

It's me again

Étienne Balibar, *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness*, trans. Warren Montag, edited and introduced by Stella Sandford, Verso, London and New York, 2013. xlvii + 158 pp., £51.98 hb., £14.99 pb., 978 1 78168 135 0 hb., 978 1 78168 134 3 pb.

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in questioning the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy. Although there are many different components to emerging post-analytical and post-continental philosophies, there are two dominant and overlapping themes that return time and again. On the one hand, there are investigations into what Livingstone, in *The Politics of Logic* (2012), has called 'the consequences of formalism'. Proceeding as if the analytic/continental divide never took place enables a focus on the formal structures of thought and being that creates unusual alliances across the divide and novel ways of interrogating those, such as Badiou, who have done much to stake out this territory in the first place. On the other hand, a good deal of ink has been spilled considering the ways in which the brute objectivity of objects or the brute facticity of things may be thought without invoking a range of subjective presuppositions as the conditions of thinking. Attempts to escape what Meillassoux terms the 'correlationist two-step' of the subject-object bond have led to a rebirth of speculation on the subject-independent reality of things.

Both of these trends can be read as attempts to puncture the overinflated role of the subject as traditionally understood in modern European philosophy (even if Badiou then pumps a lot of air into a purely formal conception of militant subjectivity). Nonetheless, whatever tool is used to burst the bubble, there is broad agreement that it is Descartes's *cogito* and its legacy in Kant, Hegel and Heidegger that must be deflated if the recently separated analytic and continental traditions of philosophy are to find some common ground. Yet, what if this understanding of the central role of the Cartesian subject in the continental tradition is based on some fundamental misconceptions and omissions? Not only would it be incumbent upon those who defend the continental tradition to rethink what it is that they are defending; it might also be the case that those seeking to undermine it from within have missed their target. Such are the stakes surrounding the appearance of this book in English. That it is a translation of a

significantly different book published in French in 1998 only amplifies these stakes in the here and now, as will be explained below. But, first, it is important to lay out the 'heretical' provocation at the heart of Balibar's text.

Balibar puts it like this:

I was increasingly led to question a traditional image of Descartes as the father of the idea of subjectivity qua 'consciousness' ... and to fully picture Locke as a theorist of 'self-consciousness', whose ideas and problems irrigate every philosophy of the 'inner sense' and the 'reflective self' from Kant to modern phenomenology.

There are two components to this claim: a challenge to the received wisdom regarding Descartes's role in inaugurating the modern European tradition of philosophical reflection and the proposition that Locke is the inventor of the idea of self-consciousness that 'irrigates' all the fertile lands of the modern philosophies of the subject. Balibar's careful reading of Descartes opens the substantive discussion of the main essay in this text. It proceeds from the claim that 'Descartes, with two possible exceptions ... never uses the word "consciousness" to the more telling argument that no matter how 'rich' the soul's experience of everyday life, for Descartes 'it was a matter of providing the same demonstration every time: thought can only be referred to the "thing that thinks" whose action it is'. In Sandford's useful gloss: 'What is important, then, is not so much that I am a *thing* that thinks, but that *I* am the thing that thinks – that it is *me*.' The 'domain' of Descartes's 'thing that thinks' therefore extends to everything, but in every extension it is the same 'I' that is presumed in thinking. Therefore there is no possibility of interrogating the richness of subjective experience itself in any other way than endlessly reflecting upon the fact that every new experience simply leads to the same conclusion: 'it's me again'.

The richly textured internal experience that sets off the modern European tradition, according to Balibar, is found in Locke's discussion of personal identity not Descartes's appeal to the *cogito*. More

precisely, it is found in Chapter XXVII of Book II of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, entitled 'Of Identity and Diversity'. In a hint of the textual complexity to which I will shortly return, it is important to note that this chapter was an addition to the second edition of Locke's essay, published in 1694, four years after the first edition. The addition, Balibar tells us, was partly at the behest of one of Locke's friends, William Molyneux, and partly as an attempt to clear up problems remaining within the first edition. The result is a lengthy chapter that many commentators and critics recognize as both a cornerstone of Locke's epistemology and one that also stands apart from it, in significant ways. Embracing the 'autonomy' of this chapter, Balibar presents in the first instance a careful reading of it that focuses on the detailed twists and turns of argumentation that lead Locke to establish consciousness as the criterion of personal identity.

While it is not possible to do justice to this complex analysis here, Balibar's principal interpretive gambit can be easily summarized. He recognizes that the standard reading of Locke's chapter has led most commentators to attribute a vicious circularity to his treatment of personal identity; if I know what I am thinking then I must be a self, but to know that I am a self I must know what I am thinking. Rather than treat this as the cul-de-sac of Locke's argument, however, Balibar presents this circularity of personal identity as the real discovery of self-consciousness; a consciousness that is more than a stuck Cartesian record and that is instead open to the constant influence of the richness of sensation in the constitution of inner sense. Balibar argues that, understood in this way, Locke's treatment of consciousness presents a theory of personal identity that incorporates the possibility of becoming someone different. The last section of the main essay develops this idea through the notion of 'topography', and it gives rise to provocative claims that situate Locke firmly in the heart of the (post-)phenomenological tradition of modern European thought. For example, according to Balibar, Locke's conception of interiority is based on a principle of identity that 'perpetually remains over-determined by the multiple figures of its other (or to put it another way, by the equivocality of the world)'. This is not the Locke we know from introductory classes to personal identity, but it is Locke as the great-great-great grandfather of the plasticity of the brain.

This is enough of a claim to establish this book as a welcome addition and corrective to current debates

in and about analytic and continental philosophy. But the heretical claim at the heart of this book is only one aspect of its radicalism. The other aspect is the way that the book is framed: in itself, in relation to the French version from 1998 and then further still in relation to the initial French translation of Locke's text (which then has a complicated relation to translations of the Bible and work by the French Cartesians, such as Malebranche). It is almost harder to do justice to this complex layering of texts and the subtle overlapping of frames of reference than to the claim that Locke should unseat Descartes as the inventor of consciousness. In a nutshell, however, in his exemplary presentation of Locke's chapter Balibar declares that he does not owe his reading of Locke primarily to philosophical argumentation but to 'a particular philological encounter with Pierre Coste, the French translator of Locke's *Essay* in 1700'. The subtleties of this encounter are provided by Balibar (and Sandford in her Introduction), but in essence amount to a series of puzzles in the French translation about why consciousness was translated at certain moments of the *Essay* in one way and at other moments quite differently. This realization draws Balibar into a compelling narrative about the relationship between Coste and the French Cartesians (which involved co-lingual terminological creativity between English, French and Latin). It was these complexities that led Balibar to include in the original French version of *Identity and Difference* the original English text of Locke's chapter, the Coste translation from 1700 and a new translation by Balibar. It also explains why the French text contained Balibar's contextualization of the chapter within Locke's *œuvre*, which he presents as an additional 'philosophical and philological glossary' of Lockean Concepts. This current English version, however, only retains some of this material: the extracts are not included and the glossary is trimmed down. In their place are a new Preface and Postscript by Balibar (the latter of which is a text on Spinoza originally published in 1992) and an indispensable Introduction by Sandford that synthesizes the arguments, updates the relevance of Balibar's book to Locke scholarship and draws out the political consequences of the reading he develops. It turns out, therefore, that this is both much less and much more than a simple translation of the 1998 French text. Given that it also required a new translation of Balibar's own contributions by Warren Montag, it is hard to imagine just how complicated the dealings between publishers/authors/translators must have been.

The point of explaining this textual complexity, however, is not to wonder at the effort involved in producing the book (considerable though this must have been). It is to make the case, first, that the book itself exemplifies the complexities of the claims about personal identity that Balibar excavates from Locke. Each rendition of the original text by Locke is informed and inflected through a different context; maintaining its identity and yet changing as it does so. The 1998 version of this text brought this to the foreground with the inclusion of the three translations but then framed these through the main essay and the glossary. This English version has been trimmed but also considerably enhanced by Sanford's introductory essay and the additional material by Balibar, but also by the translation of Balibar's text, which, in large measure, is a text about the philosophical importance of translation. As such, this 2013 version reframes the whole debate again, engendering a substantially different text from the 1998 French version, even though it remains in other senses the same

text worthy of the same title. Second, however, it is a text that exemplifies philosophical practice. Each translation and framing of Locke's chapter becomes the site of a new philosophical encounter that forces the reader to embrace the role of language, time and place in the emergence and consolidation of philosophical ideas. Those attempts to overcome the analytic/continental divide that prioritize form and object in ways that strip both of their intrinsic linguistic, historical and geographic conditions can only look barren in the shadow of this multilayered and richly textured engagement between philosophers past and present. Indeed, rather than seek to bury the modern subject under the weight of formalism or speculation about objects, this quietly revolutionary book invites a 'new chapter for investigation' into its emergence; to which the only adequate response, as Sanford declares in almost Beckettian mood at the end of her introduction, is to 'read on'.

