

Speculation at the crossroads

Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*, trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2014. 488 pp., £85.00 hb., £24.99 pb., 978 0 74868 149 5 hb., 978 0 74868 150 1 pb.

In 2011, the publication of *The Speculative Turn* drew together discrepant realist and materialist philosophical projects that had been developing over the prior decade. But it has yet to be seen what this 'turn' in twenty-first century philosophy will amount to. While some of its projects are in decline, others are still developing towards mature articulation. Epistemological impasses seem to have driven Graham Harman's work deeper into recapitulation and commentary than conceptual development, while recent follies of object-oriented ontology like Timothy Morton's *Realist Magic* suggest that this 'school' is caught in a downward spiral of incoherence (see my review in *Parrhesia* 17, 2013). On the other hand, Ray Brassier's lucid programme piece 'Concepts and Objects' outlines a critical realist programme at the intersection of metaphysics and epistemology that still awaits book-length treatment. Similarly, the fascinating work of Gabriel Catren on the ontology of mechanics has yet to result in the systematic treatment it will hopefully receive. Quentin Meillassoux has published a study of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés*, but his most significant philosophical contribution, *After Finitude*, remains only the fragment of an as-yet-unpublished magnum opus whose notoriety has grown through hearsay, past drafts, sketched outlines and excerpts. Meanwhile, Markus Gabriel's careful, provocative investigations of German idealism suggest the promise of his forthcoming systematic work, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology*. And Daniel Sacilotto is one among several younger thinkers in the midst of writing what may be a significant first book.

While contemporary speculative philosophy thus lingers in the trough between waves of early conceptual invention and mature systematic development, those committed to the philosophical current beneath the surface of its proper names have a double task. On the one hand, to counter the reduction of genuine speculative thought to the brand name of an academic trend, 'speculative realism'. On the other hand, against dismissals inevitably encouraged by such opportunism, to take up the consequences of what matters in contemporary speculation through a re-engagement of the tradition in light of its

achievements and an inventive articulation of new conceptual openings.

For better or worse, 'the speculative turn' is the context in which Tristan Garcia's *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things* must inevitably be situated. Indeed, it situates itself in this context in its opening pages, aligning its project with Harman's 'object oriented metaphysics' and Manuel DeLanda's 'flat ontology'. Like Harman, Garcia positions his treatise against 'philosophies of access', including 'philosophies of intentionality, consciousness, language, and action'. He claims that such philosophies 'fail insofar as they begin by establishing a relation aimed at objectivity', while 'the goal of objectivity is soon abandoned and never attained'. Garcia points out that 'by initially thinking about things we are not prevented from conceiving of our thought, language, and knowledge as things equal to things thought, said, and known.' But speculation, according to him, cannot *begin* with thought, language or knowledge: it has to set out from thought about things, rather than thought about thought about things.

Already, these introductory gestures distinguishing speculative thought from critical philosophy rely upon oppositions unlikely to satisfy perspicuous readers. Garcia wants 'to first consider that which is "something," rather than the position, production, or formation of this something'. For him, 'the question is therefore: is it better to begin by thinking about our access, which will never have access to things, but only to our conditions of access, or to begin by thinking about things, which, if we do not want to cheat, obtains the thinghood in every possible mode of subjectivity?' According to Garcia, things can thus be considered *prior* to considerations of their position, production or formation, and we can begin by thinking about things *before* thinking about conditions of access to things.

Before proceeding further, let me note that the major text of twentieth-century speculative philosophy, Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, set out precisely by refusing to sanction such oppositions. Garcia sets two methodological beginnings against one another, one speculative and the other critical.

But for Whitehead, speculative philosophy recognizes that neither of these can begin without the other. Displacing both transcendental critique and metaphysical dogmatism, Whitehead recognizes that we can no more begin with something *rather than* its position, production or formation than we can begin with the formation, production or position of something in the absence of the thing itself. Whitehead's theory of prehensions – a non-anthropocentric theory of the determination of entities – is inseparable from the account of actual entities/occasions it accompanies. He cannot 'begin' with one or the other. By imposing a misleading order of reasons (either things first, then conditions of their production; or conditions of production, then things) Garcia loses from the outset the synthetic ground of speculative thought, without which it falls back into forms of dogmatism inviting Kantian critique. This is why Badiou, for example, arduously develops formalist tools through which his speculative claims might find epistemological coherence, and why Brassier rightly insists that 'the question "What is real?" stands at the crossroads of metaphysics and epistemology.' We need not *begin* with epistemology alone nor remain within its province; nor must epistemology claim *transcendental* warrant or anthropocentric restriction. But we cannot do without it. Speculative philosophy sets out from and returns to the crossroads of metaphysics and epistemology; it has to travel both roads at once. That difficulty is what makes real progress on the double path of speculation so rare.

So, *Form and Object* unfortunately sets out from the least tenable premiss of contemporary speculation: it purports to circumvent the problem of conceptual conditions by fiat, resolving to treat objects and things objectively while treating conditions of objectivity as secondary. For many, I fear, this will discourage earnest attention to Garcia's book. But that would be a shame: despite their methodological shortcomings, Garcia's conceptually rich investigations deserve to be grappled with.

Form and Object is organized in two Books, titled 'Formally' and 'Objectively'. The first outlines a formal, universal theory of four interlocking concepts: thing, world, being and comprehending. The ground of this theory is a differential, relational concept of things: a thing is the difference between *what is in it* and *what it is in*, that which it comprehends and that which comprehends it. 'Being comes inside a thing and being goes outside it', Garcia writes; 'a thing is nothing other than the *difference*

between being-inside [*l'être entré*] and being-outside [*l'être sorti*].' A thing is thus 'a relation, inscribed in the world, between the being that enters the world and the being that goes outside it, and that enters into another thing.'

Garcia's system of concepts is already active in these definitions. A thing is the difference between what is in it and what it is in: 'the world'. Since the world is what *every* thing is in, it is not itself something, but rather 'the form of things'. Everything enters into the world, and the world enters into nothing. The world is the 'negative' of things. Considered as in the world, things are solitary (they enter the world, not each other). In so far as they are in one another, things are 'objects'. According to this scheme, 'every thing has two configurations. The first is that a thing is an *object* insofar as it is comprehended in other things. The second is that a thing is a *thing* insofar as it is comprehended in something-other-than-a-thing [the world].' In the world, things are 'equal': they exist one by one, solitary in their formal equivalence. In one another, things are 'unequal': distributed in relational hierarchies ordered by mereological relations moving from 'smallest to greatest, from simple to complex, from minimum to maximum, from parts to whole'. For Garcia, 'being' and 'comprehending' are also relationally determined. There is no being 'in-itself'. *Being* is being *in* this or that, while that in which something is *comprehends* it. The world comprehends things; objects comprehend each other. Being and comprehending are mutually constitutive categories giving sense to the relational structure of things as the difference between what is in something and what something is in. 'Being is not primary', writes Garcia, 'which means both that no being is *in itself* and that no being is *before* things. Being is secondary and the handmaiden of things, which means that being is the sense attributed to one thing in relation to another thing.'

Garcia thus articulates a relational ontology, persistently critical of 'compact' thinking: any concept of things as self-identical, non-relational or in-themselves without exposure to an outside. His differential theory of things and relational theory of objects is particularly welcome in the wake of 'OOO's' incoherent positing of 'vacuum sealed objects' withdrawn from 'any relation at all' yet related through 'vicarious causation'. Moreover, Book I of *Form and Object* is beautifully written and constructed, moving between numbered propositions and theoretical expositions that are sometimes dazzlingly suggestive of novel conceptual horizons.

The primary difficulty of Book I lies, predictably, in accounting for the *determination* of things and of objects. 'When things are together', writes Garcia, 'they are objects', but 'what forms all is not all things together, but each thing separately.' Again, *things* are always alone in the world, which is the form or 'negative' of each thing separately. But how can 'each thing' be considered separately in this sense, when even gender or adolescence is a 'thing' in Garcia's system? We have no account of how the boundaries of such amorphous 'things' are determined in such a way that their distinction could be coherent – and if this is the case then our formal knowledge of the world (again, working with Garcia's terms) will be rendered incoherent by the metaphysical system we hoped would help us grasp it.

