholasticism and system-building) that appear in Beauvoir's later work, but the claim that it illuminates Bernardian elements ('a search for truth', 'an effort at lucidity', avoidance of 'dogmatic absolutes') in *The Second Sex* is entirely unconvincing, since they can be found in almost any philosopher that Beauvoir read.

At the other end of the period represented in this volume, Beauvoir's 1947 'An Existentialist Looks at Americans', written for the *New York Times Magazine*, must be one of the lowest points in her writings, philo-

sophical or otherwise. Beauvoir's early work often displays a tendency towards pat generalization. Here she gives the tendency free rein. It dovetails with the tone of smug European superiority also characteristic of the early work: the lack of 'authentic ambition' in American youth ('[t]he sort of ambition one finds in the young Frenchman as incarnated by Stendhal in Julien Sorel') is 'particularly disturbing to a European'. The 1945 sketch 'Jean-Paul Sartre', written for *Harper's Bazaar*, is similarly superficial, even when the original manuscript replaces the published version ('Jean-Paul Sartre: Strictly Personal') edited to suit the magazine. It would be pointless to criticize these journalistic pieces for being journalistic, but one can still be disappointed in them. It would be absurd to approach them critically as one might approach a philosophical work. It is painfully sad that they are here made to represent Beauvoir's philosophical writings.

The justification for the inclusion of these pieces is what Simons calls Beauvoir's 'own unique philosophical methodology'. This remains regrettably vague, but seems to include Beauvoir's attempts to think philosophically in non-traditional philosophical forms, not just the novel (for there would be nothing 'unique' about that) but also, precisely, journalism. The sketch of Sartre, treating his life and thought as inseparable, is supposedly illustrative of Beauvoir's 'later concept of philosophy as a way of life' and her 'methodological focus on the exploration of concrete, lived experience' (although, again, this is by no means unique). If this is enough to warrant their inclusion as philosophical writings – and I doubt that it is – we would still be forced to conclude that they are very poor philosophical writings.

Of the more traditional philosophical essays translated in this volume, 'Pyrrhus and Cineas' (1944) is the longest. In her introduction, Bergoffen suggests that its 'originality and freshness' can only be captured if it is read according to the political-existential and intellectual-existential horizons of its time, rather than as an immature text or precursor to Beauvoir's magnum opus, *The Second Sex*. Along with 'Moral Idealism and Political Realism' and 'Existentialism and Popular Wisdom' (both 1945) it represents the early stage of what Beauvoir called her – brief – 'moral period'.

Taking these works seriously means reconstructing their arguments and subjecting them to the cold eye of criticism. In 'Pyrrhus and Cineas' a cluster of questions, which concede certain existentialist dicta, animate the argument. If human life is finite, is it not absurd? If human action is not necessitated by any cause or transcendent purpose, what justifica-

tion can it ever have? If each subjectivity is wholly responsible for itself, why should I feel responsibility towards anyone else? For the most part, the answers to these questions are orthodoxly existentialist. Finitude is a feature of every project and, as definitional of the specificity of the human, desired rather than endured; human action finds its justification within itself. However, what Beauvoir's commentators often identify as her original contribution to existential philosophy is the emphasis on the role of the Other, an emphasis which here functions both as the basis of her ethics and as a justification of existentialism in the face of repeated accusations that it is a philosophy of despair. According to Beauvoir, '[t]he Other's freedom alone is capable of necessitating my being.... We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary' because 'once I have surpassed my own goals, my actions will fall back upon themselves, inert and useless, if they have not been carried off toward a new future by new projects.' The only thing I cannot surpass is that which is constantly surpassing itself: the pure freedom of another. However, a freedom that exhausts itself in struggling against 'sickness, ignorance, and misery' cannot perform this function. Thus, in the name of the justification of my own existence 'I must ... strive to create for men situations such that they can accompany and surpass my transcendence. I need their freedom to be available to use and conserve me in surpassing me.'

In 'Pyrrhus and Cineas' Beauvoir dwells only briefly on what has been identified as one of the recurrent themes of these early essays: we must act in uncertainty and assume the risk of failure; violence is inevitable. In 'Moral Idealism and Political Realism' these themes are more insistent. The inevitability of violence (in treating some men as ends we must treat others as means) reduces moral idealism (the refuge of the beautiful soul, the adherent of a pure and rigorous Kantian ethic) to a pale excuse for inaction, which is a form of action anyway. On the other hand, the anethical political realism that reduces action to a technical or tactical matter, believing its goal and its necessity to be imposed from the outside, fails to take account of 'the very reality that gives all others their meaning and value, namely, human reality'. The reconciliation of ethics and politics, according to Beauvoir, entails the recognition of the freedom of subjectivity and the uncertainties of human action.

Taken together, 'Pyrrhus and Cineas' and 'Moral Idealism and Political Realism' thus do offer a kind of existentialist ethics, but, as Kruks implies in the introduction to the latter, one that is quite as empty

as the Kantian ethics against which Beauvoir positions herself. Her categorical imperative: always so act as to maximize the freedom of the other. How do we know which other to choose, and which (inevitably) to treat as means in this action? Assume 'the constituting movement through which values and principles are posited': decide for yourself, just be prepared to answer for your decision. This ethics is based on a kind of extreme existentialism. Despite a distinction between freedom and power, a distinction that Beauvoir believes distances her from 'that abstract freedom posited by the Stoics', the absolute freedom of the subject is affirmed. Despite the thematic emphasis on the Other, the absolute sovereignty of the self-constituting subject is not questioned. As she says in 'Existentialism and Popular Wisdom' (also 1945), 'man is the unique and sovereign master of his destiny if only he wants to be.'

Several commentators in this volume refer to Beauvoir's own assessment of these early essays in her autobiography (Volume II):

> An individual, I thought, only receives a human dimension by recognizing the existence of others. Yet, in my essay ['Pyrrhus and Cineas'], coexistence appears as a sort of accident that each individual should somehow surmount; he should begin by hammering out his project in solitary state, and only then ask the mass of mankind to endorse its validity. In truth, society has been all about me from the day of my birth... My subjectivism was, inevitably, doubled up with a streak of idealism that deprived my speculations of all, or nearly all, their significance.

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948) Beauvoir does depart from early Sartrean orthodoxy, taking the first steps towards the momentous intellectual achievement of *The Second Sex*. Some situations, she says in 1948, are such that freedom within them is impossible, or at least meaningless. The full 'weight' of the situation, as Kruks says elsewhere, begins to impose itself. The recognition of the social-political constitution of subjectivity begins to dawn. Even then, however, according to Beauvoir's own assessment (in Volume III of her autobiography), the ethics remains abstract, idealist, saturated with 'the ideologies of my class':

> I went to a great deal of trouble to present inaccurately a problem to which I then offered a solution quite as hollow as the Kantian maxims. My descriptions of [various 'types'] are even more arbitrary and abstract than [Hegel's], since they are not even linked together by a historical development; the attitudes I examine are explained by historical conditions; I limited myself to isolating their moral significance to such an extent that my portraits are

not situated on any level of reality. I was in error when I thought I could define a morality independent of a social context.

Beauvoir's commentators in the *Philosophical Writings*, as elsewhere, usually claim that this Maoist moment of the 1960s is 'overly dismissive', as Kruks says here. But it is an accurate assessment of the writings of the 'moral period'. Why is it not possible to give Beauvoir the credit for seeing this? These writings are shot through with banal observations and bourgeois homily: 'A lucid generosity is what should guide our actions.' Characteristically, they advance the argument with complacent anecdotes, often with a decid-

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edly sexist or self-aggrandizing bent ('Many women give up their lovers on the advice of their concierges because the lover is only a man; the concierge is the voice of the public, that mysterious they'). This is not evidence of an 'original philosophical methodology', but the 'popular wisdom' Beauvoir claimed to despise. A serious assessment of her work demands that we acknowledge these things.