Iain MacKenzie

Socialism or Balibarism

Étienne Balibar, *Equaliberty: Political Essays*, trans. James Ingram, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2014. 365 pp., £15.99 pb., 978 0 82235 564 9.

The essays collected in *Equaliberty* span twenty years, yet attest to a singularly dogged set of pursuits. Balibar's desire to interrogate the kernel of the most readily accepted but in fact singularly ambiguous and paradoxical political concepts has generated some extraordinary thinking, particularly around notions of citizenship, exclusion/inclusion, rights and the hybrid concept of 'Equaliberty' (*l'égaliberté* in French) which gives this collection its title. Yet Balibar, unlike many in the Althusserian tradition to which he still partly belongs, is careful to contextualize his thinking with reference to those whose thought usefully overlaps with his own. Thus the essays here are scattered with references to thinkers in diverse traditions: Arendt, Agamben, Brown, Derrida, Laclau, Mouffe, Poulantzas, Rancière, Sassen, Spivak, Wallerstein, but also De Sousa Santos, Giddens, Hobsbawm, Mbembe, Samaddar, Wacquant, Yuval-Davis. Balibar makes no special case for ontology over social, anti-facist, feminist, history or political approaches, which give all these essays a synthetic, wide-ranging and multilayered cast, a kind of methodological open-endedness, as if keeping a watchful eye out for new

approaches and insights that might yet come along. It is this expansiveness that ensures that even some of the older essays here, or some of the more specifically historical or journalistic essays (the pieces on the French 'uprisings' of 2005, or the headscarf law), remain relevant to global readers today.

A willingness to stay with conceptual complexity, to really untangle constellations of ideas, is the cornerstone of Balibar's contribution to contemporary political thought. Terms that are the most familiar in the Western political imaginary – democracy, freedom, equality, universality, revolution – come in for the most scrutiny, precisely because they are often used without attention to their unsteady or contradictory bases. In 'The Antinomy of Citizenship', the introduction to the collection, Balibar argues that 'at the heart of the institution of citizenship contradiction is ceaselessly born and reborn in relation to democracy.' The constructed, fluctuating and unstable nature of the tie between citizenship and democracy frames everything that follows: 'the name "democratic citizenship" cannot conceal an insistent problem, the object of conflicts and antithetical

definitions, an enigma without a definite solution.' Yet Balibar's stress on the paradoxes, conflicts, antinomies and tensions of political thought and practice does not lead him, as it does so many others, to wallow in political aporias for their own sake, or to a kind of mystical fuzziness regarding institutions and ideologies. On the contrary, it is only by picking apart the supposed 'obviousness' and 'transparency' of terms such as 'citizenship' and 'democracy' that their revolutionary underpinnings can once again be revealed. Balibar's identification of the 'dialectic of insurrection and constitution' that he demonstrates underpins the French revolutionary constitution with its intertwining of 'man' and 'citizen' entails that the 'community of citizens' remains 'essentially unstable, problematic, contingent'. Rather than understand this community as overdetermined either by institutions or by individuals in the last instance, Balibar stresses throughout the essays how essential it is to understand the relational, communal aspects of political life. Invoking what he describes as the 'trace of egaliberty' (the unstable pairing of equality and liberty we find at the heart of republicanism, particularly in its French mode), he reminds us that 'the rights of citizens are borne by the individual subject but won by social movements or collective campaigns that are able to invent, in each circumstance, appropriate forms and languages of solidarity' and that the finitude of 'insurrectional moments' should make us understand that 'there are no such things as "absolutely universal" emancipatory universalities, which escape the limits of their objects.'

The period covered by the essays coincides with the most vicious onslaught against what Balibar terms 'social citizenship', and he raises the question of whether certain forms of social protection and the prevention of insecurity (the welfare state) are a mere 'blip' or are integral to the 'history of citizenship in general'. Balibar stresses the impact of nineteenth-century socialism on the relation between capital and labour, and the construction of a public sphere, but also seeks to analyse the ravages of neoliberalism through a reading of Brown and Foucault which focuses on the idea of 'antipolitics' or 'apolitics' – has the social citizen been displaced or destroyed by neoliberalism such that politics itself has dissolved or disappeared? Balibar adds nuance to the discussion by describing a situation in which it is no longer helpful to think of 'empirico-transcendental' types – 'the Worker, the Proletarian, the Colonized or the Postcolonized, the Woman, the Nomad' – or to think of political 'subjects' in the way that we might have

before. Instead, Balibar argues, the concept of the subject 'is not sufficient to think the constitution of politics, and we need many operative ideas ... bearers, subjects and actors'.

While social citizenship remains potentially explosive, or at least carries within it the seeds of insurrection, even in its fragmented neoliberal mode, Balibar is careful to understand the way in which 'citizenship' is also founded on a series of constitutive exclusions. A lengthy discussion of Arendt's 'right to have rights' in which the relational character of these rights is stressed ('Rights are not properties or qualities that individuals each possess on their own, but qualities that individuals confer on one another as soon as they institute a "common world" in which they can be considered responsible for their actions and opinions') gives way to a thorough investigation in the latter part of the book as to who is excluded, and how, from the right to have rights. In a chapter entitled 'What are the Excluded Excluded From?', originally given at a sociology conference in South Africa in 2006, Balibar explores ideas of 'social' and 'internal' exclusion, taking as his starting point postcolonial 'neoracism' and the 'real complexity of "racism after race"'. Picking up on the idea of 'internal exclusion' Balibar describes a situation in which 'the excluded can be neither really accepted nor effectively eliminated or even simply pushed into a space outside the community'.

Here he sees two overlapping logics at work: a logic of commodification of individuals on the capitalist market, and a logic of racialization that drives from 'the essentialist representation of historical communities, where intolerance of the other ... is all the more virulent for being undermined by ongoing processes of communication and transnationalization.' It is this double logic that generates a form of internal exclusion 'characteristic of the contemporary world'. Such a model of 'European apartheid' generates both the transformation of human beings into things and the generation of 'absolute others' and racialized enemies (this also plays out, as Balibar points out in later essays, across religion, particularly via Islamophobia). This duality of exclusion generates forms of poverty and political resistance that are multivarious and heterogeneous, and Balibar invokes Fraisse's concept of 'exclusive democracy' to make it clear that these forms of inclusive exclusion are a central feature of (particularly) European democracy. National and supranational borders (like the Schengen area) thus play 'a central role in the real operation of what we call democracy'.



Balibar may accept the frameworks and language of really existing capitalism, but he does so in order to pull at their threads and to refocus critique upon tired concepts. But a revolutionary fervour (although this too does not escape theorizing) runs throughout these essays. It is not because these structures and institutions have succeeded that they must be critiqued, but because failure and consequently resistance to them runs like a thread throughout their historical iterations: it is because, historically, democracies have never ‘completely or durably’ instituted equality and freedom that they still contain the seed of these ideas and practices. Balibar concludes with a rousing defence of ‘active citizenship’ – ‘not ... she who by her obedience, sanctions the legal order or the system of institutions ... materialized in her participation in representative procedures that result in the delegation of power. She is essentially the rebel, the one who says *no*, or at least has the possibility of doing so.’ It is Balibar’s persuasive analysis of who counts as a citizen and who does not, and who is granted rights and who must take them another way, that makes these essays simultaneously relevant, realistic and rigorous.

Nina Power

Sub rosa

Jennifer Mensch, *Kant’s Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2013. 256 pp., £31.50 hb., 978 0 22602 198 0.

‘Subreption’: this inauspicious term from Kant’s pre-Critical period is in fact of great relevance to current concerns with inter- or trans-disciplinarity. In its first appearance in Kant’s *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766), subreption (*Erschleichung*) refers to the error of illegitimately transmitting concepts between different bodies of knowledge. Looking back on his work prior to *Dreams*, Kant considered himself to have committed this error, having taken concepts from physical natural science to use them in metaphysics: notably, his attribution of attractive and repulsive forces to spirits and monads in the *New Elucidation* (1755) and *Physical Monadology* (1756).