Even the case of a tree branch brings this difficulty into relief. 'As an "object", the branch is in the tree', Garcia argues. But 'as a "thing", the branch is in the world – that is, in everything except itself, in everything that surrounds it, in everything that begins infinitely where the branch ends.' The obvious and banal question is: where *does* the branch end? One should not demand the solution to such questions from a metaphysical treatise, but one does want a framework in which they can be coherently addressed. In *Form and Object*, the answer cannot be scientific, it cannot be conventionalist, it cannot be linguistic, it cannot be phenomenological. While reading the book, we are asked to abstain from asking 'Where does an object come from? By whom or how?' because the metaphysics developed 'ought to be retroactively applicable to any subject, consciousness and condition of thinking, provided one has patience to judge it at the end and not the beginning'. Unfortunately, this turns out not to be the case: the book lacks a theory of determination that might enable such retroactive applicability. Whereas Whitehead's theory of prehensions, for example, offers a non-anthropocentric account of determination according to which entities/occasions are relative to relations among which they are constituted, Garcia does not allow for such a flexible model of the contextual determination of something like a 'branch'. Rather, we are asked to accept that a branch enters into 'everything that begins infinitely where the branch ends', without an account of how instances of relational, perceptual, cognitive, conventional, linguistic or scientific determination might distinguish the beginning of the branch from the trunk of the tree. The point of such an objection is not at all to discredit Garcia's whole project by regarding it with self-satisfied Kantian

scorn; it is simply to point out why the book's metaphysics remains dissatisfying.

If Book I of *Form and Object* is conceptually fascinating despite these shortcomings, I find Book II less so. Here, Garcia turns from his formal metaphysics to an encyclopedic application of its scheme, with chapters on The Universe, Time, Living Things, Animals, Humans, Representations, History, Values, Classes, Genders and Ages of Life. These chapters exhibit an impressive breadth of reading and theoretical labour. But this breadth also turns out to be a weakness, since eight pages on Culture or fifteen on History prove predictably inadequate for credible treatments of such topics. Read charitably, these chapters offer preparatory sketches of how diverse regions of thought might be more rigorously addressed from the metaphysical perspective elaborated in Book I. But they also chafe at such generosity by offering highly reductive accounts of complex theoretical problems. Take the chapter on classes, for example, where Garcia claims that 'Marxism as a fundamental theory of classes is caught in a stranglehold: the necessity of reducing class relations to political and historical conflicts (which allow us to make the struggle meaningful and history readable) and the impossibility of doing so.' This is a false stranglehold, since what Marx offers is a *structural* theory of class constitution grounded in the function of the wage relation within the double reproduction of capital and labour power requisite for capitalist accumulation. If, for Marx, class emerges from and results in 'political and historical conflicts' it is not simply 'reducible' to them. Garcia argues that, 'As an individual, I am neither reducible to being the member of a class which comprehends me nor irreducible to all classes, like a free electron without determination. I overlap different classes, reduced or enlarged – classes of inheritance, of ideas, of thought, of belief, and of action.' Rather than expanding or refining Marx's theory of class, this passage crudely conflates it with classification in general, situating us on a plane of reflection so indeterminate that its statements seem at once banally true and irrelevant or technically erroneous.

This is also the case in the chapter on Gender, where Garcia argues that 'gender is neither purely inscribed in the nature of things nor purely projected by the human mind, but exists as a minimal relation between *that which is gender* and *that which comprehends gender*.' The problem with this pat reconciliation of naturalist and nominalist theories exemplifies the problem with Book II: the formal model of Book I functions as a *deus ex machina* purporting to

reconcile opposing approaches to gender, while the term 'gender' itself is deployed in a question-begging fashion which lands us back at square one, either overlooking or reproducing all the difficulties of the term's ambiguous reference, which spur such debates in the first place. Even if we allow for the constraints Garcia is working under, treating so many subjects in so little space, the frustrating experience of Book II is that if one is invested in the details of the debates he addresses, one finds his brief treatments too misleadingly reductive to lend his theoretical interventions real traction. Ultimately, *Form and Object* would be a more persuasive treatise if it included only Book I, reserving the topics in Book II for treatment elsewhere, in greater detail and with greater precision.

More generally, one hopes that Garcia's considerable intellect, erudition and creativity might be channelled into a more disciplined engagement with the philosophical tradition that would flesh out and strengthen the promising aspects of his metaphysical

framework. The originality and energy of *Form and Object*, and the lovely openness of the book's tone, make the differential, relational ontology it elaborates conceptually and affectively enticing. But speculative philosophy cannot draw its interest merely from the novelty of interlocking metaphysical propositions, even if the scheme they articulate approaches coherence. Philosophical systems also require a dimension of *necessity* drawn from a rigorous confrontation with the history of thought they inherit, and from which they cannot escape. Even if we might like to, we cannot go back to being pre-Socratic philosophers. 'Speculation' should not be a slogan announcing the cursory treatment of detailed theoretical questions in pursuit of an ersatz encyclopedism, nor the evasion by fiat of epistemological problems. It should designate a determination to work through those problems towards the articulation of metaphysical systems that are wrested, rather than sheltered, from critique.

Nathan Brown

Natura highs

Knox Peden, *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology: French Rationalism from Cavaillès to Deleuze*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 2014. 384 pp. £55.00 hb., £16.99 pb., 978 0 80478 741 3 hb., 978 0 80479 134 2 pb.

In this intervention into postwar French intellectual history, Knox Peden posits an antagonistic relationship between Spinoza and phenomenology that structures the whole of his book. This is the antagonism of a 'rationalism' represented by different French Spinozists pitted against various strains of phenomenology – either of the Hegelian, Husserlian or Heideggerian variants. Here, the battle is waged between the philosophers of the pure concept against philosophers of experience, and a negative dialectic for Peden plays out in these thinkers without resolution between concepts and intuitions, or between speculation and experience. Of course, the poles of this antagonism do blur historically, and we see in Peden's rich narrative many crossovers between rationalism and phenomenology. This is particularly so in the cases of Gilles Deleuze and the less well-known Jean-Toussaint Desanti. But such cases of blurring do not avoid the fundamental antagonism of concepts and experience posited by Peden. Indeed, a presupposed gap between concepts and experience persists throughout the narrative of *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*, and one sees how Peden analyses

these antinomies of French Spinozism within a framework largely established by Kant at the height of the first Pantheism Controversy.

What gives Peden's narrative its strength and potential weakness is the elasticity of certain terms, like 'Spinozism' and 'rationalism', which are used to cover a wide range of intellectual phenomena. Before Peden endeavours to describe the contours of this history, he establishes what he means by 'rationalism' as 'a term of art'. Rationalism is not so much reducible to a dogmatic philosophical programme, but enjoys the status in Peden's narrative of an 'ethos – understood as a commitment to the capacity of reason, however it is conceived, to supervene on the spontaneous insights of lived experience'. It is this fidelity and commitment to reason as opposed to lived experience that set up the main contrast between who counts as a French rationalist as opposed to a French phenomenologist in Peden's book. With the arrival of the so-called three Hs (Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger) into Parisian intellectual life, Peden maps a veritable rationalistic counter-revolution under the explicit or implicit aegis of a French academy

tradition that harks back to Léon Brunschvicg. What Brunschvicg's students inherited from him, other than a neo-Kantian disdain for Hegel, was his strong appreciation for Spinoza as a philosopher of reason and positivistic science. The reader sometimes gets the impression that Peden's title should be not so much *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology* as *Brunschvicg's Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*.

Brunschvicg's transformation of Spinoza affects a host of characters who are not so well known to anglophone audiences, but extremely important for shaping the trajectories of more eminent figures. Peden's work is essential for filling in such lacunae. Not only does it contribute excellent biographical sketches of the less well known figures of Jean Cavaillès, Martial Gueroult, Ferdinand Alquié and Jean-Toussaint Desanti; it effectively reveals the world that shaped them, and their effect on the conceptual universe of continental philosophy today. Peden is at his best when describing the intellectual climate of the French Academy, the war, the resistance and the political pressures that shaped these men's lives. But remaining true to their rationalism, Peden does not reduce their ideas to their lived environment. An important aspect of their biography is found in the ideas themselves, and not simply in their historical genesis. The contingent ways that these ideas developed does not exhaust or even explain their validity. Thus investigation has to work 'immanently' to the logic of the discourses presented.

Peden starts his genealogy of French Spinozism with Jean Cavaillès. A unique and heroic figure, whose life was cut short fighting the Nazi occupation, Cavaillès combined within himself the intellectual and political virtues of a mathematician, philosopher and resistance fighter. Influenced by Brunschvicg's interpretations of Kant and Spinoza, and working with existentialism more as a foil for his own ideas than as a constitutive influence, Cavaillès developed a new rationalism that emphasized concepts as a site of validity over the consciousness of phenomenology. What was lacking in Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology was an independent grounding for the validity of ideas, apart from lived experience. While Husserl tried to establish rules for a transcendental ego, grounding knowledge in terms of necessary structures, the validity of these structures found its basis for Cavaillès ultimately in something subjective. Thus, in contrast to the Husserlian ego and Heideggerian Dasein, Cavaillès sought to ground truth in the rational procedures of sciences themselves, with mathematics as a privileged domain. In

criticizing the phenomenological approach, it was not so much a matter for Cavaillès of focusing on the contingent history and emergence of scientific discourses, as of taking seriously the immanent nature of the truths emerging out of the generative and dynamic procedures of these discourses alone.