Bergoffen suggests that the early work needs to be seen as more than an anticipation of *The Second Sex*. Even so, many of the introductions in this volume reveal that all eyes are constantly on the later text, justifying the interest of the early pieces in relation to it. Philosophy, we might say, really falls to earth in *The Second Sex*. No doubt it contains its own banalities and insupportable generalities, and in 1949 Beauvoir is still 'insufficiently liberated from the ideologies of [her] class', but it does boast the originality and importance that justifies Beauvoir's place in the philosophical canon. In particular, the idealism and subjectivism of the earlier work gives way to a materialist ontology of social being, more or less single-handedly inaugurating the twentieth-century philosophy of sex and gender, explicitly criticizing the irritating abstraction of the 'man' of the moral period – so evident and insistent in the works collected in this volume.

Two pieces, however, stand out. Beauvoir's 1945 review of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of*

Perception should routinely be given to students as a pithy (and very short) introduction. Beauvoir identifies several aspects of the book as particularly important. The pages in which Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that 'it is impossible to consider our body as an object, even as a privileged object' are, according to Beauvoir, 'perhaps the most definitive of the entire book'. She seems to approve of Merleau-Ponty's description of 'the concrete character of the subject that is never, according to him, a pure for-itself'. Among many 'rich suggestions' she singles out for special distinction those on the questions of sexuality and language. The most important, however, is 'the phenomenological elucidation of a lived experience', the experience of perception. It is striking that these insights, so crucial to *The Second Sex*, are almost entirely absent from the early philosophical works in the rest of the volume.

The other outstanding piece is the 1946 essay 'An Eye for an Eye', a philosophical response to the trial and subsequent execution of Robert Brasillach, editor of the fascist newspaper *Je suis partout*, an anti-Semite and collaborationist, who revealed in his columns the pseudonyms and whereabouts of French Jews. In this essay 'public opinion' no longer belongs to the inauthentic masses, but to 'us':

> Under the Nazi oppression, faced with traitors who have made us their accomplices, we saw poisonous sentiments bloom within our hearts of which we never before had any presentiment. Before the war we lived without wishing any of our fellow humans any harm... Since June 1940 we have learned rage and hate. We have wished humiliation and death on our enemies. And today each time a tribunal condemns a war criminal, an informer, a collaborator, we feel responsible for the verdict. Since we have desired this victory, since we have craved these sanctions, it is in our name that they judge, that they punish. Ours is the public opinion that expresses itself through newspapers, posters, meetings, the public opinion that these specialized instruments are designed to satisfy.

Beauvoir refused to sign a petition, circulated among intellectuals, for Brasillach's pardon. And yet, she says, on leaving the courtroom, 'I did not desire his death ... I could not envision without anguish that an affirmation of the principle "one must punish traitors" should lead one gray morning to the flowing of real blood.' It is not a small thing, she remarks, 'to suddenly find oneself a judge, much more an executioner'. How can a revenge so ardently desired leave only the taste of ashes in the mouth? The thirst for revenge, according to Beauvoir, 'answers to one of the metaphysical requirements of man'. In the event of the abomination of the reduction of a man to an object, the denial of his existence as a man, the demand for the reaffirmation of 'the reciprocity of interhuman relations [that] is the basis of the idea of justice' howls out for satisfaction. Revenge strives to destroy 'evil' at its source – the freedom of the 'evildoer'. But revenge itself runs the risk of becoming abomination. Thus society refuses to authorize private acts of revenge (while allowing, without legitimating, them as exceptions) and punishment rests in the hands of the state. It is this idea of punishment itself that is at issue in 'An Eye for an Eye'. Beauvoir's problem is that revenge is, in fact, not a dish best served cold. Furthermore, all punishment is at least partially a failure – it cannot compel the freedom of the evildoer to recognize the interhuman reciprocity that his act denied.

'An Eye for an Eye' is a powerful piece of writing, free – agonizingly wrenched from – the defects of the other essays from the moral period: idealism, subjectivism, elitism. The references elsewhere to the inevitability of failure and violence, uncertainty and risk ('Pyrrhus and Cineas'), to the 'tragic ambiguity' of human existence ('Introduction to An Ethics of Ambiguity', 1946), take concrete form in the deliberations of 'An Eye for an Eye'. The 'sovereign subject' of Beauvoir's extreme existentialism seems to feel itself swayed and buffeted by society and history, and the unpleasant tone of self-assurance and class confidence dissolves into genuine uncertainty. The philosophical issue – the idea of punishment – is all the more strongly posed for being unresolved; Beauvoir's point, indeed, is that it is unresolvable.

'An Eye for an Eye' offers a taste of Beauvoir at her best, very far from the doyenne of existentialism who wrote 'Jean-Paul Sartre'. Her review of *Phenomenology of Perception* demonstrates what an astute reader she could be, in contrast to the sloppy references to Heidegger that contribute to making 'Pyrrhus and Cineas' such an excruciating read. 'An Existentialist Looks at Americans' is nothing compared to Beauvoir's more considered *America Day by Day*, an account of the four-month trip to the USA that seemed to open her eyes to the kind of social criticism that spawned *The Second Sex* – one of the most important books of the twentieth century and so far superior to the empty abstraction of the moral period represented in the *Philosophical Writings*. It would be a terrible mistake to judge Beauvoir's philosophical work on the basis of this volume. To that extent the wisdom of its presentation must surely be in question.

Stella Sandford

Get a chewn, mate!

Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, eds, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, Continuum, New York and London, 2004. xvii + 454 pp., £55.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 8264 1614 4 hb., 0 8264 1615 2 pb.

Audio Culture is a book to provoke thought and disputation. Its ambition is to import the bewildering profusion and vitality of the contemporary music scene into the academy. This intervention is timely, but who benefits is not yet clear. By constructing a genealogy that links 'vanguard music production' to the twentieth-century sonic avant-garde, it seeks to bolster, through textual support, a challenge to conservative musicology and philosophical aesthetics.

The fifty-seven texts selected are divided into two parts – 'Theory' and 'Practices' – and nine sections. Each section is briefly introduced; each text with author's biography, discography and, where relevant, bibliography. This material is supplemented by an idiosyncratic chronology of events (1877 – Edison invents phonograph; 1995 – Simon Reynolds coins the term 'post-rock'), a general discography, bibliography and glossary. This is an excellent selection of texts. It avoids univocity, provides sources for thinking about tough problems, and even the duds are representative. But it is not clear whether it constitutes a marker for the self-confidence of music or a generation of academics.

The first section on noise, sound and silence is indicative of the endeavour. The classical context is created through Luigi Russolo's futurist manifesto 'Art of Noises', Cage's credo, a Morton Feldman piece on Varèse and Boulez, and one by Varèse himself on the transformation of the composer into an 'organizer of sound' ('a worker in rhythm, frequencies, and intensities'). It concludes with three complementary selections taken from contemporary music. Mary Russo and Daniel Warner connect this interest in noise to industrial bands such as 23 Skidoo and Einstürzende Neubauten, but introduce a certain post-punk infatuation with the fast, loud transgressive element of noise as expression of working-class alienation. A different dimension of noise as cruelty is found in the brief interview with Masami Akita of Merzbow, which repositions the car-crash eroticism of noise alongside its potential to battle 'much too noisy' Japanese life (though making Merzbow stand for the entirety of Japanese noise music is questionable). Debate is generated by setting an extract from Simon Reynolds's book *Blissed Out* (1990) next to these two. Questioning the 'subversive fallacy' that he sees as underlying these affirmations, Reynolds advocates the bliss of new

psychedelia against self-destruction. As the editor's introduction points out, Reynolds's later *Energy Flash* (1998) pursued these themes in relation to 'techno and rave culture'.

When the method works such differential tensions come to the fore not simply within the sections, but also across them. This is best exemplified by the manner in which the sections on the 'Open Work', 'Experimental Musics' and 'Improvised Musics' survey the modern challenge to composition. In its most forthright expression, George E. Lewis positions Charlie Parker and the jazz revolution as the wider impetus behind the incorporation of chance into the compositions of John Cage. Opposed to a purely 'internalist' reading of the latter, Lewis notes that the emphasis on spontaneity and uniqueness arrives '8 to 10 years after the innovations of bebop' and cites Anthony Braxton's assertion that the terms 'aleatory' and 'indeterminism' were coined specifically to avoid the term 'improvisation'. There are three Cage selections in this work, and this essay is the only point at which the Zen influence behind spontaneity, with its exclusion of history and memory, is challenged in its narrow conception. Disappointingly, there is no comeback to this strong reading that terminates these three sections.