The concept of subreption would change in Kant’s *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) to designate the confusion of sensible concepts with those of the understanding, thus prefiguring the Amphiboly of the first *Critique* (1781/87). In its original meaning in *Dreams*,

however, it is one of a number of lesser-known Kantian themes put to effective use in Jennifer Mensch’s new book, *Kant’s Organicism*. Mensch investigates the significance that biological theories of ‘epigenesis’ had for Kant’s account of experience and cognition in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this sense, Mensch’s entire book is about Kant’s subreptive transfer of a biological concept to the domain of metaphysics, or, more accurately, to Kant’s innovative transcendental philosophy. Perhaps just as interestingly – because covertly – Mensch’s book also *enacts* a subreption across modern academic disciplinary boundaries.

Mensch conducts a striking and radical rereading of the first *Critique* through the concept of ‘epigenesis’. The early chapters provide the context, describing contemporary accounts of biological generation and classification and of natural history, before going on to narrate Kant’s consistent interest in the origin

and unity of reason in the pre-Critical texts and his engagement with Teten's empirical psychology during the 'silent decade' of the 1770s. This contextualization sets the stage for what is the centrepiece of Mensch's book: a reading of the first *Critique's* Transcendental Deduction.

Epigenesis was a biological theory of Kant's day that provided an account of the genesis of organisms. It ran counter to theories of preformation, whether divinely ordained predetermination, or the 'Russian-doll' model of generation whereby the mature organism was manifest *in nuce* in the ovaries or testes. Mensch shows that 'epigenesis' had a number of meanings in eighteenth-century biology, two of which primarily influenced Kant's account of cognition: as a description for the 'spontaneous generation' of organisms, or the more technical definition, given by William Harvey, of 'development as a movement from undifferentiated unity to an interconnected whole of diversely functioning parts'. Mensch's book leads to a reading of the Deduction in which she makes a number of striking claims. In particular, she argues that the form of logic most important to Kant is not the discursive, transcendental logic of conceptual determination, but rather a non-discursive, non-linear *organic* logic. This latter logic reveals itself through the conceptual importance to Kant of 'organic cycles of generation and growth', of 'genealogical concerns regarding lineage and affinity' and the 'vocabularies of life: root, stem, branch, and birth'. It is through this logic that, Mensch argues, Kant tries to depict reason as a unified, organic whole.

This organic unity of reason is based on Kant's conception of 'transcendental affinity'. 'Affinity' has the dual sense of the familial relation between faculties, as a result of their common descent from reason, and the relation between 'parts' of an experience constructed by the faculties, which unifies experience into a coherent whole. This enabled Kant's system to show that 'the means for making a logical connection between subjects and predicates were the same for connecting concepts and objects'. Mensch thus goes a long way towards explaining the statement arguably central to Kant's transcendental idealism: 'The conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience.' The consequence for the Deduction is that, for Mensch, the famous *quid juris*, the legalistic question of right, is of much less significance to Kant's account of the categories than the *quid facti*, the question of fact. The 'fact' under discussion is the question of the 'origin and unity'

of reason, which 'dominated' the trajectory of Kant's thought from the *Inaugural Dissertation* to the Critical period. Mensch therefore contends, with support from the first *Critique's* closing Transcendental Doctrine of Method, that the famously mysterious 'unknown root' of both sensibility and understanding is *reason*. Reason is the 'birthplace' of concepts, ideas and its faculties, and reason itself is 'self-born' and contains the 'germ of its self-development'. This epigenetic reason, the origin of the faculties, represents Kant's 'discovery of the *quid facti*'; this, for Mensch, is the genuine result of the Transcendental Deduction.

Epigenesis, then, is not on this reading a mere metaphor. Rather, 'Kant's use of the organic model had a deep methodological impact when it came to the critical system; indeed the system itself was conceived as a result of this model as an organic unity whose telic course of development could be described as a natural history of reason.' Mensch unearths a Kant whose Critical project is at heart deeply metaphysical: a metaphysics of the organic, epigenetic development of reason.

As should be apparent, Mensch's reading is bold and innovative; it deserves to be debated at length by Kant scholars. But we can also step back to consider the place of this text in relation to modern academic disciplinary subdivisions, and some issues it thus raises for contemporary philosophy. Mensch's book demonstrates the fact that much of the stronger work on Kant is currently found in texts that stand somewhat outside the mainstream of Kant studies. She covertly smuggles her philosophical reinterpretation of the entire grounds of Kant's first *Critique* into a book that on first glance might be categorized as 'history of philosophy', 'philosophy and the sciences' or 'Kant and biology'. These categorizations are arbitrary, of course, but the accompanying disciplinary structures are not: those that mean Mensch's work is not of the kind to feature or to be reviewed (to date) in *Kant-Studien*, the major journal of Kant studies. Similar things could be said of John H. Zammito's historically sensitive interpretations of Kant, Robert Bernasconi's attention to the category of 'race' in eighteenth-century thought, and the work of many others. Excellent works on the margins of Kant studies are reconceiving Kant's *œuvre* in ways that, paradoxically, have more philosophical significance than the often straightforward and less ambitious commentary of the more explicitly 'philosophical' mainstream Kant studies.

Kant's Organicism is an example of a modern subreptive transfer: from history of philosophy and

the sciences to philosophy itself. It demonstrates the value of cross-fertilization between artificial academic subdisciplines, to borrow a biological image. The division between philosophy, as living thought, and history of philosophy, as somehow dead, is untenable. Increasing cross-fertilization could, on the one hand, provide contemporary thought with an open, potentiated history of philosophy: in this case, a rejuvenated Kantian corpus that can still reorient subsequent debates; and, on the other, vivify the history of philosophy, as a space in which contemporary philosophical questions are active and meaningful. I am suggesting, then, that work like Mensch's enacts a kind of *sub rosa* incursion, from marginal subdisciplines within philosophy, to strike at hallowed sites that can only be cautiously approached within mainstream Kant studies. It is no coincidence that Mensch's book is at heart a rereading of the Transcendental Deduction: the centre of the *Critique* for generations of Anglo-American readers. Under the camouflage of 'history of philosophy', properly philosophical interpretations of Kant can be attempted, unencumbered by the restrictive commitments of English-language Kant scholarship (such as the emphasis on epistemology inherited from its neo-Kantian forebears). These are guerrilla tactics on the modern battlefield of metaphysics.

It is worth recalling, however, that for Kant subreption is, in the main, an error. Similarly, these kinds of *sub rosa* incursions into Kant scholarship themselves have problems. Camouflaged as history of philosophy and science, Mensch's book engages with little of the more explicitly philosophical commentary that she threatens to overturn. More significantly, *Kant's Organicism* fails to investigate fully the philosophical consequences of its proposed interpretations. For example, other than a brief indication in a footnote, Mensch does not examine the impact that this Kantian epigenesis may have on our understanding of Hegel's critique of Kant. An account of the relation between Kant's self-born, self-developing reason, as she reads it, and the Hegelian dialectical movement of the concept would be very valuable. Likewise, Mensch's account bears many similarities to the reading of Kant that Deleuze pursues in his texts of 1963, which could be investigated further. Deleuze presents the original, indeterminate free play of the faculties in aesthetic judgement as the ground of the accord of the faculties: or what for Mensch is the unity of reason. Most notable, however, are the resonances that Mensch's reading has with Heidegger's interpretation of Kant in his lectures and *Kantbuch* of

the late 1920s. Mensch makes no reference to these, but her account of the ways in which Kant transforms the faculty of 'imagination' from Baumgarten and Tetens could be read as a historicized response to Heidegger's intuitions around the centrality of the imagination to the 1781 edition and Kant's subsequent 'shrinking-back' from its power. Furthermore, Mensch's emphasis on the 'connection' between sense and intellect and the 'affinity' within reason echoes the centrality of the activity of 'synthesis' to Heidegger's account. Finally, Mensch's insistence that Kant is 'in the end a metaphysician', and that the *quid facti* – the question of what is – predominates over the *quid juris*, brings her argument into a complex relation with Heidegger's depiction of Kant's place in the history of ontology and of metaphysics. The danger of the subreptive, *sub rosa* approach is that it allows questions central to the post-Kantian history of philosophy, questions that still resonate today, to be passed over.

There are two weak points in Mensch's study. The first is her treatment of Kant's account of 'race', which is both strangely uncritical – compared to Bernasconi's work on the topic, for example – and which seems to contribute little to her central re-reading of the Critical philosophy. This is one of the places in which Mensch fails to meet what could be read as a pre-emptive critique by Stella Sandford in these pages (*RP* 179). Sandford argues that much work on Kant and biology, and specifically on epigenesis, both contributes little to our understanding of transcendental philosophy that we did not already know, and fails to treat either the biological theories or their philosophical employment with suitable suspicion or criticism. Mensch's chapter on 'race' could profit from an engagement with Sandford's critique; and Sandford's emphasis on the gendered nature of the epigenetic theory presents a new direction that challenges the book as a whole.