One cannot do justice here to Peden's rich discussion of Cavaillès' work on mathematics and set theory, but it is worth considering his insistence that we should take Cavaillès' approach to the logic of the sciences in general as Spinozistic. It is Spinozistic, for Peden, in so far as there is a radical distinction for the Spinozist between the realm of experience and the realm of concepts. But there are also other competing influences upon Cavaillès that Peden introduces to his narrative. Indeed, not only Brunschvicg's deep intellectual and personal relationship with Cavaillès but also the latter's periods of 'Christian militancy' are recounted, complicating the picture of what Peden calls Cavaillès' Spinozism even further. Indeed, in recalling anecdotes about how Cavaillès described his own form of political resistance as Spinozist – following a necessity that had its own logic and weight apart from any determinate empirical consideration – Peden notices not only a formalistic but a quasi-existentialist form of commitment.

Cavaillès' formalism derives from the ways in which he did not so much ground his idea of the concept in Spinoza's metaphysics of substance as in concepts generated from particular sciences, whose grounds were self-legitimizing as sciences. This logic of necessity thus becomes tautological in terms of what is considered scientific, since one can only understand what is scientific from the protocols internal to those very sciences. We see that what looks like Cavaillès' mathematical Spinozism, as Peden describes it, is less like an argument from Spinoza's actual metaphysics, and more like a form of Pascalian truth-seeking and commitment, where one submits oneself to a certain logic of necessity that is self-grounding – that is, a logic that is grounded without a ground or without transcendental guarantee. It is a logic that establishes itself with its own force, asserting itself as a logic, but is thus something voluntaristic precisely because of its lack of foundation other than itself. When Cavaillès is reported to describe his own resistance activity as Spinozist – that is, as emanating from the logic of necessity itself – it sounds more decisionistic than demonstrated. But Peden sees this movement within Cavaillès as a development internal to, and to a certain degree faithful to, the limitless and radically indeterminate nature of Spinoza's own philosophy.

In moving forward from the first chapter, we see a consistency in Peden's intellectual constellation that links his account of Cavaillès to the last chapters on Deleuze; it is a consistency rooted in what Landon Frim, in a talk on Deleuze, once playfully called 'substance abuse'. I use the word 'abuse' here in a more Pickwickian sense, since either the idea of substance in Spinoza's philosophy is neglected (as in the case of Cavaillès); treated as a leftover of idealist metaphysics (as in the case of Desanti); or completely dissolved into the attributes and modes (as in the cases of Gueroult and Deleuze). Martial Gueroult especially accentuates this process of a dissolving of Spinozian substance into a pluralistic philosophy of truths. Peden provides a careful exposition of Gueroult's biography, scholarly rigour and philosophical perspective, and reveals Gueroult to be the most philologically interested in the actual letter of Spinoza's work among all the figures discussed in *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology*. With Gueroult, a scholar who fundamentally reshaped the contours of understanding Spinoza in France, what is important is not submitting the truths about texts to some abstract metaphysics, or phenomenology of lived experience, but understanding truth as produced by the particular text or philosophical logic being considered. Truth is thus plural for Gueroult, and immanent to the unique effects of specific systems and philosophical texts. The way Gueroult understood Spinozian substance is of particular importance here, and it is not unrelated to his commitment to philosophical pluralism more broadly. Rather than treat Spinozian substance monistically, Gueroult treats the attributes as really distinct things. Substance thus becomes for Gueroult a name 'for the permanent relation of these essentially distinct attributes'. Substance as cause, or substance as *natura naturans*, is cast now in Gueroult as an absent cause that dissolves into its effects, or into *natura naturata*. The remainder of what is dissolved in Spinozian substance becomes the transcendent cause, which makes possible a radical distinction between cause and effect. In other words, a plurality of effects can be appreciated without grounding them in determinate causes. Thus, with the assumption that substance cannot be understood as something positive, Gueroult establishes the groundless conditions for contingency and pluralism.

The theme of the absent cause helps to structure much of Peden's subsequent chapters, and it functions at the level of absent influences for more prominent names, such as Althusser and Deleuze. Peden establishes a relatively unknown figure in anglophone

circles, Jean-Toussaint Desanti, as the absent cause for some of Althusser's own heretical Spinozism. Even though Althusser distanced himself from Desanti, whose political role in the French Communist Party was compromised by his promotion of hard-line Stalinism in philosophy and science, Desanti did build on the tradition of French Spinozism inherited from Brunschvicg and Cavaillès. But, unlike Althusser, Desanti's Spinozism was held in radical tension with his own phenomenological commitments, and the focus on the self-generating truths of the sciences had to also compete with concerns about particular, determinate experience. These were poles that could not be resolved for Desanti. Nor was such a resolution desirable, since such a resolution for Desanti, Peden suggests, would have had the sort of baneful political effects that he witnessed under the ideological supremacy of Stalinism: of trying to make everything fit into an abstraction.

The chapters on Cavaillès, Gueroult and Desanti set up the logic for Peden's subsequent chapters on Althusser and Deleuze. Unlike Desanti, Althusser wanted to purge the concerns of phenomenology – along with Hegel – 'into the night', and saw a fundamental complicity of phenomenology, empiricism and the politics of lived experience with the crass pragmatism of Stalinist politics. But for Peden, like Cavaillès, Althusser was driven less towards a concrete politics, and more into flights of philosophical abstraction, ending in what remained a seemingly apolitical philosophy of the encounter in his later work. Deleuze continues the reading programme of Gueroult's Spinoza, but Peden reveals the tension between Spinoza and Heidegger that operates throughout Deleuze's intellectual corpus. The univocity of being (where being is multiple) in Deleuze is always treated in excess of concepts. Peden shows that in Deleuze's attempts to Spinozify Heidegger and Heideggerianize Spinoza, Heideggerian being is turned from a reflection of radical finitude to a new ontology of excess, while Spinozian substance is again dissolved in favour of a pluralistic universe of events.

It is important to emphasize how Peden sees these developments in French Spinozism as not merely heretical, but as logical consequences of Spinoza's own philosophy. In using the analytic of Spinozism provided by Kant's 'What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?', Peden treats Spinozian substance as radically indeterminate in such a way that it has no concrete purchase on experience, much less politics. This opens up the charge from Kant

and Friedrich Jacobi that Spinoza leads to forms of fanaticism and nihilism, and that in annulling the realm of the finite in favour of the infinite, we lose all sense of responsibility for what is right in front of us. It seems, then, that the recent French Spinoza that Peden elucidates here is in fact the image of a rather old German one, and it is one that has not gone unchallenged. In fact, even the young Hegel went to some lengths in challenging Kantian and Jacobian stereotypes about Spinoza in his early *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), which makes the case for Spinoza as a dialectical thinker. Later, Hegel adopted these same stereotypes of Spinoza to fit his own criticisms, but also tried to demonstrate how a more sophisticated Spinozism, or at least an approach profoundly inspired by Spinoza, does not represent the 'death

of politics' but its rational grounding. For Hegel, 'the political' doesn't result from the dissolution and death of substance, but is related to the process of development of substance as subject in history.

Beyond the French and German Spinozas, there is still Spinoza's own philosophy as a coherent and self-contained project. When Alquié said to Gueroult that 'we do not believe there is a system in Descartes', Gueroult retorted: 'Descartes thought otherwise.' We should insist, too, that Spinoza thought otherwise about the relationship between speculation and politics, a relationship signified by the title of Spinoza's *Ethics*, where ethics becomes the philosophical resolution between theory and practice.

Harrison Fluss

Repeat prescription

Nadir Lahiji, ed., *Architecture against the Post-Political: Essays in Reclaiming the Critical Project*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014. 252 pp., £110.00 hb., £34.99 pb., 978 0 415 72537 8 hb., 978 0 415 72538 5 pb.

Nadir Lahiji, ed., *The Missed Encounter of Radical Philosophy with Architecture*, Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney, 2014. 256 pp., £65.00 hb., 978 1 472 51218 5.

The architecture world's engagement with philosophy has not always been an easy one, although this has not been through a lack of enthusiasm. Since at least the late 1970s, successive waves of philosophy have pulsed through the architectural academy, deeply influencing the teaching and theory of architecture and occasionally making some surprisingly coherent appearances in the built environment. From the wave of 'deconstructivism' in the 1980s, inspired if not exactly endorsed by Derrida, to the long flirtation with Deleuze from the 1990s onward, many architects at the cutting edge of the profession have utilized the language of radical philosophy as inspiration.

But in the last decade, a reaction against the 'French turn' in architecture theory has become clear. This has occurred from two principal directions. On the one hand, due to advances in technology, the experimental architecture practised by many of these theorist-architects became not only possible but increasingly in demand for prestige architectural projects. As a result, a change in attitude was required to adapt to these new working conditions, and an intellectual shift from a conceptual to a technical or managerial approach occurred. But, on the other hand, and more recently, a growing number of people have been challenging not only this managerial

turn, but also the broader history of architecture's recent engagement with philosophy, with a view to re-energizing and perhaps re-politicizing the field.