Audio Culture rightly foregrounds the series of technical revolutions behind its choice of musics: phonograph, tape recording, electronics, digital technology and now the changes in circulation introduced by Internet audio file-sharing. In light of the recent legal controversies surrounding music downloads, the work of John Oswald, whose 'The Ethics of Musical Debt' is included here, gains added charge. Chris Cutler's excellent essay on Oswald's materialist constructions sees the latter as instituting the coming-to-consciousness of the recording process. Famously, Oswald was forced to destroy his 1989 CD *Plunderphonic* under legal threat from the Canadian Recording Industry Association over copyright infringement relating to the track 'dab' (attributed to 'Alien Chasm Jock'). Although distributed for free, and hence entailing no commercial benefit to himself, the reworking of Michael Jackson's *Bad*, and several Beatles songs whose copyright the latter also owns, proved so incendiary that CBS could not tolerate its existence. In 2002, a double CD retrospective appeared, *69/96*, including the original 1989

material but under the conceit that the master tapes had been stolen and put out without Oswald's knowledge. Cutler's concern is to articulate the strategy and self-understanding of a production that 'begins and ends only with recordings, with the *already played*' and hence rejects notions of 'genius, individuality [and] originality', those 'outmoded concepts whose uncontrolled application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense' (Walter Benjamin). In this way, Cutler extends Oswald's manipulation of the given beyond parody or institutional critique. He finds an ally in Glenn Gould, who explores the philosophical themes relating to the studio construction of his Bach recordings through the splicing of several takes. Taking issue with the common complaint that this is dehumanizing, Gould questions the privileging of live music and the judgement of the performer, insisting that recorded music, and the qualitatively new possibility of comparison it inaugurates, promotes 'analytical temperament' in the listener, which requires a new historical understanding opposed to biographism and chronology.

This repudiation perhaps underlies Cox and Warner's self-presentation as compiling a genealogy rather than a history: connecting contemporary forms to experimental tradition. Because there is no conceptualization of this distinction (though one hears a possible nod to Foucault), and since 'contemporary' and 'modern' are used as synonyms (as if *both* were simply chronological categories), it becomes difficult to discern any justification for inclusion or exclusion. What is posited? And does the evidence collated prove to be a valid sample? The precise nature of any historical relation seems to fluctuate between resource, shared concerns, serendipitous confluence. It is then important to ask about the titular claim: what is *audio culture*? In what way is it a culture? Who partakes in it, produces and consumes it?

The status of the claim shifts across the four pages of the introduction. To begin we are told that a new culture has not only emerged but that it connects to an auditory turn in contemporary culture *as a whole* (this shift in scope within the term passes unremarked). But the three events taken to reveal this new prominence of the auditory are: the academic event (the explosion of interest in the anthropology and history of sound); the art event (the new viability of sound art in museums and galleries); the music event (the acknowledgement of marginal figures by 'an extraordinary number' of contemporary musicians).

Neither of the first two symptoms, nor the broader cultural diagnosis, is demonstrated within this col-lection, though McLuhan and Walter Ong are referenced. Regarding the third, the 'mapping' of this 'sonic terrain' does not match a figure or a locale to the 'extraordinary number'. Lest it appear merely to recount the proclivities of a circumscribed cultural elite (the Rortyian 'we'), *Audio Culture* has to inflect the *modern* in its subtitle. Explicitly ignoring (but more likely ignored by) mainstream music, this 'vanguard fringe' has to be qualified as music that *challenges prevailing assumptions*. However, it is fundamental to identify where these assumptions are located. The missing term is 'tradition'. The value of the challenge depends upon the value of what is negated. If the question of value, the strong claim of art, is avoided, then the project reduces to the description of a culture, subculture or mere listening habits. Such a dialectical relation to tradition is evinced by the older pieces. Penned by the major figures themselves, they are invested with a need for justification or assertion absent from those dealing with electronica, hip-hop and techno. With the latter the authorship passes to more minor figures, freelance journalists and academics. Not that this means the pieces glow at lower wattage, but the claim to vanguardism diminishes, as does the cogency, as the mainstream influences of rock, pop, soul and dance are elided or effaced in order to justify the organizing principle.

According to Emmanuelle Loubet, cited as an epigraph to the section on electronic music, Stockhausen and *musique concrète* are the 'keywords of contemporary Techno'. It does the editors credit that they include the very enjoyable transcript of a Radio 3 programme that dispels this idea. 'Advice to Clever Children' involved subjecting Karlheinz Stockhausen to tracks by four of the leading young electronic producers of the day. Stockhausen, opposed to the 'whoring' of the highest expression of human intelligence, objects to the 'post-African repetitions' of those who, tempted by fashion, 'want to have a special effect in dancing bars'. The return leg, 'Advice *from* Clever Children', sees a robust defence of groove, bass line and dancing. Along with a subversive capacity to rhythm, lulling the listener into a false sense of security, Scanner sees the potential for religious experience in the physical effect of rhythm blocks. Do we need to ask who supplies this rhythm? Any consideration of the role played by Stockhausen really needs mediation through Kraftwerk, Can, Faust and other Krautrock giants – it's not clear what justifies the omission of these figures.

Indeed, the question of what is meant by influence is hardly pondered, but Kim Cascone, a 'post-digital' composer and former music editor for David Lynch,

offers a deflatory account of self-taught computer nerds hunting for material to sample among charity shop vinyl *thereby* unearthing the history of electronic music retrospectively. One could add that it wasn't simply classical music that turned up here, but Esquivel, Radiophonic Workshop sound effects, and porn soundtracks. Any distinction originating from the incorporation of this material still takes place *against the general backdrop of major influences.*

This elimination of rock, funk, soul and disco from the contemporary sonic scene is a fabrica-

tion wrought by the unwarranted extension of the publication's logic. The techno that counts is that which can be connected to Eno's ambient music, minimalism or the early electronic pioneers. The unfortunate journalistic invention 'Intelligent Dance Music' (IDM) is phantasmagoric when hypostatized into a defining category. Any given track, supposedly 'made for listening', was more than likely produced by figures who also made club tunes. Philip Sherburne (in the only commissioned piece) presents 'minimal' techno (constructed from a pared-down sonic palette – mostly thumps, thuds and beeps) as a reaction against the messy, sweaty hardcore scene, but one can cite several figures supposedly in the minimal or intelligent camp who continue to produce hardcore tracks. Recording for the influential Warp record label (referenced here as the home of IDM), Tom Jenkinson (Squarepusher) takes centre stage in Ben Neill's 'Breakthrough Beats': for a 200 beats per minute set at the 2001 Coachella Festival, California. A trainspotter would probably file 'My Red Hot Car' under '(Speed) Garage'; as the Duke of Harringay, he produced the only 'drum & fretless bass' tracks. It wasn't that techno 'grew' minimalist in the 1990s through some 'teleological urge', but that, as the

dance scene grew, several subgenres solidified and spawned specialist nights, labels and shops.

In Britain after Acid House, 'techno' was a loose generic that is only retrospectively distinguished from breakbeat, jungle, gabba, happy hardcore, and so on. The evolution of separate genres was accompanied by a proliferation of heteronyms: in part associated with the creation of theatrical personae, in part to do with contractual arrangements with small-scale labels. In 1996, Matthew Herbert released deep house as 'Herbert' on Phono, sampling techno workout, *D for Doctor*, as 'Doctor Rockit' on Clear, and reserved his experimental live work with toasters and crisps for 'Wishmountain' on Antiphon.