The second weak point is not an oversight but is symptomatic of the dangers mentioned above accompanying the subreptive approach. Surprisingly, it is the lack of clarity around the central concept in the study: 'epigenesis'. Epigenesis, like Aristotle's being, is, in Kant's era, said in many ways. Mensch suggests at times that it encapsulates everything counter to theories of pre-existence. Of the natural-scientific precursors that Kant drew upon, it is not clear which of them actually propounded what Kant would consider an epigenetic model. The term 'epigenesis' seems only to have been retrospectively applied to the major figures that Mensch discusses; Buffon's 'mechanical

epigenesis' may actually be better considered a theory of preformation. This raises the unsettling suspicion that, for all Mensch's admirable archaeological investigation into the roots of 'epigenesis' in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century biology, we are left little the wiser as to Kant's own understanding of the term. Kant appears to be one of the first of the figures cited by Mensch to actually use the term, and if natural science of his era does not provide a coherent clue to the meaning of epigenesis, we must take a lead from Kant's convoluted definitions, like that in §810 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, to which Mensch wisely accords little time unpicking. The stakes of this issue are apparent when Mensch writes,

In its most radical form, epigenesis offered a theory of generation that Kant found compelling as a model for interpreting reason, for approaching reason as an agent that was both cause and effect of itself. But it was precisely the radicality of this model that led investigators of Kant's day to ultimately decide that this form of epigenesis was untenable as an explanation of nature.

The model of biological development on which, in Mensch's view, Kant's conception of reason was based was actually considered unfeasible as a description of nature. Kant's grounding of his account of reason on an empirically, even conceptually, absent ground – for all its modern re-emergence in epigenetics – throws us into a hermeneutic circle, and again returns us to Heidegger's work. The ground of Kant's model of reason was, in view of the natural science of his time, what Heidegger would call an *Abgrund*. Here, a greater focus on the philosophical implications of the epigenetic account of reason would be particularly welcome. What does it mean that biological generation is the absent ground of Kant's conception of reason? There may be greater light shed on these kinds of questions by Catherine Malabou's upcoming book on Kant and epigenesis. Either way, long may the subreptive cross-fertilization of philosophical subdisciplines continue.

Steve Howard

The pig's head

Adrian Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism*, Volume 1: *The Outcome of Contemporary French Philosophy*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 2013. 257 pp., £26.67 pb., 978 0 81012 912 2.

Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism is the first volume in a proposed trilogy. As such it seeks to clear the ground for the formulation of a contemporary materialism worthy of the name. The book itself is composed and divided up in terms of a particular trinity of thinkers: Lacan, Badiou, Meillassoux. No doubt such 'threes', wherever they arise (and even where they structure a book), are not ultimately tinged with religiosity of the kind Johnston's materialism so steadfastly opposes. Perhaps they are more properly speaking dialectical. Yet to formalize the number in such a way (and according to current fashions) seems at odds with the evocation of 'hyperdense complexity' that permits Johnston's move from the mathematical to the life sciences as the true destiny of modern thought.

The first part of the book, then, is devoted to Lacan. Following Lacan's mantra that the truth can sometimes be stupid (doubtless even more stupid than my clumsy reaction to the 'three'), Johnston advocates a 'healthy dose of pig-headed, close-minded

stupidity on behalf of materialism' as right for the times. Let's see what that looks like, perhaps looking with the clumsy eyes of a pig's head.

The stated aim of Johnston's materialist project is, as mentioned, the desire to purge materialism itself of any and every vestige of religiosity. Speaking of Lacan's attitude towards Marxism, Johnston writes of materialism's task as the 'surprisingly incomplete and difficult struggle exhaustively to secularize materialism, to purge it of camouflaged residues of religiosity hiding within its ostensibly godless confines'. When such 'materialism' is described foremost in terms of the urge to purge – and, perhaps first of all, to purge itself – historical memory might cause some to shudder. Just a few pages later, Johnston (by now on a roll) proposes a Lacanian atheism that 'demands flushing out and liquidating' each and every 'stubborn investment' in 'the theological and religious', whether conscious or unconscious. And, once more, suspicion grows that the enemy may be within, and that one must therefore begin at home:

'faithfulness to this Lacan dictates submitting to merciless criticism those Lacans who deviate from this uphill path.' How, exactly, is this language – a language of the purge, no doubt – party to a thoroughgoing purge of religiosity? I for one tremble at its religious or, one might say, its theologico-political fervour. To the extent that the failure of materialism to date is still something of a surprise, no one (as Monty Python might say) expects the Adrian Johnston inquisition.

The deep history of the arche-fossil, evolutionary complexity, and modern neurological and biological science (not to mention the materialist legacy of



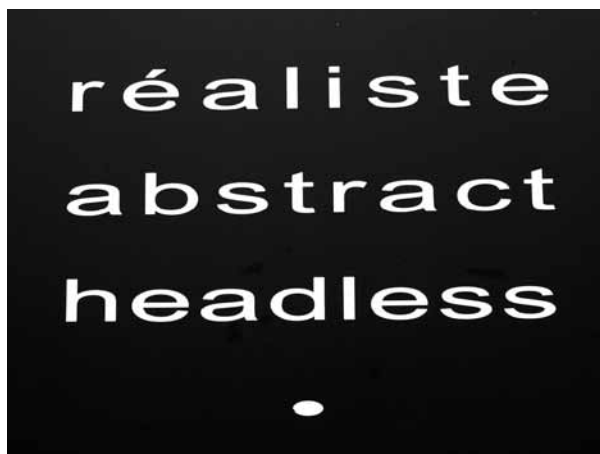
Marxism) are crammed back into a certain Lacan, such that we are presented with the extraordinary claim that, at last, science is ready for Lacanian psychoanalysis. The scariest thing about this proposition is that it is entertained solely on the strength of its supposed internal theoretical consistency. There is no reality check, no modicum of perspective of the kind that might come from even the most casual conversation with a practising life scientist. Once more, the combination of utter self-belief and utter self-suspicion stirs historical memory in troubling ways. No doubt fittingly, Johnston concludes the chapter in question with 'an enthusiastic call-to-arms that is simultaneously a warning of the danger of the return of old (un)holy ghosts'. I'll let that call-to-arms speak for itself.

While the sundry secularisms, rationalisms and atheisms that sought to hasten religion's decline by championing 'the Enlightenment world-view of scientific-style ideologies' bequeath to us the metaphysics of religiosity in different guise, for Johnston psychoanalysis is better equipped to deliver materialism's aspirations, in the sense that 'its placement of antagonisms and oppositions at the very heart of material being' chimes with biological science. The myth of biological immutability is countered by the anti-reductionist findings of the contemporary life sciences, where a 'hyperdense complexity', not reducible to any form of self-identical conceptuality or theoreticity, might be taken as the watchword. Johnston argues for a new materialism of the kind made possible by a thinking of plasticity, one that remains hospitable to scientific endeavour at its cutting edges, while at the same time speaking back to the ideological predilections of science and scientists, particularly where certain forms of determinism are concerned. Via the Lacanian Real and Badiouist mathematics, we have the perhaps predictable evocation of Cantorian set theory as the now-standard gesture by which contemporary thought's resistance to totalization is formalized. Yet Badiou's preference for the mathematizable is itself resisted in favour of a certain biological preference, one which permits the assertion of merely a 'weak nature' defined by 'heterogeneous ensembles of less-than-full synthesized material beings, internally conflicted, hodgepodge jumbles of elements-in-tension'. Here, the 'material' in its non-reductive sense is depicted in terms of 'phenomena flourishing in the nooks and crannies of the strife-saturated, undetermined matrices of materiality, in the cracks, gaps, and splits of these discrepant strata'. 'Weak nature' is thus matched by a kind of motherhood-and-apple-pie image of the bio-material, propagated in the ground of a language which leaves little room for sharp disagreement. (I leave it to others to think of examples where the rhetoric of motherhood-and-apple-pie happily co-exists with the urge to purge.)

Along the way, the Lacan who seemed at certain points to favour 'mathematical-type formalism' as an escape route from humanistic models of subjectivity is downgraded in favour of a psychoanalysis able to rehabilitate aspects of Freud's biological scientism (as Johnston puts it), in the interests of a new pact between philosophical or critical thought and the life sciences today. Thus, unsurprisingly, Badiou's outsourcing of ontology from philosophy to mathematics is contested as the basis of materialism proper. It

is just too pure; it lacks the messiness demanded by an authentic dialectics and evinced by the findings of the natural sciences alike (messy bedfellows in themselves). It is as if materialism must purge itself even of purity. In the kind of hyperinflationary environment that characterizes the field of contemporary continental philosophy, true materialism must up the ante on the 'ultra-rigour' of Badiouist 'purity'.