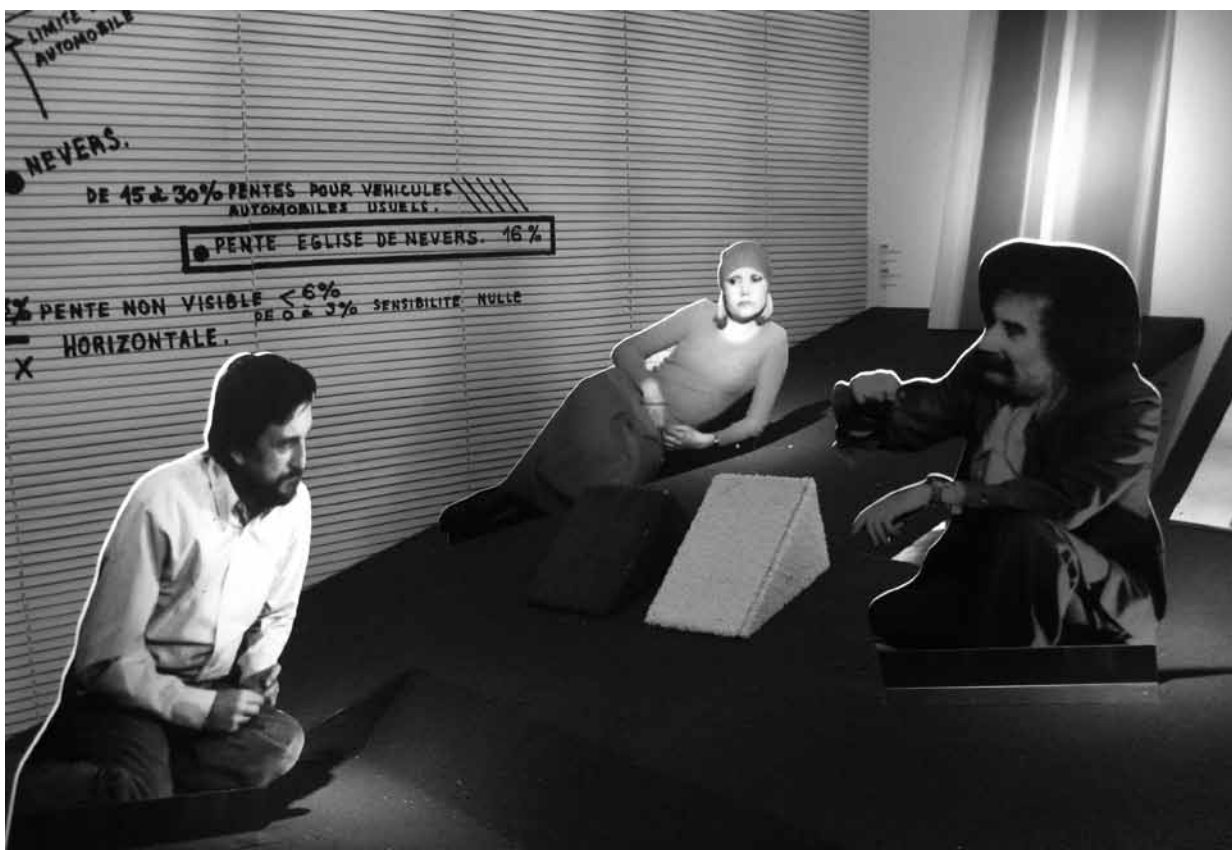
Nadir Lahiji is one of the more prominent academics working on this latter project, and his two new edited volumes attempt to push this theme forward. Although they are ostensibly on different subjects, they can be considered as aiming towards the same goal, with many of the same contributors. *The Missed Encounter of Radical Philosophy with Architecture* takes the wider view, and asks, why is it that of all the art forms, philosophers have concerned themselves the least with architecture? *Architecture against the Post-Political* states its aim as a challenge to the rejection of criticality in architecture, and the seeming alignment of progressive practice with the spirit of contemporary information capitalism, with a particular, although by no means exclusive, focus on the work of Jacques Rancière.

Lahiji's essay in *The Missed Encounter* exemplifies the attitude that more or less dominates both collections. A critique of what he terms 'antiphilosophy', meaning the diluted borrowings of poststructuralism which have long been architecture theory's bread and butter, he deploys Badiou's viciously barbed use of 'sophist' to dismiss the weakness of yesterday's

architectural theory. Beyond this venom, however, there is an intriguing argument that through 'suturing' itself to poststructuralism, architectural theory neglects philosophy's own will-to-architecture, and risks 'turning into its own negation'; by becoming in thrall to deconstruction, architectural thought missed the potential to discover its own immanent philosophical architectonic. From another angle, it is also possible to critique architectural theory for its very success in accommodating itself to power. Douglas Spencer's essay in *Architecture against the Post-Political* watches as Rem Koolhaas travesties his own *Delirious New York* to impress Manhattan property developers, discusses Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Patrik Schumacher, two once arch-Deleuzeans who have made rather too smooth a transition to the use of corporate rhetoric, before discussing the ideological contortions that Koolhaas's firm OMA had to make in order to justify designing the headquarters of the Chinese state broadcaster CCTV. While these adventures are damning enough, what Spencer highlights is the near impossibility of preserving an oppositional political stance while also attempting to support hundreds of architectural staff designing buildings that cost vast amounts of capital to produce. Indeed, Schumacher's work *The Autopoiesis of Architecture* makes the strong argument that it is completely out of architecture's field of competency

to consider the political implications of its work. It raises the question: if it is so easy to slip it off, how useful could any of the old radical rhetoric have actually been?

Both of these books involve potential answers to that question, broadly falling into two strategies: one, that reinvigoration is possible through returning more carefully and pointedly to recent thinkers, and two, that there are new avenues of thought which might provide a greater possibility of getting a hold on the politics and theory of contemporary architecture. One touchstone for the criticality debate centres around Manfredo Tafuri, whose powerful critique of ideology worked out in the 1970s and 1980s led to sobering conclusions regarding the ability of architecture ever to escape being a vocal expression of capitalist power. For generations Tafuri has been for architects a symbol of why it is impossible to be politically principled and work honestly within the system. Gevork Hartoonian's essay in *Architecture against the Post-Political* takes a fresh look at Tafuri in the context of new debates on autonomy, while Andrew Leach's essay in *The Missed Encounter* argues thoroughly that the general understanding of Tafuri as an uncompromisingly pessimistic thinker who retreated from his earlier engagements with modernism in favour of studies of the mercantile architecture of the Italian renaissance is unfair. Instead, Leach



argues that we should understand him not only as intellectually consistent throughout his career, but as one of the first architectural historians to really merit the term, in terms of properly engaging with a critique of the intellectual conditions which generated the terms of the form.

In recent years the Italian architect and theorist Pier Vittorio Aureli has come to prominence, with a consistent practice and critical position which, to a certain extent, pick up from where Tafuri and other Italian theorists left off. Francesco Marullo and Ross Exo Adams, both students of Aureli's, contribute essays to *Architecture against the Post-Political* that exemplify this recent turn in architectural thought. Marullo examines the notion of 'genericness', drawn from a text in Koolhaas's 1995 work *S,M,L,XL*. The 'generic' here is the architecture of warehouses, airports and infrastructure, an architecture often seen as embodying an almost naked display of capitalism's function, with no civic or ideologically charged aesthetic dressing. Marullo argues that 'the fading landscape envisioned by Koolhaas at the end of his "The Generic City" efficaciously describes the present post-political condition', the landscape of the privatized public sphere, managerial politics and flattened differences. Marullo then asks us to look at the factories of Albert Kahn, the celebrated designer of many of Detroit's early car works which prefigured and influenced the modern movement in Europe, explaining them in terms of labour struggle and the imposition of Fordist methods.

Adams, working in a similar vein, looks to the work of Ildefons Cerdà, the nineteenth-century Catalan engineer most famous for his designs for the extension to Barcelona. Aureli has been writing about Cerdà for a number of years, placing him alongside later urban thinkers such as Ludwig Hilbersheimer, thanks to Cerdà's *General Theory of Urbanisation* of 1867. Adams goes into detail on this work, arguing that the 'Urbe', as Cerdà called it, is a field that has been almost completely neglected in the history of architecture and urbanization, which 'lacks a language in which to speak about the urban'. Cerdà's urbanism is also a form of generic application of biopolitics, looking to facilitate the flow of people and money through time across a functioning civic environment, in which direct politics is replaced by administration – the post-political ideal expressed right at the origins of the liberal capitalist city.