It is not clear what is at stake in tracing a strand nominated 'minimal techno' and connecting it to Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Is it influence or congruence? And does this make it matter? Sherburne makes some solid points about the 'massification' effect of playing several minimal tracks *simultaneously* (viz. Jeff Mills's four-deck performances), but the current scene is skewed by the exclusion of non-minimalist, non-mainstream output, for example so-called 'wonky techno' or 'ugly funk' (Subhead, Buckfunk 3000, Sugar Experiment Station et al.). The 'funk' recalls George Clinton, James Brown and Prince, a real influence, however distorted through modern technical apparatus (is *Sign 'O' the Times* the last authentic popular classic?). Is there further mileage in George E. Lewis's complaint about 'Eurological' perspectives effacing black musics? Or is there a generalized, unthematized suspicion about the *song* in the avant-garde context? We have intimations of this in the critical response to the forthcoming releases of Brian Eno and Jamie Lidell.

A further dimension: the membership card for the legendary Birmingham techno club, House of God, reads in upper case: 'THIS CARD ENABLES YOU TO FULLY APPRECIATE BLACK SABBATH'. A Midlands metal genealogy supplements those of Chicago and Detroit. Could we reconstruct from this welter a non-institutionalized tradition reflecting all these genealogies and reconfigure a vanguardism in this fashion?

Perhaps, but we should first consider another factor. In the liner notes to *Change of the Century* (1959), Ornette Coleman states:

> Many people don't trust their reactions to art or music unless there is a verbal *explanation* for it. In music, the only thing that matters is whether you *feel* it or not. You can't intellectualize music; to reduce it analytically often is to reduce it to nothing very important.

As a prevalent refusal of articulation, it threatens to undermine *both* the drive to justification *and* any presented continuity with academic interests. Derek Bailey writing on free improvisation, the subject of Ben Watson's recent biography (reviewed by David Cunningham in *RP* 128), also distances himself from avant-garde 'attitudes', which he associates with the desire to stay ahead of the field. Such a refusal need not decide the issue, but in a recent *ID* magazine interview (March 2004), Tom Jenkinson, who has also performed on bass in a free improvisation trio with Alan Wilkinson and Paul Hession, suggests that such a desire is *now* strictly illusory:

> There is really no such thing as a musical avant garde, because enough people are now so ready and desperate for 'difference' that nothing experimental stays on the margins. The speed at which information can be disseminated about music forces anybody with something resembling originality to be quickly brought to the zenith of their popularity. … It has revealed that there was never taste, just habits. Now there are only waves of enthusiasm that break and sink into the sand, in endless procession.

Just as Bailey counteracts any ossifying effect by playing with as many different people as possible, Jenkinson and others explore several avenues made possible by new technologies. Does bare opposition to the 'gruesomely predictable' suffice? Or is a discursive dimension essential to vanguardism? If this work is necessary to modernism, who does it? Critics? Academics? Producers? Notably, Jenkinson does not eschew articulation per se, and has written on machine collaboration proffering similar ideas to Gould, Oswald and Cutler. In contrast, Herbert, who opens his website (www.magicandaccident.com) with a quotation from Cage, has produced a sampling manifesto, 'Personal Contract for the Composition of Music' (see www.matthewherbert.com) whose commitment to performance and live musicians offers a contrast to plunderphonics. Leverage points for philosophy appear as this meshes with the political and pedagogical turn in his recent work. Again, the question of value rests on this interrelation of tradition and social function. And pleasure? It gets honoured, but no one seems willing to say much.

The foregrounding of these questions is hampered by an editorial quirk: book extracts from philosophers and theorists are reduced to little more than a couple of pages. Although essays are also edited, they generally suffer less violence (though Pierre Schaeffer's definition of the sonic object, in an essay translated especially for the volume, becomes impossible to follow in abbreviated form). A measly page and a half, taken from the collaboration with Hanns Eisler, *Composing for Films*, represents Adorno thoughts on music's place under advanced capitalism.

Ola Stockfelt's anti-elitist defence of the context-dependent plurality of appropriate musical competencies, exemplified by the uncanny ability to recognize tunes from the first note, slips into the easy valorization of 'genre-normative listening situations'. Here the question of value is effaced. Adorno's concern is to question the political or socially attenuated consequences of such listening practices: that is, no listening situation can inure itself from the social in an autarkic subpractice. This complacency is exemplified by Iain Chambers's paean to the Walkman as weapon of urban strategy, experiential reorganization and human adventure ('a semiotic shifter').

> To travel and to perform our *travail*, in this environment we plug in, choosing a circuit. Here, as opposed to the discarded 'grand narratives' (Lyotard) of the city, the Walkman offers the possibility of a micro-narrative, a customized story and soundtrack, not merely a space but a place, a site of dwelling.

Update the Walkman to the Wasp communication tool, and we have musings, more brassicate than rhizomatic, that should grace www.trashbat.co.ck. It underscores Coleman's fear of intellectualization. Opposing the narcissistic daydream of the temporary autonomous zone, whether the concert hall or the space between your ears, a productive interrogation of the theoretical terrain would avoid becoming a celebration, or an inauguration of contemporary music into the academy. Wim Mertens's suspicion of Steve Reich's 'annexation' of gamelan music could be extended to the creep of cultural capital into clubbing, gentrification through academic apparatus. This problem needs to be to the fore: are philosophy and theory, our habits of thought, adequate to what is going on in music today?

Andrew McGettigan

Metaphysical charms for animated nature

Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005. xxiii + 224 pp., £54.00 hb., £15.50 pb., 0 7914 6293 5 hb., 0 7914 6294 3 pb.

Hegel's philosophy of nature is one of the most neglected areas of his thought. Alison Stone makes a serious and sustained attempt to vindicate its significance and relevance by canvassing an a priori interpretation, which she reconstructs in light of ethical considerations. The book makes an important contribution to the study of Hegel and is a timely intervention in current debates about our relation with nature. And whilst I remain unconvinced by Stone's defence of her central thesis, I think she is right to bring to our attention what she calls the 'metaphysics' of our scientific world-view. It is compared to this, she argues, that we should consider the Hegelian alternative, which, on her account, offers us the opportunity to articulate current ecological concerns.

Any discussion of the metaphysics of nature is likely to encounter entrenched resistance. An apologetic tone appears de rigueur whenever historians of philosophy discuss Descartes on primary and secondary qualities, Leibniz on motion, or Kant on forces, to say nothing of Schelling and *natura naturans*. There are exceptions, of course, and recent work on each of those topics shows that we stand to gain from renouncing the safety of philosophical complacency and allowing ourselves to re-examine our own dogmas of empiricism.

Both are difficult tasks. In the 1930s Otto Neurath liked to tell the story of how Hegel proved on a priori grounds that there can only be seven planets in our planetary system, in the same year that an eighth planet was discovered. The story is inaccurate. Hegel did not attempt to prove a priori the existence of seven planets, and in the only place in which he does discuss the topic, *De orbitis planetarum*, he seems happy to accept the existence of Uranus, discovered in 1781, on empirical grounds. Also, an eighth planet, Neptune, was not discovered till 1846, by which time Hegel would not have been able to comment one way or another. Yet the story has proved an enduring one. It confirms our prejudices about speculative foolishness; it is also useful as a cautionary tale against the usurpation of the domain of science by philosophical reason. (I strongly recommend the paper by Bertrand Beaumont, 'Hegel and the Seven Planets', *Mind* 63, 1954, pp. 246–8, to which I am indebted here.)