Johnston suggests that the assault on idealism by materialism must of necessity also counter itself, or must, in a certain sense, act as its own counter-resistance. The messiness that transpires from this doesn't only reflect nature, 'manifest in condensed form in the bodies and brains of human beings', taking inconsistent and heterogeneous shapes characterized by 'holes, gaps, and lags'; it also describes the politics of the field. Badiou is thus presented, in



the space of just a couple of pages, as at once averse to biology and as unclear on the borderline between idealism and materialism as he is on that which separates biopolitics from biological science. It seems to me that the 'good' rhetoric of a non-deterministic biology masks a highly determined political game played out across this particular landscape of 'materialism' that time and again succumbs to the fateful logic of the purge. But is this how the brain works, for Johnston? Are its dynamics of self-organization those of a perpetual self-cleansing? The story is a messier one than that, not least since the purifying gesture of mathematical formalization is presented by Johnston as rather alien to neuroscience. (Thus, Johnston questions what he deems the Badiouist inclination to drive the life sciences towards quantum mechanics.) If the brain doesn't work on the basis of self-purification, why retain the motif for materialism, if that same materialism justifies itself on the strength of its affinity with science in its biological rather than mathematical form? Unless

of course the plasticity of the brain – 'as both flexible and resistant, as moving between the malleability of reformation and the fixity of formation' – gives itself as the very medium and instrument of a politics that hygienizes in increasingly intensifying ways. This seems a doubtful but nevertheless rather terrifying prospect.

Meillassoux is last up in this Holy Trinity, Son of the Badiouist Father – and treated very much in the vein of such a family romance. Meillassoux is described as 'more of a realist than Badiou' to the extent that the former, more so than the latter, encourages a certain passage from mathematical purity to a sense of extra-subjective or non-correlational 'matter'. Equally, though, Meillassoux is (quite rightly) deemed guilty of cherry-picking from the empirical realm when it suits, for instance in his arguments about the arche-fossil, while violently sealing off his brand of speculative materialism from the messy evidence of empirical science, whenever the latter troubles the former's rationality. From here, it is a short stride to idealism and religiosity. Yet one might speculate that Johnston's retreat from the 'hygiene' of Meillassouxian thinking is another instance of the logic of the purge, which comes ever closer to home but only in the sense that the nearest family member is the most suspect. Meillassoux 'clings with one hand to what he struggles to cast away with the other' – be it Kant, idealism, metaphysics – but, between the 'mess' and the 'purge', what makes Johnston think this characterization of the other won't come home to roost?

As the book nears its conclusion, Johnston argues that there is 'a big difference between arguing for materialism/realism versus actually pursuing the positive construction of materialist/realist projects dirtying their hands with real empirical data'. As a condemnation, this is surely nothing but self-condemnation, since, by obsessing over the former, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism* makes no attempt at the latter; doubtless because the latter would be as suicidal, in practical terms, as the former eventually turns out to be. Hands get dirty in this book, not in the sense that – going along for the ride on some life science field trip – they enjoy digging in fertile ground. The logic of the purge (that is, of purification), which this book at once resists and advocates, no doubt as a feature of that very same logic, casts a more troubling light on those dirty hands.

Simon Morgan Wortham

Brainiacs

Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, *Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2013. 352 pp., £48.95 hb., £16.95 pb., 978 0 69114 960 8 hb., 978 0 69114 961 5 pb.

The title of Nikolas Rose and Joelle M. Abi-Rached's new book on contemporary neuroscience captures the broad scope of the authors' project, but belies their resolutely even-handed approach. Written in a spirit of 'critical friendship', the work is intended as a 'rapprochement' between the humanities and neuroscience. Rose and Abi-Rached state that they intend to follow one particular OED definition of criticism: 'Rather than fault finding or passing censorious judgment, we are critical here in the sense of "exercising careful judgment or observation; nice, exact, accurate, precise, punctual."' As such, they refrain from making bold, sweeping claims about the implications of neuroscientific research. Rose and Abi-Rached are wary of insisting on the radical novelty of the present, of overemphasizing the influence neuroscientific discourse has on current understandings of subjectivity or of downplaying scientists' own sensitivity to the limitations of their research.

Drawing primarily on scientific literature and public policy documents rather than mass media sources, Rose and Abi-Rached set out to provide a tour of a large and uneven terrain. They locate the origin of neuroscience in the early 1960s, identifying the advent of a qualitatively new attitude to its object of study: the brain. This moment was not only significant in terms of disciplinary formation but, the authors argue, crucially represented 'an event in epistemology and ontology'. They trace the emergence of what they term the 'neuromolecular gaze' – a mode of observation that sought to anatomize the mind, redefining the brain as 'an intelligible organ that was open to knowledge'. An engaging history of medical imaging technologies is sketched, focusing on the powerful role images have played in constructing our understanding of the psyche and tracing the complex mediations that occur in rendering the invisible visible. The authors argue that a connecting thread links nineteenth-century techniques like physiognomy and phrenology to the development of fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging), the discovery of which has launched a new 'industry of visualization'. They caution against confusing a simulated image of brain function with

the qualitative experiences those functions might correlate to; an image of blood flow is not an image of human emotion. A more sympathetic appraisal is given of the application of research undertaken on animals to humans. Although the authors point to the potential pitfalls of such work, they are critical of those who seek to overemphasize the uniqueness of the human species, concluding that complex, careful and nuanced translations can take place that cross the animal-human divide.

Many problems are identified with current diagnostic procedures as enshrined in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* – the checklist approach to identifying symptoms and the associated proliferation of disorders. Here the discussion hinges on the danger of medicalizing normality, of pathologizing everyday life – 'normality', it turns out, 'is hard to diagnose'. All these labels and the medications associated with them are insufficient when faced with the suffering of living humans in a social world: 'Mental disorders are problems not of brains in labs, but of human beings in time, space, culture, and history.' The problem for Rose and Abi-Rached is that this insight is something that neuroscience itself is capable of addressing. Instead, they suggest that the concept of neuronal plasticity, which situates the brain in time, provides a fertile alternative to crude reductionism. Brains are no longer separated from the bodies and worlds in which they live but are malleable and open to intervention: 'The plastic brain becomes a site of choice, prudence, and responsibility for each individual.' Similarly, work on mirror neurons emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity and conceives of the brain as a product of evolution, 'open, mutable, and in constant transactions with its milieu'. The brain becomes the site not of destiny but of possibility.

The authors are clear that the implications of this conception of the brain are ambivalent. If the brain is capable of being reshaped this opens up new possibilities for state intervention on a neuronal level. Childhood is key here. The 'screen and intervene' approach reverses the logic of the *DSM*: rather than

basing judgements on behaviour *a posteriori*, this model aims to identify susceptibilities before they manifest themselves and to strike pre-emptively. The future-oriented logic of risk assessment is extended to human life.

Rose and Abi-Rached convincingly trace the emergence of 'a biology that is open for intervention and improvement, malleable and plastic, and for which we have responsibility to nurture and optimize'. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to determine whether their analysis is descriptive or prescriptive. The Foucauldian vocabulary that has characterized Rose's writings on these subjects is still present here but is more muffled than in previous works (the most cited author in the book's bibliography is Rose himself). Biopower is identified, its features dispassionately outlined, but the authors' measured tone prevents them from making any interventions of their own.

The book's self-proclaimed conciliatory approach seems to apply exclusively to scientists rather than to others working in the social sciences and humanities, about whom they are less generous. These murky figures – often vaguely referred to en masse with the adjective 'many' – are implicitly cast as hysterical, simplistic or superficial critics, too hasty and extreme in their judgements. Meanwhile, Rose and Abi-Rached's

own explicitly value-laden statements slip by almost imperceptibly. Take, for example, the claim that there is nothing inherently malign 'in the intertwining of researchers' hopes for academic success, hopes for a cure for one's loved ones, hopes for private financial advantage for individual scientists and for companies, and hopes for public economic benefits in terms of health ... tangled webs ... permit of no easy ethical judgments.' Ethical judgements might not be easy, but that does not mean they cannot and should not be made. It is easy enough to point to the intricacy of the world, but just because the webs are tangled does not mean they don't ensnare people and shouldn't be torn down or at least reconfigured. Such questions are firmly off the agenda here.