Elsewhere, Walter Benjamin receives some varied and interesting attention. It is intriguing, considering Benjamin's sustained intellectual engagement

with architecture, that his direct influence on architectural practice has been so minimal. Daniel Libeskind explicitly referenced *One-Way Street* in his descriptions of the designs for the Jewish Museum Berlin, but there are no Benjaminian architects in the way that there are Deleuzian or were Derridian ones. Libero Andreotti in *Architecture against the Post-Political*, and David Cunningham and Richard Charles Strong in *The Missed Encounter*, each take on the 'Work of Art' essay, with its passages on architecture's prefiguring of the distracted relationship of the masses towards the new medium of film. Andreotti remarks upon how this particularly forceful political essay has somehow become one of the most easily digested in Benjamin's *œuvre*, and goes into detail on various authors' approaches to the difficult last sentences, 'Such is the aestheticization of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism responds by politicizing art.' Cunningham, too, takes on this passage, arguing that the communist politicization of art was the promise of an altered social world where the aesthetic itself would be understood in a radically different manner. Strong, on the other hand, wishes to take seriously Benjamin's descriptions of architecture and film, and perhaps rather pedantically argues that Benjamin's analogy doesn't hold any more (if it ever did), because buildings can now be covered in cinematic display screens and have thus collapsed the distinction between the two media.

It should be noted, however, that for volumes of writing that are frequently vociferous in their condemnation of the pitfalls and missed opportunities of architectural theory, there are a number of essays that might fall into that camp. Esoteric graphic notation explaining Lacanian-influenced interpretations of the diageic framework of cinema, such as Donald Kunze provides, may well be interesting but I would venture to say may not be of the highest priority for understanding the political problems of architecture today. The same goes for the high Deleuzianism of Hélène Frichot, an example of the kind of architectural theory that has often been directly attacked by other authors featured in the collection. Another problem is looking for potential sites of agonism in the contemporary city, as Uta Gelbke and Lidia Klein, looking at Barcelona and Warsaw respectively, attempt to do. The tendency to put forward vaguely unprogrammed space as a potential site for political innovation is common, but often displays a fundamental mismatch between the argument for political change and its chances of occurring through small-scale action. At worst, one is

left with the contradiction noted by David Cunningham's essay in *Architecture against the Post-Political*, discussing the privileging of 'radical margins' with regard to London's Heygate Estate, recently cleared for redevelopment as luxury flats: 'do we really want to think of the "void" of the estate's abandonment as somehow more "truly radical" than the actual social housing that preceded it?'

Despite the concern with missed encounters between philosophy and architecture, some of the more recent developments in the philosophical vanguard make only a small impression on the essays collected. The plethora of new materialisms and new metaphysics going under the 'speculative materialism' or 'object-oriented ontology' banners are only briefly touched upon, although it seems likely that these fields are almost tailor-made for being introduced to architecture. Joel McKim's discussion of 'radical infrastructure', for example, attempts to bring the 'vital materialism' of Jane Bennett, and the object-oriented approaches of Graham Harman and Timothy Morton, into the question of large-scale landscape design, such as the plans for the decommissioned Fresh Kills landfill site near New York City. McKim sees an opportunity here to connect architectural theory to serious questions of landscape, consumption, ecology and design through these new, more ontologically flat modes of thought. The attraction is obvious, and the famed litanies of various different equally real objects, from light bulbs, galaxies, sovereign wealth funds, methane molecules, Mickey Mouse, and so on, that 'object-oriented ontology' deploys are clearly very attractive from the point of view of design. Indeed, when considering the tendency of historic models of ecological ethics to sublimate directly from technological Prometheanism into a guilty, apocalyptic anti-humanism, an object-oriented approach appears to offer a chance of synthesis.

Graham Harman has already been making an inroad on the architectural lecture circuit, and, like many a philosopher before him, has found architecture departments to be a very eager and welcoming audience. But we should be wary from previous encounters between theory and architecture, because the risks of severe aestheticization are very real. Considering what happened to the radical philosophy of Deleuze when it hit architecture, the prospect of 'object-oriented architecture' unfortunately suggests the potential for yet more flamboyant shape-making for the neoliberal order, with even less concern for the human networks around it. Add to this the

possibility of architecture becoming intellectually taken by 'accelerationism', or even the grim high-tech fascism of the so-called 'Dark Enlightenment', and there are definitely some intellectual battles around architectural theory that will soon need to be fought.

In short, both of these volumes are worth reading, perhaps more for germinal forms of new radical philosophical approaches to architecture than for anything as yet fully formed. They do give hope, however, that the facile post-political approach to architectural theory is ripe for being superseded. Douglas Spencer and David Cunningham, both familiar to *Radical Philosophy*, have been doing much useful work holding the protected enclave of architectural theory to account, challenging its continued assertions of radicality, and their contributions are of great interest. It also seems to me that the return to ideology critique and questions of the urban as exemplified by Pier Vittorio Aureli and his circle of influence is definitely an area to watch, as it returns to questioning and critiquing the urban forms of twenty-first-century capitalism and their historical emergence. They provide positive examples of the course of action recommended by Lahijj: 'Reading philosophy must once again be taken up with the view to restore the project of critique and no longer as a series of "concepts" to be "applied" as *prescription* to practice.'

Douglas Murphy

Shadows, liquids, bubbles

Ole Bjerg, *Making Money: The Philosophy of Crisis Capitalism*, Verso, London and New York, 2014. 292 pp., £19.99 pb., 978 1 78168 265 4.

Attempts to think critically about money are now confronted with a profound set of ontological transformations in and to finance. For example, the transmutation of traditional intermediation (the so-called 'Jimmy Stewart' model of banking) into a 'shadow banking' system effects a rhizomatic mode of distribution wholly lacking heterogeneity; progressive differentiations of securitized and synthetically replicated assets exhibit peculiar material capacities, radically dissimilar to traditional debt and equity; highly novel central bank experimentations with quantitative easing execute liquidity and credit roles hitherto facilitated by unassisted capital markets; a

haemorrhaged set of secondary debt markets produces bubbles incessantly on the verge of bursting, yet whose voluminous size now appear required for primary debt market stability; there is a perpetually fragile, intimate commingling of money markets and capital markets; ongoing, nonlinear causal threats of a reignited sovereign debt crisis; a collapse of distinction between liquidity risk and solvency risk; and thus incessant threats of market crises – along with the fiscal and monetary hyper-vigilance they putatively require. The ontological transformation in and to finance, the financial asset, its method of composition, as well as the markets they populate, stand at the precipice of this wholesale qualitative alteration of finance's relation to capital and capital markets more generally, and now begs serious, sustained, historically specific materialist analysis.

Yet herein lies the problem. There are few heterodox political economic tools pre-fitted for the job. To what schools of thought or thinkers do we look – analytically, theoretically, methodologically – as we approach and try to cognitively map the peculiar ontological domain of finance? It is not the case that such projects have yet to be inaugurated: the Australian Working Group on Financialization out of Sydney, Critical Finance Studies in Stockholm and Amsterdam, the New York Cultures of Finance group, and the Bruce Initiative on Rethinking Capitalism in the Bay Area, among others, have for some time been working, each in their own way, to develop conceptual resources for a critical analysis of finance commensurate with its present dynamics. Ole Bjerg's contribution is to propose that Žižek's conceptual framework is equally up to this task. Is it? The results are mixed.

The thesis of *Making Money* is that Žižek's conceptual apparatus, whose principal analytical force pivots on the three Lacanian ontological registers of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, lends us 'immense conceptual firepower' for examining surreptitious philosophical commitments endemic to financial discourse on contemporary money, financial markets, financial economics, and other aspects of contemporary finance. As Bjerg puts it:

One of the positive results of the economic crisis that started in 2007–8 was the awakening of a critical public interest in the constitution and functioning of the international finance and banking system. As ever new aspects of this system come to light, we see the contours of a highly complex global machine that serves to not only facilitate global trade and production, but also to systematically concentrate wealth in the hands of

a small minority of people. The complexity and perversity of the contemporary money system must be countered with a theoretical framework that is even more complex and perverse. This is what Žižek provides. He is the Goldman Sachs of contemporary philosophy.

That last sentence is fun, but provokes some anxiety that if Bjerg's principal assertion is merely that Žižek provides us with the tools to critically evaluate contemporary money, perhaps it would be prudent (given that Žižek is a living and notably prolific writer) to wait for *him* to publish on the matter, rather than reading a secondary speculation on a primary text that has yet to be written – that is, to learn from Bjerg what Žižek *would have said* about money and finance, had he actually thought to say it? However, in the case of *Making Money*, such caution proves unwarranted. Occasionally, yes, the reader does encounter instances of the awful substitutive 'logic of sameness' – that placid theoretical practice of substituting, in this case, a concept specific to Žižek's *œuvre* (subject, the law, fantasy, and so on) with a concept common to finance (money, asset pricing models, credit, and so on): 'see what Žižek says about the barred subject: it's the exact same thing with money!'; or, 'you know what Žižek says about the real? The same thing occurs with financial risk!' (Naturally, Žižek offers an enthusiastic endorsement of the book on its back cover.) But ultimately, somehow, these episodes don't detract from the book's significance as much as one might expect. Bjerg, who also bends Heidegger's mode of inquiry to his object, is as well read in the field of 'political finance' (if I may coin this term) as he is in the fields of monetary theory and financial economics. He works on and through a broad variety of sources – from Keynes to Graeber, from Knorr-Cetina to LiPuma and Lee – so as to ontologically situate contemporary money in the epistemological context of modern finance. The results are a threefold contribution that, befitting a Lacanian-intoned theoretical exercise, demonstrates plenty but *less* about what it intends to, and perhaps *even more* about what it does not.