Important recent work has shown Hegel's vivid interest in contemporary scientific work and his readiness to engage directly with contemporary theories and discoveries. But awareness of Hegel's scientific interests renders the task of rethinking his relation to natural science more difficult, not easier. This is because a way must be found of tackling the problem of how he combines these interests with his commitment to a priori interpretations of natural phenomena and processes. There is a serious philosophical question hiding beneath the froth of invention: how do the concepts of pure thought, deduced independently of natural observation, relate to the objects of perception? There are two ways open to sympathetic interpreters to answer this question. One is by stressing the plausibility of an 'a posteriori' or pragmatic interpretation based on a distinctive understanding of Hegel's conception of reason and of rational processes. Historically, scientifically formed readers of Hegel's philosophy of nature have been attracted by what they saw as his dynamic conception of reason. In France, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a developmental and synthetic conception of reason was thought to have a promising application in thinking systematically about dynamic wholes. Against this type of dialectical reading, which ultimately encourages us to become accustomed to the lack of finality of our findings, Stone recommends an ontological interpretation that emphasizes the achieved union of thought and matter. On her account, Hegel's metaphysics presents us with 'the organizing structures that nature really has, structures which consist of forms of thought that become instantiated in matter in increasingly harmonious ways'. Stone recommends this interpretation on the grounds that it is fruitful. By 'fruitful' she means capable of presenting an alternative to the standpoint of 'empirical science'. This alternative perspective can then be used to launch a critique of the assumptions of empirical science and thus make room for current ecological concerns. Stone is careful to avoid imputing to Hegel proto-ecological intentions, but insists that her reconstruction does justice to scattered remarks that suggest that Hegel held a thesis 'that all nature is intrinsically good'. As this thumbnail sketch makes clear, a lot hangs on questions such as: Is an alternative to empirical science desirable? Can we speak of empirical science in the singular, as a unified discipline with a shared set of assumptions? Are all unexamined assumptions

usefully thought of as metaphysics? The answers to these questions are always mediated through further interpretation of Hegel. But this strictly immanentist interpretative style is, especially in a topic such as this, quite frustrating to readers who do not share Stone's Hegelian sympathies.

Exegesis of particular passages of Hegel's work and engagement with commentary make for cohesive presentation, but also one that leaves out both the broader epistemological issues that shaped post-Kantian philosophy and current argument that relates to this. Engaging with these debates would have helped to make explicit the philosophical motivation for the pursuit of what to many must seem an arid a priori path. When Euler, in his address to the Berlin Academy in 1748, argued that we would be well advised to use the truths of mechanics as our guide in our metaphysical researches, he sounds a note for what has become our common sense. Yet there is a puzzle that is not cleared away by our empiricist intuitions, and this puzzle was thought by many to take precisely a metaphysical form. In an early work, Kant remarks that laws which are shown to be false in mathematics can *still* occur in nature. To put it bluntly, it is possible that an explanation that stands to (mathematical) reason is not true of nature. We can also look at this problem differently. The opposite of what concerns Kant is also possible: mathematically correct laws, with proven predictive powers, can describe a physical universe that is utterly perplexing. When Max Planck, in the Berlin Physical Society in 1900, announced his formula on electromagnetic energy, he proposed precisely such a law, for which the only physical basis turned out to be the very odd world of quantum physics. It may be that the lesson to draw from this is to let go our hopes of a priori philosophical knowledge. Perhaps the best we can do is laboriously rethink our assumptions about what makes sense, about our criteria of intelligibility. But we still need to give an account of our choices, give reasons.

Broadening our focus, we can see the problem in terms of the unstable pairing of logical empiricism. There is a history to this beginning with Descartes's normative question about intelligibility criteria. What he saw was that the mechanistic world of the new science offered a new paradigm of intelligibility for which a criterion needed to be found that was not in itself empirically given. It takes Kant to place the observer at the heart of this transcendental logic: the observer contributes the criterion of objectivity itself, the formal characteristics of experience (and thus not merely subjective 'secondary qualities'). It

is in this context that Hegel sets out his claim for the intelligibility of nature, aiming to remove the dualistic remnant left over from Kant's revolution. The problem for Hegel and his contemporaries was to bridge the gap between mind and world without reviving the traditional doctrine of material substance in order to render intelligible the perception-independent existence of things in themselves.

Whilst Stone is not unaware of this larger problematic, she studiously avoids engaging with it. On her account, Hegel's chief concern is with showing the intrinsic rationality of all natural forms. I agree, but this is a truncated version of his project. A number of things follow from this that are directly relevant to Stone's defence of her thesis. First, if, as I suggested, we view Hegel's position in terms of his post-Kantian inheritance, then the drawing of any ethical lessons is not going to be as direct as Stone argues. It might involve coming to terms with our spatio-temporal being as historical and as shaped by our practical interactions and commitments. Related to this is the question of the ethical import of the *criticisms* of Hegel's rationalist metaphysics. It would have been good, for instance, to see the reason–nature relation Stone attributes to Hegel defended against the ethically motivated criticism of panlogicism. As Schelling puts it in his *On the History of Modern Philosophy*: 'the whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is how exactly it got to these nets, as there is obviously something other and something more than mere reason in the world.' Third, and again taking our clue from the post-Kantian debate, the epistemic question I flagged earlier was not posed in isolation. A mechanistic world-view was seen as impervious to our moral strivings and irreconcilable with the view of nature as created by a benevolent God. Whilst Stone mentions passages in which Hegel speaks tantalizingly of the divinity of external nature, she keeps them strictly within the scope of her ethical interpretation. This may be viewed as an advantage by those who weary easily of Hegel's God. But it does mean that the ethical interpretation has to carry a lot of argumentative weight.

Can it do so? Let us consider again the elements of Stone's interpretation. Hegel's aprioristic metaphysics, she argues, asks us to consider 'all natural forms' as 'intrinsically rational …[,] they are, in some sense, rational agents whose developments are meaningful, making it appropriate to explain those developments interpretively with reference to the rationality that guides them.' Further on, she writes that what allows Hegel to attribute intrinsic goodness to all natural

forms is their 'practical rationality'. Whilst it is consistent with Stone's thesis about the gradual unification of reason and nature to speak of the rationality of natural forms, the conclusion of their 'practical rationality' is less compelling. Certainly there are good reasons for thinking in terms of continuities between different forms of life, and the recent reclassification of humans, hominins (which replaced the older 'hominids'), and some apes is an interesting example of this. But is the liberal assignation of practical rationality and agency really the best way to think ethically about nature? Further, despite Stone's advocacy, I think that few ecologists would be consoled by Hegelian assurances that 'it is impossible for activities of finite human individuals to impact upon the internal order of nature'. Finally, the commendation of this metaphysical interpretation on the grounds that it fits with our 'basic sense' of nature's intrinsic goodness is unconvincing. I remain sceptical about this 'basic' sense. Whilst few would deny our natural being and multiple natural dependencies, bare appeals to 'our' intuition about nature's goodness are insufficient. Nature, as Kant often reminded his audience, can be like a cruel stepmother, and, as both Kant and Hegel argued, to define ourselves as human we often find ourselves compelled to leave nature behind.

Katerina Deligiorgi

I had that Arthur Schopenhauer in the back of my cab once

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Art of Always Being Right: Thirty-Eight Ways to Win When You Are Defeated*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders, Gibson Square Books, London, 2005. 200 pp., £9.99 hb., 1 903933 61 7.

David E. Cartwright, *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Philosophy,* Scarecrow Press, Lanham MD, 2005. 312 pp., £50.00 hb., 0 8108 5324 8.

The recent republication of Arthur Schopenhauer's *The Art of Always Being Right* – originally published in part as 'Logik und Dialektik' in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, and translated into English in full by T. Bailey Saunders in 1896, when it was published as *The Art of Controversy* – offers an interesting and combative interpretation of the dialectic, likely to conflict with our habitual understanding of this much contested and questioned term of philosophical practice.

Given the role of the dialectic in the history of philosophy since Kant, it is easy to forget that in Ancient Greek philosophy its place was far from stable. In the aporetic dialogues, Plato has Socrates use the play of questions and responses not to establish knowledge but to call into question the authoritative mastery of those who think they know, and to make the difference between knowing and not-knowing manifest. By contrast, a dialogue such as *Meno* makes it clear that Plato was starting to understand the dialectic as a method, a way of leading to the correct response to a question. Michel Meyer has argued that the subsequent dialogues of Plato's maturity ultimately yield a conception of the dialectic which deals with the objective value of assertions and has nothing to do with stabilizing the play of opinions to establish a basis for discussion, as it does for Aristotle, where, rather than yielding knowledge, dialectic aids in the formation of consensus. In *The Art of Always Being Right*, Schopenhauer develops a conception of the dialectic as *eristic*, a sense which is perhaps better conveyed by the title of the 1896 edition of the translation: *The Art of Controversy*. In eristics, which Aristotle keeps distinct from dialectics in the *Sophist Refutations*, an appeal is made to the commonplace opinions which formed the basis of Aristotelian dialectics but in an entirely factitious way. Testifying to an inspiration which owes more to Kant than to the Aristotle he explicitly discusses, Schopenhauer identifies dialectics and eristics:

> In itself the study of dialectic has nothing to do but to show how a man may defend himself against attacks of every kind, and especially against dishonest attacks.… The discovery of objective truth must be separated from the art of winning acceptance for propositions.