The book's introduction ends by asserting that neuroscience challenges notions of the self as atomized individual and could thus become an 'ally of progressive social thought', but it is difficult to ascertain what Rose and Abi-Rached intend by this. Neuroscience, they insist, has not fundamentally reconfigured how people understand themselves but has provided a material underpinning for existing assumptions about self-improvement, choice, responsibility and agency: 'Once more, now in neural form, we are obliged to take responsibility for our biology,



to manage our brains in order to bear the responsibilities of freedom.' This does accurately capture the dominant vocabularies at work in neuroscience, but overall the authors seem content to position themselves *within* this decidedly neoliberal discourse. Such a version of selfhood emphasizes human adaptability. But openness to change is not identical with agency and volition. Instead, it is combined with an emphasis on the disintegration of the conscious subject. Rose and Abi-Rached claim that there is an overlooked affinity between neuroscientific understandings of the self and accounts of subjectivity that emerged from the humanities in the late twentieth century (here they mention anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Clifford Geertz, as well as Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and the more recent neurologically inspired philosophical work of Thomas Metzinger). The notion of a coherent, 'conscious, self-identical, autonomous', 'unified, purposive, intentional, and self-aware' self is an artefact of history. But, if anything, this vision of a non-conscious, automatic subject open to management sounds like the enemy of progressive social thought.

'Unless there is continued theoretical effort, in the interest of a rationally organized future society, to shed critical light on present-day society and to interpret it in the light of traditional theories elaborated in the special sciences, the ground is taken from under the hope of radically improving human existence', Max Horkheimer declared in his programmatic

essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory' (1937). The conscious subject is crucial to the project of critical theory, a twentieth-century current of thought that Rose and Abi-Rached do not engage with, despite its focus on the production of scientific knowledge. Does contemporary neuroscience challenge the very existence of human subjects capable of consciously intervening in the course of history? On an ontological level Rose and Abi-Rached do not come to such an audacious conclusion, preferring to point to the continued overlapping of different models for comprehending human subjectivity. The way I pick up a glass might be governed by non-conscious perceptual processes, but that does not prevent me from being able to consciously smash it, spill out its contents or turn it upside down.

However, by advocating 'collaboration beyond critique', the authors make their priorities clear. Intervention remains the purview of the experts and authorities upon which they base their study and with whom they are professionally engaged. Critique, like the spectral entourage of social critics that haunt their text, is implicitly aligned with crude judgements, with insensitive and destructive polemic blind to the intricacies of reality. But this betrays the limitations of their own analysis. The real challenge for those committed to social change is to engage subtly with the often uncomfortable insights of contemporary neuroscience without forsaking critique.

Hannah Proctor

Apart

Derek Hook, *(Post)apartheid Conditions: Psychoanalysis and Social Formation*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2013. 256 pp., £55.00 hb., 978 1 13703 299 7.

The insight that 'social formations may themselves exhibit patterns of psychic causality' has informed an important strand in the history of psychoanalytic thought. What is surprising, perhaps, is that, apart from a handful of studies over the years, relatively little systematic work of this kind has been done in a South African context. Making an excellent case for the explanatory power of psychoanalysis in South Africa, Derek Hook's *(Post)apartheid Conditions* is thus a welcome addition to the literature.

The most powerful parts of the book revolve around narrative, specifically what Hook terms 'personal

narrative'. Hook's guiding assumption is that, as commonly understood, narrative is produced in order to foster social ties through recognition by others. In a personal narrative one thus presents oneself as one would wish to be seen by others. Understood in psychoanalytic terms, the transaction remains at the level of the ego, and thus of what Jacques Lacan termed the imaginary. The task of the psychoanalyst is not to reinforce the ego of the analysand by affirming the truth of the narratives that he or she produces, but instead to bring to light unconscious processes, which, although not acknowledged, serve

to shape the analysand's discourse. By extension, the scholarly investigator may use psychoanalytic modes of interpreting in order to discover patterns of repression in the discourses of subjects from a given social formation. These may turn out to be common enough to be regarded as typical.

Read as a psychoanalytic study of narrative, the key theoretical question raised by *(Post)apartheid Conditions* emerges as the following: in the context of remembering apartheid – the source for whites of protestations of innocence as well as affirmations of guilt – once one no longer takes these personal narratives at face value but psychoanalyses them, are they still stories of apartheid – or stories of apartheid through and through? Hook analyses three narratives contributed to the Apartheid Archive Project (AAP), an international initiative centred at the University of the Witwatersrand – which, according to Hook, 'aspires not just to the aim of ... record[ing] and collect[ing] such narratives ... but also to engage thoughtfully and theoretically with the[m]'. The informants who contributed the narratives are, as is consistent with the procedures of the AAP's website, not named. All three narratives are recollections by white South Africans of specific events in their childhood or adolescence. In terms of manifest content, each involves an awareness of implication in the racial dynamics of the time. Each also involves feelings of guilt, remorse or regret.

The greatest energy is devoted to analysing the first of the narratives presented. This is an adult white male's memory of his emotional withdrawal from Dyson, an African man who was employed by his parents to look after him when he was a child growing up in Zimbabwe. For this withdrawal, the adult feels guilty. The gist is that the withdrawal was because he had applied the social codes of racial differentiation and hierarchy current at the time. The adult feels guilty because of the child's racism. Such declarations of guilt are now so common that a critique has developed that asks: is the declaration of guilt not an attempt at gaining merit for having made it? Is it not, indirectly, self-aggrandizing when it should be precisely the opposite? Does it not recentre the white subject? Hook discusses, in this regard, Australian cultural critic Sara Ahmed's important critical reflections on white Australian apologies, in a 2004 article in the *Borderlands e-Journal*, which, as Hook shows, are highly relevant to post-apartheid South Africa.

Psychoanalysis can uncover such ego-ruses. In South Africa, however, as in the Australia of Ahmed's

critique, psychoanalysis has not been necessary in order to detect or suspect them: the white confesses, and almost at once there is the response: this is just a reaffirmation of white privilege, since it puts white experience at the centre of public awareness, and the experiences of black people remain marginal in relation to them as far as publicity is concerned. Some are justly tired of this situation, and nobody better expresses his fatigue than contemporary Black Consciousness intellectual Andile Mngxitama, as cited by Hook:

for myself, as a black person, I don't want the following: 1. Acknowledgement of whites' culpability 2. Disclosure and remorse for what happened during colonialism and apartheid 3. I wish for no dialogue 4. Whites owe me no apology or washing of feet 5. Please, not another conference on racism 6. No pledges confirming our collective humanity.

The question that Hook seems to be asking is: is there a way of narrating – or of receiving these narratives – that takes into account ego-gain as motive, but does not say 'I wish for no dialogue'? Or does not make that into the final word? If one follows the analyses in *(Post)apartheid Conditions* carefully, this question is related to the larger one of whether personal narratives of apartheid are stories of apartheid through and through.

Hook's view, as I read it, is that psychoanalysis is a way of pursuing these questions without dismissing the negative reception of white narratives. Accordingly, the story of Dyson begins to be understood as overdetermined. First, it is a reflection of the social formation in miniature – or at least a report made in later life, of a boy's incipient awareness of it. Second, as Hook notes, like the other two narratives he discusses, it includes animals. In this story the family's dogs are a symbolic substitute for Dyson, becoming the focal point of the boy's affection when he remembers worrying about how they will be treated after the family emigrates to South Africa. Third, as is evident to the informant, who appears to be schooled in psychoanalysis, if the dogs substitute for Dyson, Dyson substitutes for Daddy: 'Was Dyson my "other daddy" (conceivable perhaps as the good, ever-present daddy relative to the strict white daddy who seemed at times less approachable)?' Although this is not quite how Hook reads it, there is, in other words, a displacement of Oedipal conflict onto other symbolic ground – in which that ground then becomes staked out, retroactively, in Oedipal terms: withdrawal of libidinal cathexis (from Daddy) as a failure of love (toward Dyson).

The story of Dyson resurfaces in chapter 6, where it is revisited in a discussion – in print and by email – with Ross Brian Truscott, also a psychologist. The latter insists on the importance of Dyson as a substitute for Daddy, emphasizing the boy's identification with his father: 'Dyson is in fact "a secondary cast member on stage where a[n] ... identification with the father plays out".' And I see no reason not to read the situation in classical Oedipal terms: the boy withdraws libidinal cathexis from the father once he realizes that, in phantasy, the father's love depends on the boy's feminization and castration. He thus identifies with the father, who also becomes his antagonist. This is the familiar path towards male heterosexuality, as described by Freud. To elaborate: the withdrawal of cathexis becomes acceptable to consciousness only as a withdrawal thereof from the substitute figure – namely, Dyson. This does not mean that the boy never loved Dyson, only that, if he loved Daddy, there was never a time, in conscious recollection, at which his love for him ever lapsed. The guilt in relation to Daddy is conscious only in relation to the substitute.