The first contribution of *Making Money* is its fleet-footed critique of financial economics – 'critique' here being used in its classical sense, as an exposition of the internal limits of the conditions of possibility of some object or phenomenon. Bjerg rightly identifies the Kantian 'strain' of thinking weaving through the French mathematician Bachelier's *Theory of Speculation* (1900). Originally the latter's doctoral thesis, this work involves the inaugural use of stochastic calculus

to model the price behaviour of stock options, and in an important sense renders Bachelier the first 'quant'. Bjerg shows that financial economics is indeed an epistemology always already imbricated within a set of philosophical commitments. This, no doubt, is something most philosophically minded persons already knew, but Bjerg aptly probes its epistemology, at once reproducing the now common narrative of the development of modern finance – for example, from Markowitz's portfolio selection to the efficient market hypothesis, to the capital asset pricing model, and, finally, to the Black–Scholes–Merton options pricing model, from whose technological heritage credit derivatives and synthetic finance have differentiated – all the while illustrating how the imaginary of much of modern finance is already 'encapsulated' in Bachelier's subtle but important ontological commitment to the principle of nonarbitrage, which in turn relies on a Kantian conception of the transcendental subject. Indeed, as Bjerg, who chooses his one-liners with care, notes, 'Bachelier does for modern finance what Kant did for modern philosophy.'

The book's second contribution is its smart suggestion that we upend our common line of questioning about contemporary money. Bjerg defers to Heidegger's reformulation of the question of Being to propose a mode of philosophical inquiry into not 'What is money?' – as if money keeps some secret, or hides a kernel of truth about itself, whose essence we might yet crack – but rather now 'How is money?' That is, how does money actually function today? Into what financial-material practices is its imagistic substance presently interwoven? In this respect, chapters 5 and 6 of the book comprise its most compelling portions, where Bjerg practises what he earlier only promised his reader (having to this point got bogged down proselytizing on behalf of the thesis that Žižek is a heterodox political economist). Recalibrating our aperture from *what* to *how*, Bjerg guides us here through an occasionally rigorous exposition of two compelling notions: first, that the voluminous expansion of credit derivatives and other synthetically replicated financial assets means that we are moving from an era dominated by credit money to an era of post-credit money; which, relatedly, generates his second conviction that 'the contemporary logic of financial markets, especially derivatives markets, now administers the manner of constitution of money itself.' This point matters, and extends some way beyond Bjerg's immediate object of contemporary money, in so far as it means that any materialist account of economy today must grasp

modern finance wholesale – its institutions, assets, and the spatio-temporal specificities of the markets they populate. For if economics is already ontology, so, too, any financialized economy obtains a set of singular, specific, ontological correlatives; and failing to understand them will render any subsequent move problematic from the outset.

Third – and despite this reviewer's doubts about the effectiveness of Bjerg's Žižek – it must be observed that latent in the affective fungibility of the psychoanalytic subject resides the beginnings of a robust heterodox microeconomics. It is not clear that Bjerg intends to make this point, but at any rate the notion is certainly present and readable in-between the lines of his thesis. Behavioural finance, for instance, which is currently so *en vogue* in academic finance, would agree with Žižek et al. that subjectivity does not comprise a unity, but is rather a retroactive instantiation produced by an original, fantastic, irreconcilable gap. However, from there these two methods part ways. Nonetheless, behavioural finance, too, like the (Cartesian) *Homo economicus* and (Bentham's) subject of marginal utility before it, bifurcates into an unambiguous, highly developed, self-consistent financial trading strategy commensurate with its epistemology. We might ask then: if Žižek was a trader, what would his trading strategy be? Would it be possible for us to line up and 'test' the behavioural, Kantian, psychoanalytic and other theories of the subject, in order to know which theory, when deployed in the service of a financial trading strategy, would earn the best results? (I, for one, would be interested to see Marx, Deleuze and Žižek try to outperform each other in their respective trading strategies.)

Finally, despite its philosophical acumen, *Making Money* ironically suffers from some financial myopia. Throughout his book, Bjerg deploys the register of the imaginary and its related concept of fantasy to examine and critique, among other things, various trading strategies and pricing models, but at times reproduces inaccurate tropes and/or oversimplified depictions of their dispositions. For example, Bjerg constructs an extensive account of gold and the commodity theory of money in terms of Žižek's framework, only to conclude:

We like to think the reason gold is stowed away in the vaults of banks is to provide security against the outstanding debts of the bank. Perhaps the actual reason is the complete opposite. Gold is kept out of the ordinary exchange and consumption of commodities in order to conceal the fact

that it is in fact an ordinary commodity with very little actual use-value beyond serving as the surface for our fantasmatic projections about its magical capacities.

OK, I don't know anyone in or outside finance who believes that gold has a tangible use-value, that gold is anything other than an 'ordinary' commodity (whatever that means), or that it has 'magical' capacities. In fact, it's likely that anyone who frequently trades gold also trades bitcoins, which is just as much of a floating, albeit so-called 'virtual', currency and which lacks any referent whatsoever. Who exactly is this 'We' that Bjerg is imagining?

Another example, this time more troubling, surrounds Bjerg's treatment of Black-Scholes-Merton (BSM), the options pricing model credited with technologizing the standardization of financial derivatives. Bjerg explains that '[the BSM] theory allows us to calculate the right price of certain securities in the market with no recourse to market-external data.' This, as anyone who trades options knows, is certainly *not* how BSM is used today – which in fact means the precise opposite of what Bjerg suggests. BSM *actually* says you must know volatility to accurately price an option. But traders know that any positing of volatility is a fantasy – that is, an imaginary, retroactive attempt to symbolically instantiate that which by definition cannot be known, namely 'the real' of volatility. Therefore, rather than dumbly plugging in some symbolic instantiation of a fantasy, traders invert the BSM formula by using the market price of an option to derive 'implied volatility' – that is to say, they use the market's fantasy about future volatility *implied* by its current market (i.e. symbolic) price.

Here, then, it's not so much that Žižek's registers cannot be used to critically examine a financial pricing model, such as BSM, as that Bjerg inadvertently reminds us throughout *Making Money* that the nascent field of political finance must take caution to attend carefully to, and continually seek to understand rigorously, our financial objects of analyses – which involves studying the way the plumbers *actually* use their tools, prior to executing our analysis, deploying our own methodological tools, and attempting to move from economy to ontology and then back again to economy. If we fail at this first step, we may end up *inaccurately fantasizing* (is this possible?) a financial imaginary that is itself ungrounded in any generative slippage between the real and the symbolic.

Benjamin Lozano

Deal with the devil

Jacques de Saint Victor, *Les Antipolitiques*, Grasset, Paris, 2014. 91 pp., €10.00 pb., 978 2 24685 211 7.

In this book, Jacques de Saint Victor, by profession a historian of law in Paris, has a dual focus. His first focus is on the history, politics and ideology of new electronic media, the Internet and so-called 'social networks', with a particularly incisive analysis of 'hacker culture'. His second focus is on the way in which a culture of suspicion towards all political institutions has gradually established itself in many Western countries over the past twenty years, for which the author takes the recent success of the M5S movement in Italy as a paradigmatic instance. In origin these two phenomena have relatively little in common. Yet there is a certain convergence between them, at least in the way both of the groups see themselves. Both the 'cyberactivists' and groups like M5S take their respective movements to be radically different from anything that went before; both take themselves to be a 'progressive' vanguard of opposition against established structures of power, but also conceive of themselves as 'anti-political' movements; and, finally, both attribute to their followers the power to 'change the world for the better'.

Saint Victor argues, however, that representatives of both movements suffer from massive forms of self-deception about the history of their respective movements, their power, social location and actual political prospects. In fact, neither is in any real position to offer effective resistance to the large international corporations, the banks or the police, military and security services of even a medium-sized country. The great political 'victories' that are touted by the activists actually amount to no more than minor, short-lived disturbances of the existing structures of power, the significance of which is retrospectively exaggerated. Thus, the author argues, the Internet played an extremely minor role in the Arab Spring, and its actual effect was often not to mobilize people but to serve as a kind of narcotic to distract them. The real mobilizer was television, especially Al Jazeera's Arab Service. The security forces are often complicit in this policy of exaggeration: it does them no harm to take credit for disarming what are asserted to have been 'serious' threats to order, whatever their nature actually was – and, after all, none of the systems under attack ever really properly broke down – using such a claim, in turn, as a justification for higher spending on security.