This conception of the dialectic, despite sharing – in Kant – at least one common antecedent, is decidedly different from that of Hegel: it is a way of winning arguments, nothing more or less – and certainly doesn't have any speculative value. Of course Popper has argued that, to the extent that it would not admit of falsifiability, the Hegelian dialectic was also an art of always being right. For Schopenhauer, by contrast, it is precisely *because* any and every proposition is falsifiable, honestly or dishonestly, that a different, highly practical appreciation of the dialectic is required.

To the extent that Schopenhauer's version of the dialectic as eristic develops a logic of appearances – and despite his own protestations to the contrary – Schopenhauer's essay brings his interpretation into maximum proximity with the verbal jousting, the logology of the sophists. The stratagems which the essay discusses, as ways of winning an argument even when our own propositions may appear or actually be weak (that is to say, devoid of truth value) have more than an air of sophistic chicanery. They run from the really cheap and nasty – number 38: The Ultimate Strategy. 'A last trick is to become personal, insulting, rude, as soon as you perceive that your opponent has the upper hand, and that you are going to come off worst' – to the devious and disingenuous – 12: Choose Metaphors Favourable to your Proposition, 13: Agree to Reject the Counter-Argument. Calculated, then, as a series of means of always gaining the upper hand, Schopenhauer argues that these stratagems ultimately provide a defence against the 'natural baseness of human nature', a claim which may be understood as aligned with Schopenhauer's more general philosophical pessimism.

Barbara Cassin has proposed that a sophist history of philosophy serves the important purpose of underlining the ways in which philosophy constitutes an identity for itself by means of a thoroughly ambivalent relation to its other. The constructive engagement of sophistry with language, she argues, indicates the close link between sophistry and the constitutive activity of 'the political'. An analysis of Schopenhauer's essay in these terms is suggestive for a somewhat different appreciation of the dialectic and negativity than our present post-Marxist theoretical conjuncture might suggest.

Beyond the obvious family resemblance with what philosophical orthodoxy tells us sophistry is, there are several reasons for considering Schopenhauer's text in these terms. In his brief and helpful preface, A.C. Grayling points towards the uncertainties regarding the ultimate intent of Schopenhauer in this text. The fact that the latter only published an attenuated version of the original text in his lifetime suggests that he may have had some concern over its compellingly insistent drive to win win win. His critical remarks in *Parerga and Paralipomena* suggest a desire to attenuate the sophist implications of the original text. However, it is precisely this grey area regarding intentions which is characteristic of the Ancient Greek sophists – were they good? were they evil? – and is the necessary corollary of the 'autonomization' of language. Schopenhauer drives such a big wedge between the truth and

appearances, and insists to such an extent on keeping up the latter, that one is entitled to wonder if by force of argument one might end up convincing oneself of the truth of the weaker argument.

In the second place, just as the sophist conception of the practice of 'citizening' – that is to say, professing to justice in public, regardless of what happens in private – meant a paradoxical, because hypocritical, adherence to the crucial values of the city, Schopenhauer's affirmation of the need always to appear right presents a belated, pessimistic spin on the same practice. 'We are', he says, 'almost compelled to become dishonest', doggedly or dogmatically maintaining in public what we know full well may be false in private. In a footnote, Schopenhauer concedes that his view has a crucial parallel with that of the *bête noire* of political philosophy, Machiavelli: 'Machiavelli advises his Prince to make use of every moment that his neighbour is weak to attack him; otherwise his neighbour may do the same.… It is just the same in a dispute.' If we forget the ethics of intentions by which Schopenhauer sought to protect his work from the accusation of Machiavellianism it is possible to read this collection of stratagems as a useful tool for the analysis of consensus formation. Indeed, to the extent that Schopenhauer's pessimism leads him there, his constructive dismissal of truth claims from the immediate sphere of debate better fits this work to following the pragmatic actions of language within the political and the subtle displacements of *spin*. It is no coincidence that the promotional blurb adorning the inside front pages of the book quotes a review in the *New Statesman*

claiming that *The Art* is 'An instruction manual in intellectual duplicity that no aspiring parliamentarian, trainee lawyer, wannabe TV interviewer or newspaper columnist can afford to be without.' Such 'instruction manuals' have a long history: Schopenhauer translated the Spanish Jesuit Baltasar Gracián's *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, itself an important philological link with the world of the sophists.

Of course it would be difficult to make the claim here that Schopenhauer was a sophist and it would be difficult to see what value such a claim might have. However, it is interesting to note how, pushed to the margins by a vigilant critical rationality, the loquacious amorality of sophisticated disputation can creep back onto the page, facilitated by a conception of human nature as generally perverse. The anchoring of language in a normative conception of human nature enabled Aristotle to ground his exclusion of the sophist from the city in his *Metaphysics*. Here, a somewhat different conception of the human facilitates the sophist's partial return.

Given what has been said already about the proximity of Schopenhauer's *The Art of Always Being Right* to sophistry, it might appear perverse, an expression of the baser instincts of human nature or just downright contradictory to want to review David F. Cartwright's *Historical Dictionary of Schopenhauer's Thought* in the same article. After all, the purpose of a dictionary is to fix the sense of words so as to guide the reader, whereas eristic dialectic aims to shift their meaning so as to lead one's interlocutor astray. However, a remarkably insistent drive characterized Schopenhauer's life as a philosopher and it is noteworthy that by all accounts he himself had a fearsomely disputatious nature, which expressed itself in some interestingly singular terms.

It is well known that when working as a *Privat-dozent* at the University of Berlin, Schopenhauer requested to have his lectures scheduled at the same time as those of Hegel. Cartwright helpfully reminds us that whilst Hegel managed to enrol two hundred students for his course, Schopenhauer only succeeded in enrolling five. Given the relative failure of his career as an academic and his enmity for Hegel, it is not surprising that Schopenhauer should have produced both his incendiary reinterpretation of the dialectic and his attack (in the *Parerga and Paralipomena*) on the state-happy thinking of those academics who would live *by* but not *for* philosophy (in this, incidentally, he anticipates some of Max Weber's ideas about science as vocation) with his nemesis firmly in mind.

By drawing together the main strands of Schopenhauer's thinking with biographical issues and issues to do with Schopenhauer's relation to the history of philosophy, Cartwright's book provides suggestive avenues of research for exploring the role of Schopenhauer in the history of German philosophy after Kant. Pointing towards Schopenhauer's concern, justified or not, with the stupefying effect he felt Hegel was having on German thought, the *Historical Dictionary* provides suggestive indications of the role that Schopenhauer had in transforming what Deleuze calls the 'image of thought'. Whilst Deleuze contends that it is with Nietzsche and Flaubert that the problem of *stupidity* comes directly to the fore, Schopenhauer's acute sense of the constraints imposed on thought by academic specialism is testament to his early appreciation of the negative aspects of professionalization, of which stupidity (in the active sense of the French *bêtise*) is an expression.

When dealing simultaneously with the conceptual and the biographical the danger always arises of mistaking the movement of thought for psychology. The case of Schopenhauer's 'thinking' about women is a case in point: Schopenhauer clearly had a 'troubled' relation to women in his personal life and an equally troubled conceptual understanding of the difference between the sexes, but although Cartwright hints at the obvious Freudian interpretation that could be made of the relation between Schopenhauer's life and thought, his approach is prudently descriptive and ironically understated, qualities which are manifest elsewhere in the book. Discussing Schopenhauer's attitude towards the genitals, for example, Cartwright remarks that 'it is fortunate that he did not advocate total castration or genital mutilation as a means for overcoming sexual desire.' Indeed.

The *Historical Dictionary* provides a comprehensive bibliography of anglophone writings on Schopenhauer and in its pedagogical intent provides a helpful guide to a much maligned but thoroughly interesting figure in German philosophy. It doesn't venture into the more difficult task of evaluating Schopenhauer's work and nor does it consider the more troubling resonances of his writings. *The Art of Always Being Right* on the other hand compels a somewhat different historiography and is a caustically witty reminder of the ambiguities of the daily practice of philosophy.