It is interesting that the exchange with Truscott occurs in the chapter in which Hook is engaging critically with Judith Butler's influential essay 'Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification' (in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, 1997), where Hook's ostensible target is her – and others' – too loose use of the psychoanalytic concept of melancholia, when what they are actually talking about is mourning. But, as the critique unfolds, Butler's attempt to explain homophobia in terms of primary (and substitute) loved objects whose loss cannot be grieved begins to look more and more classically Freudian. Having expressly substituted racial for sexual terms when quoting Butler, Hook gets closer to affirming the Oedipal configuration of the story of the boy and Dyson.

What we learn, then, is that, for the young boy, race relations are refracted through the lens of infantile sexual theories (the meaning of the father's love as castration). Another way of putting this is that the social is being understood via the familial. And also that because that family is sexed/gendered, so, too, then is the social in terms of this understanding. At one level, this is 'wrong', since the social is structured differently to the family. This is something that, from the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

(1905), Freud kept underlining: sublimation of the libido from sexual aims (active and passive) towards social aims. To cite a famous example, the catalyst for paranoia, in the Schreber case, is a 'sexualization of the social' – because it brings to the fore a return of the repressed: withdrawn cathexis, fear of/aggression towards the formerly loved object (or its substitute), and so on. Neither Hook nor Truscott reads the name as unconscious shorthand, but one may as well: Dyson = Die-Son.

One can thus understand Mngxitama's reaction as being intuitively correct at another level. Not only in play are reinforcement of white ego and a symbolic privilege of whiteness. But rather: if, in your overture to me (as black), you are acting out and repeating unresolved familial/Oedipal dynamics, then I wish for no dialogue, since it is not really a dialogue between *adults*, but rather some infantile psychodrama in which I feature as a substitute object not only for your nanny (female or male), but also for your father or mother. In that case, it is a play in which I will have no part. Like the analyst's interpretation of the transference, this negation – *no* dialogue – may be powerful enough to give rise to 'truth'. Who knows?

I am not sure whether Hook would be prepared to come to such conclusions (or risk the prosopopoeia that I have), although there are hints of him moving in this direction. It is a pity, in this respect, that he did not analyse contributions by black South Africans to the Apartheid Archive, a decision for which no real reason is given, and that Mngxitama's negations are registered without being critically addressed. Similarly, Hook's reading of Steve Biko says nothing about how he advocated that blacks address their own psychological complicity in their oppression. Biko did a great deal to decode white attitudes, but, like Fanon, from whom Black Consciousness derived so much, he was relentless, too, in exposing investment in whiteness by black people. Despite these lacunae, by proposing a method for interpreting post-apartheid narratives, and thereby opening dialogue with them in ways that do not either affirm their truth (or state their falsehood), let alone assign merit or demerit on their basis, *(Post)apartheid Conditions* remains an important intervention for anybody seriously interested in bringing psychoanalysis to bear not only on South Africa but on the deeper dynamics of social conflict, wherever it is found.

Mark Sanders

Freiburgdeathtrip

Marc Crépon, *The Thought of War and the Memory of Death*, trans. Michael Lourioux, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 2013. 184 pp., £50.50 hb., £17.00 pb., 978 0 81668 005 4 hb., 978 0 81668 006 1 pb.

This engaging book, first published in French in 2008, traces an illuminating trajectory through the critical afterlife of Martin Heidegger's thesis on 'being-toward-death' in postwar continental philosophy. Marc Crépon foregrounds the ways in which the writings of the foremost European thinkers of the mid- to late twentieth century (Sartre, Levinas, Patocka, Derrida, Ricœur) destabilize the solipsistic attitude that Heidegger identifies as *Dasein*'s authentic relation to its own mortality (on the grounds that death constitutes the ultimate possibility for *Dasein* to realize itself as a singular being). Opposing this position, Crépon, like the philosophers whose work he examines, suggests that 'our shared responsibility – indistinguishably ethical and political – before and against death' should be recognized as the foundation for a 'cosmopolitical' community structured around our common mortality. Against the dehumanizing and anonymous imaginary of death that dominates contemporary media and culture, he argues, we need to seek 'other images ... that engage the thought of death *otherwise*', a 'sharing which would be simultaneously a *sharing of the meaning of the world and a sharing of the meaning of death*'.

As Rodolphe Gasché suggests in his foreword, one of the most surprising characteristics of the confrontation with Heidegger's being-toward-death is the fact that despite 'the scandal' of his collaboration with 'the national socialist regime', each of its major exponents 'systematically took on Heidegger's thought on death with ... exemplary seriousness and rigour'. Crépon identifies this willingness to encounter Heidegger's work on its own terms as a symptom of the radical 'unsettlement' of philosophical thought in the aftermath of the Second World War. Although *Being and Time* was first published in the interwar period, 'Heidegger's elaborations on death occur in a work that displays only a few explicit traces, or memories, of the thoroughly unsettling and traumatic event of World War I.' By contrast, Crépon argues, the memory of the genocidal and militaristic destruction of the Second World War exerted a profound and determinative effect upon the philosophers who would reckon with Heidegger's thoughts on death, impelling 'a more

fundamental, and non-metaphysical way of thinking', 'whose stakes, tellingly, bear on the possibility of living together at all'. In Crépon's terms, this inescapably social 'being-against-death' manifests 'a kind of "being-for-one-another" in opposing death, in uniting against it, in suffering its proximity collectively'.

Throughout *The Thought of Death and the Memory of War*, Crépon attempts to assimilate his account of mid-twentieth-century philosophy within a conceptual model able to realize this mode of being-against-death. The Introduction posits Freud's 1915 text *Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod* (*Reflections on War and Death*) as the conceptual (and historical) precursor of the debates to follow, and contends that Freud's reflections highlight the convergence of two phenomena that would overshadow the philosophy of the twentieth century: 'the disillusionment that war induced, and the change in our attitude toward death that war engendered'. Freud's lesson is that 'if humanity has always *made a distinction* between those whose death brought grief ... and those whom one could see die and cause to die without being affected', then the thought of death – and our individual and collective relation to it – is not ontological, but fundamentally ethical and political.

As Crépon underscores, Freud's observations contrast sharply with Heidegger's contention (some twelve years later) in *Being and Time* that Being-toward-death posits the limits of what is shareable for *Dasein*. In his later (1942) lecture on Hölderlin, Heidegger argues that it is '[p]recisely death, which each individual must die for him- or herself, and which individuates each individual upon themselves to the most degree'. However, in the same text Heidegger allows for the possibility that, in exceptional circumstances, such as might be experienced in the trenches of war, a mutual 'readiness for sacrifice' could 'create in advance the space of that community out of which comradeship emerges'. Foregrounding the memory of war as a transformatory moment in the relationship to death, Crépon consequently suggests that it is in this space that the seeds of a sociality formulated upon being-against-death may be sown. This is developed further in chapter 2, arguing that the writing of Jean-Paul Sartre amounts to a systematic 'dismantling of Being-toward-death and of the ontological privilege that is attached to it'. In both *Being and Nothingness*, and his dramatic writings, Sartre took issue with the individuated relation that Heidegger ascribes to *Dasein*'s being-toward-death, arguing that the possibility of *dying-for* another person or cause reveals death's inherently political dimension. Furthermore,

because it is ultimately the living who will determine the memory (and thus the meaning) of the dead, we assume a 'responsibility' for those who have died.

Whilst Crépon's discussion of Sartre situates the remembrance of the dead as an inherently political project, his lengthy engagement with the work of Emmanuel Levinas in the book's third chapter privileges the ethical dimension of this endeavour. Crépon argues that the originality of Levinas's writings on death lies in his rejection of the existential analytic that informs the work of both Heidegger and Sartre. Refusing the binary of being and nothingness, Levinas foregrounds the phenomena of suffering, murder and sacrifice as a means of investigating the relation to others that he positions as inherent to the thought of death. By revealing our fundamental vulnerability to, and responsibility before, the other (*to* whom we turn for care when dying, *by* whom we might be killed, and *for* whom we might die), Levinas 'reinscribes the relation to death within the sphere of interpersonal relations', insisting that, as 'the death of the other always comes *before* my own', 'exposure to the infinite responsibility that is summoned by the vulnerability of the other ... comes before *my* protection'.



The following chapter attempts to instil a sense of political efficacy in these ideas through its consideration of the *Heretical Essays* of Jan Patocka. Identifying the historical conditions of the late twentieth century as the continuation of war under another name (peace), Patocka contends that the 'forces of the day' construe a contradictory relation to death – by appearing to validate peace, those in power

seem to privilege life at all costs, whilst simultaneously suggesting that any action (and any number of deaths) is justified in order to preserve the status quo. Accordingly, Crépon argues alongside Patocka, we must reconceptualize any sacrifice (and, by extension, any death) as *unjustifiable* in order to resist the ongoing loss of life that is engendered by 'the forces of everydayness'.