The dominant form of thinking among both cyberactivists and 'antipoliticians' is, *Les Antipolitiques* suggests, hyper-individualist. In the case of the anti-politicians this has a moralizing cast. Although they proclaim their opposition to 'the system as a whole', they actually can give no plausible account of how that system works as a totality. For this reason they continue to think of the parlous state of, say, Italian politics as simply a matter of concatenated criminal acts. These are phenomena that could be prevented by better safety procedures, better policing or better choice and training of staff. For figures like Grillo, Italian politicians, then, are simply a bunch of crooks, who, to be sure, form bands, cooperate, and may even be held together by some kind of archaic mafia-style bonds of deference, dependence and patronage, but those bands could in principle be broken up by simple police action and the corrupt individuals punished by the usual operations of the legal and penal systems. If that were to happen, the Augean stable would have been cleansed, and all might be well. The degenerate state of Italian politics, however, is a different kind of phenomenon altogether, something systematically produced by the operation of predictable social forces within a given institutional structure, and it would require a different kind of analysis. Grillo's actual proposal for the reform of Italian politics is, in other words, exceedingly simple, not to say naive: politicians 'should all go home' (*devono andare tutti a casa*). If, however, the problem is systemic, getting rid of the current batch of crooks will simply make room for the next crew.

The cyberactivists are, according to Saint Victor, even more deluded and incapable of perceiving the real world in anything like an adequate way. They don't just ignore or overlook the social dimension of human life and politics, but the more theoretically engaged of them actively reject the category of the 'social' altogether. The 1940s, 1950s and 1960s saw the birth of the particularly noxious ideology of 'libertarianism'. This view, developed theoretically by Hayek and given literary expression in the novels of Ayn Rand, combines – in varying proportions, depending on the specific variant in question – hyper-individualism with a glorification of the 'free market'. The 'libertarian' is a friend of the purportedly 'autonomous' entrepreneur (that is, de facto, of capitalist entrepreneurs) and an enemy of all political regulation or state control of human activities; he or she believes that the 'free market' is a virtual panacea for all that ails one.

Margaret Thatcher's denial that there is any society sought to block off from the very start any possible demand that the state make itself responsible for the satisfaction of those 'social needs' that the free market does not, and perhaps even could not, provide for. For followers of this line of thought, 'needs' is just another term for preferences, which means the preferences of individuals. If the individuals' preferences are systematically unsatisfied by the market, that is usually their own fault for being work-shy, inefficient, irrational or perverse (one variant), or it is the price one must pay for the overwhelming global efficiency of the market (the other variant).

The entire hacker culture is based on and shot through with such libertarian assumptions, Saint Victor argues. Indeed, for hackers, the very idea of the 'social' has little meaning except in expressions like 'social media'. Add to this the fact that hackers tend to believe in the omnipotence of computers and the omniscience of the net, and the picture that emerges is not a pretty one. The wilder fringes of hacker speculation are populated by people who devote themselves to fantasies about a complete self-sufficiency of cybernetic space, as a place in which only the laws of computer technology (and the free market) hold. That in this fantasy there would be a huge class of radical losers, namely those who are *not* 'connected' (and also those who, like me, don't *want* to be 'connected'), is never discussed.

The basic thesis of *Les Antipolitiques*, in summary, is, then, that the 'anti-politics' of groups like M5S or the cyberactivists, which is presented as at least potentially a force for social progress, is actually a form of depoliticization, which suits those who really hold power in the world rather well. To the extent that they produce noticeable effects at all, these are likely to be new forms of exclusion and oppression. As such, the convergence between 'antipoliticians' and cyberactivists ought not to be welcomed by anyone on the left. The Net is not, and has never been, the free, spontaneous invention of a few heroic individuals, who took a stand against the oppressive realities of our life, our society, our states and our markets, in order to carve out *ex nihilo* a new realm of digital freedom. Instead, the development of the basic technologies behind the electronic media results from a decision by the US military first to invest in improvements in military communications, and then increasingly to fund research that would be useful in spying, surveillance and counter-intelligence. Without this massive financial support, the electronic media would not have come

into being. State funding, particularly funnelled through the military and security apparatus, is still extremely significant, and where the state leaves off it is large international corporations that step in. These corporations are oddly absent in the hackers' own fictions about themselves; or, if they do appear, it is as the collective projections or embodiments of some individual heroic entrepreneur. Yet the founding heroes and the present-day movers and shakers of the electronic media aren't rugged individual visionaries, but small-time operators who happened to be at the right place at the right time to benefit from what was in effect a privatization of publicly created technologies or masters of corporate infighting. If Google does succeed in changing the world, it will be in the interests of Google, not of the world.

Since the revelations of Edward Snowden, it should be clear that the electronic media represent a huge surveillance apparatus. This is no tiny blemish that enhances the overall beauty of a face, the twenty-first-century analogue of a rococo 'beauty spot', and it is not a bit of unsightly adolescent eczema which the self-regulating power of the 'free market' will quickly cure. Instead, it is, Saint Victor argues, an integral and constitutive part of these media. If there is any hope of transforming these electronic instruments of surveillance and oppression into something progressive, it will be only through intervention from outside, through the subjugation of the cyberdomain to exceedingly strict forms of political control.

If this covers the argument of the first three chapters, the clear conclusion to be drawn is one about the necessity of resisting the siren songs of the cyberactivists and the seductive moral wailing of the anti-politicians; the need to return to, or continue with, the difficult task of politics. But how are we to conceive of the organization and exercise of political power over our existing governmental institutions and over the new electronic media? Chapter 4 contains a highly interesting discussion of truth, deceit, discretion, and of the role of the ideal of 'transparency', which makes a number of valuable points. But it actually represents something of a diversion from the main line of argument, and it is only at the start of the fifth and final chapter that we are confronted with a sharply formulated modern version of the question Gretchen asks Faust: 'What is your attitude toward democracy?' After all, 'political control' in modern societies can *only* mean 'democratic control', *n'est-ce pas*? Just as in Goethe's era, any decent person had (at any rate publicly) to adhere to some version of a belief in God, no matter how vague and debased, so in modern Europe how can anyone who wishes to be taken seriously be anything but a (theoretical) democrat? Yet, equally, just as Faust can content himself with mouthing some pantheistic rubbish ('Who can name him? ... He Who encompasses all and holds it all in existence ... the heavens ... the eternal stars ... in Eternal mystery') because Gretchen does not pursue the matter ('Well, that's more or less what



our priest says, / just with slightly different words' – 'just different words', really?), so similarly nowadays the concept of 'democracy' can remain surprisingly unspecified without raising any very embarrassing questions. Perhaps the assumption is that we don't need to be very clear about it, because we must know already what a democracy is; after all, we live in one. This form of argument has the virtue of simplicity, even if no others.

To his credit, the author of this work does not feel, by contrast, that he needs to engage with the low-grade 'democratic theory' that is endemic in modern discussions, because he also holds (correctly, I think) that modern Western societies are not actually democracies in any interesting sense. Or, rather, if one wants to get *any* kind of cognitive grip on them, it is pretty pointless to try to analyse them as such. Instead, one should look to the (originally ancient) conception of the 'mixed constitution'. Modern 'democracies', after all, differ from the real thing in two important respects. First, they are representative structures in which *direct* action by the citizens plays a distinctly subordinate role, and second, they almost all have 'constitutions' with an associated aristocratic class of 'guardians of the constitution' (judges in the high courts). In contrast, it is utterly central to a proper democracy that the popular will cannot be bound in any way, not even by constitution, which is, in this sense, just the dead hand of the past attempting to impose itself on the present. Why, however, should the *demos* suffer itself to be thus controlled by the dead?

The dream of the anti-politicians that representative institutions might be replaced by direct political participation via the Net is shown to be an illusion. The 'net generates either apathy or hysteria', as Saint Victor puts it, but not sober, informed, rational discussion and deliberation. Those who engage on the Net do not constitute an 'intelligent mass', as the author notes, but a series of increasingly uncontrolled, potentially bloodthirsty packs of partisans, who have a tendency to act on the principle of 'winner take all', and who, when they succeed, tend to oppress the minorities over whom they have triumphed. Indeed, it is impossible to ignore, as Saint Victor observes, the strongly authoritarian, and even crypto-fascist tendencies one can find in the 'anti-political' groups who are particularly devoted to the use of the new electronic media.