Andrew Goffey

Critical theory…

Of the various philosophers and social theorists who count as members of the Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas is the last, and arguably the most important. His work may lack the boldness of Marcuse's and the intriguing quality of Adorno's, but it has

the unsung virtues of 'grey' theory: it is meticulous, thorough and erudite (not to mention difficult and dry). Habermas is in truth the only Frankfurt School thinker to develop a coherent and comprehensive social theory, even if, in the process, he arguably closed the door on the kind of critical theory envisaged by his predecessors. Moreover, he was the only one with an unshakeable commitment to and qualified confidence in democratic institutions. As Habermas once put it to Michael Haller:

> If there is any small remnant of utopia that I've preserved, then it is surely the idea that democracy – and the public struggle for its best form – is capable of hacking through the Gordian knots of otherwise insoluble problems.

So long as democracy of one sort or another is a political and social reality, and so long as citizens want to understand their social world, Habermas's work will remain alive and relevant.

It is all the more surprising, then, that Habermas's philosophy, in spite of a growing body of secondary literature, is so poorly understood. For years, with one or two notable exceptions, this literature divided into two dominant camps: hostile critics on the one hand and Habermas aficionados on the other. The former were largely crude. The latter stuck so close to Habermas's own theoretical framework and vocabulary that their commentaries often simply repeated everything that was puzzling or controversial about his philosophy in the first place. Analytic philosophers, in the meanwhile, mainly ignored his work.

Things have changed in the last fifteen years or so, as Habermas's work has achieved prominence among social and political philosophers working in anglophone circles, largely, it has to be said, because of his engagement with the debates around Rawls's work in which so much intellectual labour is congealed over here. Andrew Edgar's *The Philosophy of Habermas*, which happily falls into neither of the above camps, is a notable contribution to the literature.

The question that confronts anyone facing the task of writing an introduction to Habermas's philosophy is how to present a vast and varied body of work that stretches from his Habilitation thesis – *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* – to his most recent writings on bioethics and cosmopolitanism. Edgar's answer is to divide his book into seven long chapters, arranged in chronological order, each of which discusses an identifiable phase of Habermas's intellectual formation, and most of which concentrate on a single work – for example, chapter 2, on *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (originally

published in 1962), chapter 3, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), chapter 4, *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), chapter 5, *Theory of Communicative Action* (1982), and chapter 7, *Between Facts and Norms* (1994).

Edgar chooses to introduce Habermas's work by presenting and commenting on its origins and development, whilst in my *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction* I end up offering a snapshot of what I consider to be the final version of his entire mature social, moral and political theory taken as a whole. This, in turn, leads to a difference of emphasis. I more or less skip everything between *Structural Transformation* and *Theory of Communicative Action*, and place greater weight on the programme of discourse ethics. Edgar highlights the importance of Habermas's early works, in particular *Knowledge and Human Interests* and *Legitimation Crisis*, and pays markedly less attention to discourse ethics.

Let me begin with the first difference. Edgar's approach is at once demanding and laborious, not least because Habermas tends to fashion his own ideas through a critical (and not always hermeneutically sensitive) engagement with various traditions of philosophy, sociology, social theory, social psychology and psychoanalysis. Given Habermas's breadth of reading, simply to trace the lines of his theoretical development demands a staggering range of expertise. In general, Edgar does a very good job of summarizing and interpreting Habermas's many *Auseinandersetzungen* with figures as diverse as Wittgenstein, Weber, Kohlberg and Luhmann. His prose is assured and readable, his discussions are engaging, illuminating and leavened with well-chosen examples. Above all, his sympathy with his subject and interpretive charity never degenerates into apologetics.

Edgar deliberately refrains from correcting Habermas's tendentious interpretations and misappropriations of other theorists, thereby avoiding a lot of rather tedious corrections in the process. He also, more controversially, refrains from offering criticisms of Habermas's position, other than those that Habermas makes of his own work when reinterpreting and reworking it. Anticipating the objection that his introduction is therefore not critical enough, Edgar presents his work as 'a case for the defence' and an attempt to 'get him right'. Still, I think he misses some opportunities. Whilst one should make every effort not to attack straw men, a judicious and well-aimed criticism can be as illuminating of the criticized position as a sensitive interpretation of it, and a defence of Habermas's theory could have been mounted as well or better by responding to some of the more significant criticisms

of it, rather than merely presenting an illuminating and insightful exposition of it.

Furthermore, because Edgar's book is long on exposition (he provides potted versions of all the various theories with which Habermas engages), it sometimes, for reasons of space perhaps, ends up being a little short on analysis. Chapter 6 on modernity is a case in point. It ends rather abruptly, after a long series of discussions of Habermas's interpretation of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Weber, but without discussing how the concept of modernity bears on other parts of Habermas's work, such as on his conception of a post-conventional moral consciousness or his hypothesis about social evolution. Also, on certain crucial points Habermas's position is just unclear. For example, what is a validity-claim to truth? Is it a claim to the truth of the utterance that is raised, or a claim to the truth of the asserted content, or both at once? What is the logical form of the discourse principle (D) and the moral principle (U) – are they conditionals or biconditionals, and what is their scope? Sometimes, getting Habermas right means departing from his statements of his position and making him clearer than he is.

Edgar's approach means that he sometimes ends up discussing positions Habermas adopts but later retracts. Some of these retractions are significant. Why do the four validity claims he identifies in the 1970s later (in *The Theory of Communicative Action*) become three? Why does he drop the idea that there is a validity-claim to intelligibility? Why does he originally maintain that (D) can be inferred from (U), only to argue later that (D) is a premiss in an argument for (U)? Why does Habermas quickly retract the Peirce-inspired view that the ability to find rationally motivated consensus in discourse is a sufficient condition of truth of a proposition (as well as a necessary one)? Does his belated concession that truth outstrips even idealized discursive justifiability in discourse mean that he has abandoned even the view that it is a necessary condition? Some of these important modifications require more explanation than Edgar's approach allows him.

I have indicated some of the drawbacks of Edgar's approach. Of course, it has its advantages too. He is interested in Habermas as a critical social theorist, posing the questions of what is wrong with society and what can be done about it. In the earlier works *Knowledge and Human Interests* and *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas provides quite different answers to these questions, answers that are of interest in their own right. Students who want to find out how Habermas's philosophy develops in relation to the tradition of Marxian social theory will find Edgar's book very helpful indeed.

The second major difference between us is more substantial and concerns the prominence that I give to the programme of discourse ethics. I view discourse ethics as the normative heart of Habermas's philosophy. I think it is surprising that there is not a single work in which the programme of discourse ethics is set out, but rather a series of somewhat sketchy essays, the most substantial of which is entitled 'Notes' (Notizen). The reason I find this surprising is that *Theory of Communicative Action* appears to imply the programme of discourse ethics, whilst *Between Facts and Norms* presupposes it: neither Habermas's social theory nor his political and legal theory makes much sense without the normative moral (and ethical) theory.

Habermas's diagnosis of modern society and its pathologies turns the spotlight on the normative fabric of the social and political world, and highlights its vulnerability to economic, technocratic and administrative forces. He is interested, primarily, in the question of how a stable and self-replenishing social order can be achieved that resonates with the autonomy of social agents and with their rational and cognitive capacities; hence his preoccupation with the rational grounds of legitimate law and legitimate power. He thinks that democracy is the answer to this riddle, because of the way in which it is able to channel public (epistemic, moral and ethical) reasons into policy and law-making, which are capable of eliciting rational compliance and providing a basis of interaction that can therefore complement the coercive mechanism of law.

At first, to be sure, Habermas tended to place too much emphasis on the role of universal *moral* norms in this process. He ends up assigning them a narrower, but still essential, role. He is aware that, just as the social fabric of the modern world requires morality and law, his social theory requires the twin supports of the programmes of discourse ethics and political and legal theory. This is the reason he has resolutely defended his conception of moral discourse, in spite of the criticism it has received even from sympathetic commentators.