It is towards such ends that Crépon turns in his consideration of the work of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur highlights the necessity of recalibrating the imaginary of death in order to resist the disempowering gaze that is imposed upon the dying: projecting them prematurely into the nothingness that constitutes their future, relegating them to helpless and alienated objects beyond the reach of human society. By repositioning the dying as an agonized (*living*) subject, Crépon argues, 'the approach of death and the thought of death are placed under the sign of a *sharing* – of an experience of friendship and fraternity, incommensurable with any form of heroic solitude'. The final chapters seek to reframe this fraternity of (living and) dying in terms of an obligation to memory: first, through an analysis of the work of André Malraux and Jorge Semprún; second, through a detailed discussion of Jacques Derrida's account of hospitality and mourning as the dual foundation of ethics. Whilst the former resists the tendency to perceive death as an absolute evil that forecloses the possibility of political community or resistance, the latter argues that our essential (indeed, originary) imbrication in the lives of others impels us to recognize that 'humanity cannot be conceptualized independently of a structuring relation to [the mortality of] the other'. In acknowledging the vulnerability of the other, and facing their irreducibility and uniqueness, we are required to concede that death 'cannot be thought of, calculated, or accepted ... in the ignorance of what death means each time singularly', demanding from us both an 'unconditional hospitality' towards the living and a 'universal mourning' for the dead.

Crépon's nuanced engagement with a diverse body of mid-twentieth-century philosophy combines an original and incisive reading of seminal critiques of Heidegger's work with his own arresting arguments about our need to engage with death as a fundamentally shared experience. The uniqueness of this project lies not only in the trajectory that Crépon traces through the critical reception of Heidegger's work, but also in his attempt to contextualize this journey through the particular historical perspective

engendered by the memories of the First and Second World Wars. However, whilst he successfully demonstrates the centrality of these events and their legacies in the philosophical texts he analyses, Crépon does not always manage to traverse the transition from the abstract to the material, the metaphysical to the historical, the general to the particular so smoothly in his own writing.

Despite the welcome attention to historicity promised by the book's title, the analysis engages with the events of the First and Second World Wars in rather general terms, conflating these conflicts with unnamed famines, epidemics, terror and violence, and often occluding their singularity. Crépon's analysis at times threatens to fall back into the rather abstracting and dehistoricizing frames that the turn to memory attempts to resist. Indeed, it is not always clear exactly what Crépon means when he evokes the 'memory of war': whose memory is referred to, how these representations inflect our understanding of history, and with what implications for the political and ethical project that structure Crépon's argument. Apart from a brief discussion, in the final chapter, of the hegemonic ways in which the institutions and discourses of the public-political sphere frame contemporary responses to death, much of the book is strangely silent about the dynamics that inform the transmission and reception of memory and its associated media, and the important (and related) entanglement of individual, collective and cultural memory that has occupied much of the scholarship surrounding the 'memory boom' in Western academia over the past thirty years.

A similar opacity inflects Crépon's consideration of 'evil', which enters rather abruptly into the analysis as a key coordinate towards the end of the chapter on Ricoeur. The subsequent discussion of Malraux and Semprún in chapter 6 oscillates slightly awkwardly between the specific historical conditions of the Holocaust and a broader metaphysical framework. Whilst these writers were undoubtedly haunted by the horrors of the Second World War, as Crépon himself acknowledges, neither is able to account, 'explicitly or definitively', for the political operations of absolute 'evil', and his own deployment of the term tends to obfuscate rather than clarify. Indeed, despite the valuable insights foregrounded throughout his analysis, Crépon does not always effectively signpost the relationship (and, in particular, the differences) between his own argument and the thinkers he considers. At times, this tendency serves to downplay the political efficacy of his project. The

philosophical discussion of Plato's *Phaedo* that frames his conclusion proves rather a distraction (albeit an interesting one) to the more socio-cultural critique of the normative imaginary of death constructed by contemporary political and media industries. Rather disappointingly, this final section does not flesh out, in any detail, the promised cosmopolitics of death, meaning that the book does not end with quite the conceptual impact it heralds.

Lucy Bond

The anarchist return

Peter Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle against Capital*, ed. Iain McKay, AK Press, Oakland, 2014. 723 pp., £23.95 pb., 978 1 84935 170 6.

With a range of new books, including Bloomsbury's Contemporary Anarchist Studies series, Shantz and Williams's *Anarchy and Society* (Brill, 2013), and, perhaps most influentially, Blumenfeld, Bottici and Critchley's *The Anarchist Turn* (Pluto, 2013), which contains contributions from the likes of Miguel Abensour, Judith Butler and the Invisible Committee (and which was followed by Duane Rousselle's contested online claims that he was ousted from the project), anarchism is clearly undergoing something of an academic revival. This is a good time, then, for the long-established anarchist AK Press to bring out an extensive collection of the writings of one of anarchist theory's key figures: Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin.

Among the strengths of *Direct Struggle Against Capital* is the way in which it encourages reflection upon just how comprehensively capitalism has won over society today. This has led many to search for a radical political philosophy as an alternative to capitalism's relentless but ultimately self-destructive march towards its own pathologies. From Euro-Communism to Soviet state socialism, twentieth-century alternatives have collapsed in actuality along with the radical philosophies underpinning them. Meanwhile European social-democratic parties have not fared any better, while the hopes invested in European Green parties have faced disappointment as the latter have begun to demonstrate more and more signs of a petty-bourgeois mindset. Perhaps, then, it is anarchism, with its striving towards the dual abolition of capitalism and state, which might just provide, as thinkers from Critchley to David

Graeber have suggested, the basis for a new radical political philosophy today?

This new collection of Kropotkin's writings highlights key works that reach far beyond his better-known essays, such as 'The Conquest of Bread' or 'Fields, Factories and Workshops', and what are undoubtedly his most familiar writings on 'Mutual Aid', as well as his famous contribution to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* outlining the basic parameters of anarchist philosophy. Kropotkin wrote on the double abolition of capitalism and state as early as 1892, arguing that a radical political philosophy had to start from an effort to remember that 'man lived in societies for thousands of years before the state had been heard of and that large numbers of people lived in communes and free federations'. Over 120 years later, Kropotkin's comments on the 'state and democracy as organs of capitalist domination' may appear more pertinent than ever in a world in which states and democracy have been taken over by the ideology of neoliberalism, conservative-reactionary political parties and corporations. Indeed, it can often seem as if the twenty-first-century state has mutated into little more than, as David Watson puts it in his seminal *Against the Megamachine*, 'an excellent taxpayer funded mega-machine to protect monopoly capitalism'.

In the late twentieth century, social-democratic parties became pretty good at complying with the democratic game, but ultimately it remained the case that, as Kropotkin claimed, 'social-democrats ... are continuously driven by the forces of circumstance to become tools of the ruling class in keeping things as they are'. Famously critical of the fallacies of state socialism after the Russian Revolution, and describing the Bolshevik regime as 'state capitalism' following its abolition of 'the labour and peasants councils', the key event of Kropotkin's life was the election of the Council of the Paris Commune on 25 March 1871. Crushed by the Prussian army, with the consequent slaughter of 35,000 communards in the streets of Paris, for Kropotkin the Commune also showed why there would be nothing left of anarchism if it took the form of a political party. This is not only because of the true meaning of 'an-archy' itself – that is, no-government – but also because

anarchist philosophy conceives a society in which all the mutual relations of members are regulated, not by law, not by authorities, whether self-imposed or elected, but by mutual agreements between the members of that society, and by a sum of social customs and habits – not petrified by law,

routine, or superstition, but continually developing and continually readjusting, in accordance with the ever-growing requirement of free life, stimulated by the progress of science, innovation, and the steady growth of higher ideals.

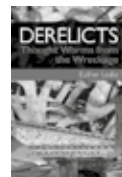
Such ideas have been politically marginalized – perhaps in line with one of Kropotkin's most biting dictums: 'your social democrat opinions will open doors for you. But if you are an anarchist ... then you will not be allowed in: your anarchist opinion will close doors for you.' For those who are today in a search of a radical political philosophy, anarchist thought will no doubt continue to close doors to the political and academic establishment. Yet perhaps we can hear something of Kropotkin's legacy not only in various recent struggles against super-state institutions like the European Union, but also in Russell Brand's notorious assertion that 'I don't vote because to me it seems like a tacit act of compliance.' If 'before we change the world, we need to change the way we think', *Direct Struggle against Capital* suggests that anarchist political philosophy may again have something to offer such a new way of thinking.

Thomas Klikauer



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