In brief, in spite of the fact that Habermas himself has not written a major work on moral theory, I feel that a sustained treatment on the role of moral and ethical discourse is a genuine lack in Edgar's book, if it is to introduce the *philosophy* of Habermas, rather than his major works.

James Gordon Finlayson

... or moral theory?

James Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005. 180 pp., £6.99 pb., 0 19284 095 9.

The multidisciplinarity of Habermas's work poses a problem for anyone trying to write an introduction to it, let alone a 'very short introduction'. A lot has to be omitted, and not just a lot of detail, but whole books and themes must be passed over more or less unremarked. Clearly, such omissions are never arbitrary, and may be justified in terms of what will provide the most appropriate entrance to the work as a whole: what must a beginner know before he or she moves on to more complex commentaries and to the primary texts themselves?

Finlayson's response to this challenge in this eloquent and concise book is to make Habermas's normative theory central. The main themes of Habermas's mature work are summarized neatly in the preface. A pragmatic theory of meaning leads to the theory of communicative rationality; that in turn leads to a social theory, to discourse ethics and to political theory (and these last three are seen to mutually inform each other). The book explores this development with great clarity, avoiding Habermas's frequently rather turgid language in order to stress the importance and vitality of his ideas.

So, after some biographical material and brief comments on his early works (most specifically *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*), the problem of social order is placed as central to Habermas's work. Habermas's response is outlined in terms of his theory of communicative competence and validity claims. Social agents with the appropriate degree of communicative competence can use language to coordinate their actions. In making any utterance, they implicitly offer a rational justification for what they have said, and what they expect to do. Language use is thus moral, in that it places social agents in obligatory relationships to each other, for one is obliged, if challenged, to answer in order to repair breaches in the social fabric; it is also rational, in that challenges to utterances are only genuinely answered through the strength of better argument, and not through any form of coercion. Finlayson then articulates the Habermasian response to the problem of social order at greater length through a theory of meaning grounded in Austin's and Searle's speech act theory, and through a broader social ontology. This social ontology does not rest with the supposed transparency of ordinary language communication, but recognizes the importance of a quasi-natural, systematic, aspect in the coordination of action in complex societies.

Yet this social ontology is presented, quite rightly, by Finlayson as a theory that has strong normative implications. First, Habermas is concerned with contemporary, late capitalist societies, and as such with modernity. The conception of personal obligations to rational justification emerges, historically, in modern societies. Modernity, for Habermas, is characterized in terms of its need to legitimate itself, and to do so through an appeal to reason rather than tradition. Second, the 'post-conventional' morality of modern societies becomes the basis of Habermas's own discourse ethics, and the critical tool that he uses to expose the flaws in contemporary society, and to maintain, from the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers, a genuine critical theory of society. Finlayson thus explores Habermas's discourse ethics both as a theory of morality and, in its more recent version, as the foundation of a theory of political and legal discourse. For Finlayson, this culminates in Habermas's engagement with the problems of a reunited Germany and the stabilization of the European Union.

To place discourse ethics at the centre of Habermas's work, at least in the way that Finlayson does, is to emphasize that Habermas is and remains a critical thinker. The widely circulated notion that Habermas has somehow relinquished his Marxist credentials of the 1950s and 1960s, in favour of a complacent liberalism in the 1990s, is mistaken. As Finlayson notes, if Habermas has changed, it is because a greater realism has entered into his work. In this he perhaps merely continues a trend that has been fundamental to all Frankfurt School thinking, which is to say the gradual loss of faith in the idea of the revolution. This loss of faith is grounded, in no small part, in Habermas's engagements with Max Weber and the systems theory of Talcott Parsons and Niklaus Luhmann. The very complexity of modern society presupposes that the bulk of everyday social interactions can no longer be coordinated through ordinary language communication and the discursive raising and justification of validity claims. As a form of social organization, such communication is highly risky, for communication can easily break down, and is highly costly in terms of time and energy. Most social coordination is thus achieved not by individuals relating meaningfully to each other, but by their relating instrumentally, mediated by social systems such as the economy or political and commercial administrations. This is broadly in line with Weberian predictions about the development

of capitalism (most grimly in the image of the 'iron cage of bureaucracy'), but also entails that if systems are necessary to the organization of society, then the state will never simply wither away (as Marxists and indeed many libertarians might believe). For Habermas, the problem of a critical theory that will engage practically with the malaise of contemporary society is, then, not a question of overthrowing the state, of the revolutionary abandoning of systems, but rather one of recognizing at once the threat and the potential for reform that lies in existing systems, such as those of the welfare state and the legal systems of constitutional democracies.

But this review of Habermas's thought on political change has, I think, already begun to exceed what Finlayson presents to us. To backtrack a little, in emphasizing Habermas's normative theory, Finlayson also emphasizes Habermas's later work. Indeed, much of the work of the 1960s and 1970s is passed over as 'now of largely biographical and historical interest'. Finlayson briefly summarizes the argument of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, and relegates *Legitimation Crisis*, along with *Towards a Rational Society*, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* and much of *Theory and Practice*, to an appendix. This poses the question of whether (if it were humanly possible to cram a coherent discussion of five more large and complex books into some 150 pages) these early texts have any continuing relevance. I would argue that they do, because they shed light on the sort of practically engaged critical theory that Habermas seeks.

Knowledge and Human Interests, for many readers, continues to be philosophically the most satisfying of Habermas's works. It is a review of the 'pre-history of positivism', seeking out the tensions between positivist and non-positivist strands in the thought of the German Idealists, Marx, Dilthey, Peirce and Freud. At the same time, it is an attempt to ground critical theory in what Habermas sees as humanity's anthropologically deep-seated interest in political emancipation (and finds models for such a theory in both Marx and Freud). While Habermas seems to abandon the book's theoretical approach quite abruptly in the early 1970s, criticizing its grounding of a theory of truth in an emancipatory interest, as well as its reliance on a 'quasi-transcendental' methodology (which is to be replaced by the notion of reconstructive science), in fact themes raised by this book linger in Habermas's writing (not least an engagement with American pragmatism that remains fundamental to much of his thinking about natural science and concepts such as the 'ideal speech situation'). In addition, Habermas actually wrestles free of *Knowledge and Human Interests* only after significant struggles with the notion of ideology and ideology critique, which find a strong echo in his later conception of systematically distorted communication. Habermas's work in the 1960s may then offer an alternative, at least in part, to his current work, rather than a stage that has simply been abandoned and is self-evidently inadequate.

Legitimation Crisis opens up a slightly different perspective. In many respects it can be seen simply as the trial run for *The Theory of Communicative Action*. However, while the all-important theory of the relationship between lifeworld and system, which is central to the social ontology of the later work, has not yet been properly worked out, *Legitimation Crisis* engages more concretely with problems that remain pressing. The problem of the legitimacy of modern democratic states is brought home more vividly here than in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, and it provides the context in which the later discussion of the Weberian themes of the loss of freedom and meaning in contemporary society acquires its true importance.

To look again at Habermas's works of the 1960s and 1970s shifts the emphasis of his work as a whole. Critical social theory becomes central. Like his mentor Adorno, Habermas remains primarily a thinker concerned with what is wrong with society. Psychoanalysts interpret their patients' neuroses, knowing that they too are hampered by their own neuroses, and that these distort their vision and their ability to communicate. It is this that informs Habermas's concept of systematically distorted communication, and with it the hermeneutic suspicion that all achieved consensus, however important it may be to sustaining social order, is grounded in some explicit or implicit imbalance of power. Even discourse ethics, Habermas reminds us, is a *minima moralia*. At best it may help us identify where we fall short of open and rational discussion, and yet, as Finlayson notes so clearly, as a second-order moral theory, it will never tell us what our substantive moral norms or ethical values should be.

Finlayson's very short introduction remains an excellent first step for anyone trying to come to terms with Habermas and his importance. It is informed by a philosophical precision, as well as an ability to survey the vast complexity of Habermas's work. I would just caution the prospective reader that we should not assume that the social problems of the 1960s and 1970s have gone away, or that Habermas's practical and theoretical responses to them are of no more than historical interest.

Andrew Edgar