The author is keen to defend the importance of precisely those 'intermediary institutions' such as

Parliament and the press, which the anti-politicians want to short-circuit in their pursuit of a 'direct' Net-centred form of democracy. Although the intermediary institutions we actually have are seriously in need of reform, they do protect us against the danger of an 'electronic fascism' pretending to be some new form of direct democracy. Our worst nightmare should be a form of political authoritarianism joined together with a completely 'free' and deregulated market economy; a nightmare that seems to be becoming a reality in post-communist China.

This book is not intended to sketch a utopian project or even to offer concrete positive suggestions for political action, but it is none the worse for that. I strongly suspect that I would not actually find the author's own political options much to my liking; he seems to be actively attracted to the ideal of the *Rechtsstaat* developed by Kant and Kelsen. These positive suggestions are kept so much in the background, however, that I am not sure I am not imagining them, and in any case they do not interfere at all with the clarity, power and coherence of the basic negative argument.

Ha-Joon Chang has claimed that the actual economic and social effects of the Internet are slightly less significant than those of the washing machine, and this book completes the picture by arguing that the political effects of the new media are actually overwhelmingly negative. Given the enormous amount of intellectual energy that has already been wasted in the impossible task of trying to elaborate and defend forms of 'Net democracy', the thorough trashing of the pretensions of cyberactivism to represent a force for human progress is an extremely useful contribution to the debate. This, not the Net itself, can be seen as a major labour-saving advance, a way of saving otherwise wasted intellectual and political energy. Nevertheless, it is not clear to me that even a highly persuasive account like this one will have much real effect. It is of the nature of really significant ideological illusions to be so deeply rooted in social necessities as to be virtually impervious to refutation. No matter how often it is refuted, people will be likely to cling to the view that the new electronic media '*must*' really have had a positive effect (even if one cannot specify what it is). Philosophers ought to have learned to be highly suspicious of this kind of '*must*', but it is a lesson harder to learn than most.

Raymond Geuss

Missed connections

Fran Guéry and Didier Deleule, *The Productive Body*, trans. Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro, Zero Books, Winchester, 2014. 148 pp. £9.99 pb., 978 1 78099 576 2.

As the editors write in their introduction, this book represents a missed connection not only in the Anglo-American reception of French thought but also in the encounter between Marxism and post-structuralism. Cited by Foucault (alongside a reference to *Capital*) as an 'interesting analysis' in *Discipline and Punish*, it was by and large overlooked in the context of the American reception of Foucault.

The book's combination of a close reading of Marx's analysis of the division of labour with a genealogy of the human sciences was perhaps unreadable in an intellectual milieu that insisted on a sharp divide between Marxists and Foucault. Those divisions have largely receded into the footnotes of academic memory. The recent publication in English of Foucault's lecture 'The Meshworks of Power' by *Viewpoint Magazine*, a lecture in which Foucault uncharacteristically sketches out a reading of Marx's theory of power, as well as that of such books as Simon Choat's *Marx through Poststructuralism* (2010), has begun to put that opposition in question. The translation of Guéry and Deleule also serves to remind us that the concern with the control over bodies and their effects, what Foucault called 'discipline', was framed in the relationship between Marx's thought and Foucault. The untimeliness of the book is not just limited, however, to the resurfacing of old debates. *The Productive Body* also returns us to the question of the labouring body at the exact moment when attention is being focused on the work of the mind, on immaterial labour and cognitive capitalism. Guéry and Deleule indicate that we can only begin to understand the situation of mental labour, of the exploitation of the mind, if we first understand what practice and relations were necessary to create the productive body. The ultimate merit of the book is not what it says about bodies or minds, but about the intersection of the two; it touches on the point where the most ancient philosophical dualisms, mind and body, intersect with the most pressing questions of contemporary theory, ideology and power in contemporary society.

The Productive Body comprises two parts – 'The Individualization of the Productive Body' by Guéry and 'Body Machine and Living Machine' by Deleule

– which follow the same central argument, examining a kind of 'primitive accumulation' of corporeality; the history by which individuals are constituted as bearers of labour power, as productive, while simultaneously being rendered peripheral to the organization of labour – as the productive body. It is a story not only of the body, but of its relation to command. This history contradicts the dominant discourse on the body in critiques of modernity and capitalism in which the narrative is one of separation and hierarchy. The latter, which usually starts with Descartes, is one in which the body is separated from the mind and made subordinate to it. (This might be a third way in which Guéry and Deleule's book can be considered untimely: it reminds us of a brief period in which talking about the body was considered to be liberatory in itself; its own repressive hypothesis.) Guéry makes a very different argument about the body. The history of capitalism is not one of the subordination of the body to the mind, a story which fuels various specious calls for unity and reintegration of mind and body, but is first and foremost a story of the individualization of the productive body. This individualization takes place through the breakdown of the guilds, which were social institutions that, as much as they organized and intensified labour, maintained the unity of productive body and biological body. The craftsman is a unity of a head and hand, preserved and mediated by a particular social body, by a particular institution. It is only in capital that the productive body and biological body become separated; productivity is organized outside of the head of the body that carries it out.

To demonstrate this, Guéry turns to the chapters of *Capital* dedicated to cooperation and the division of labour. The division of labour breaks the unity of the productive body and biological body, disseminating many of its productive capacities across machines, bodies and tools. Not only is production no longer identified with the biological body; the very control of production, the rules and methods that govern the productive process, becomes part of the machine. It is not a matter of the mind dominating the body, but of the collective intelligence ruling over the individual and individualized bodies of workers. As Marx writes: 'That a capitalist should command in the field of production is now as indispensable as that a general should command on the field of battle.'

The idea of the necessary function of the capitalist raises the question of the intersection between material reality and its ideological representation. Is this necessity an actual material condition? Does

the capitalist division of labour, with its division, specialization and dissemination of tasks, necessarily require a capitalist, an embodiment of the intelligence, in order to command? This is what Guéry identifies as the Hegelian reading, in which the capitalist organization of production increases the forces of production only to be necessarily superseded and negated to arrive at a communist future. A different reading, which Guéry identifies as Spinozist, sees this command as simply an image, an inadequate idea. The names Hegel and Spinoza are perhaps just stand-ins for the teleology of various Marxist Hegelianisms and Althusser. What is more interesting is that Guéry refuses to situate the capitalist commander as a necessary reality, a precondition of a future communist productivity, or as merely ideology. It is necessary to see in the history of capitalism a dual process by which labour is made part of a larger process; this is a condition not only of its productivity, its capacity to produce anything at all, but its very existence. The individual labouring body exists as an individual labour body through its existence in a cooperative network of workers. This objective phenomenon is doubled by an imaginary one as individual workers confront a work process organized in a way that exceeds them. Or, in Marx's words, 'the interconnection between their various labours ... confronts them, in the realm of ideas, as a plan drawn up by the capitalist.' Rather than decide between the actual necessity of the capitalist command or its merely ideological function, Guéry argues that Marx theorizes the intersection of image and reality. As he puts it, 'Reality here corresponds to the image, and the image to reality.' Guéry makes it clear that it is, then, not just that Marx's analysis combines the focus on forces with ideas, analysing capitalist command in terms of its real conditions and imaginary representation, but that such a 'double determination' describes the structure of capitalism itself.

What, then, does *The Productive Body* offer for making sense of the combination of forces and ideas in contemporary capitalism, in a capitalism in which the analysis of cooperation and the division of labour on the factory floor no longer seems adequate? Does Guéry and Deleule's analysis only offer a kind of genealogy, a reminder that the productive body is less some anthropological constant than an effect of the history of power? With respect to intellectual labour, immaterial labour or cognitive capitalism, Guéry and Deleule offer two important caveats. The first is that the collective intelligence put to work in the factory exists first and foremost as the general

plan of the capitalist. The general intellect is that of capital. It is one of the factors of the separation of the productive body from the labouring body, as the productive body becomes increasingly identified with the work of capital. Second, Deleule offers the beginning of a genealogy of psychology, of the study of the mind in terms of its most basic components of reaction time and stress, as entirely tied up with the emergence of machinery. It is not a matter of living versus machine, mind or body, but of understanding how the very identity of each, and their divisions, is part of the history of the constitution of the productive body (and mind). The chapter on psychology as the interface between man and machine is relatively truncated, functioning as a hint of later research.

It is at this point that we can grasp the importance of Guéry and Deleule's work for the Marxist/Foucauldian (or Marxist/poststructuralist) divide that overlooked it. One of the many divisions caught up in that overdetermined divide was the split between a Marxist analysis that focused on ideology and Foucault's focus on power. These were presented as an alternative: one analysed bodies and their transformations through power, and one examined ideas and their effects and transformations through ideology. Reading Guéry and Deleule makes it clear that this was never an adequate analysis of Marx's work. The overlooked reference to *The Productive Body* in *Discipline and Punish* is only a hint of the larger oversight: the presence of Marx's *Capital* underlying the entire theory of disciplinary power. Marx's analysis did not ascribe everything to ideology, or to the power relations between bodies, but sought to untangle the point where material practices generated their own representations (another definition of commodity fetishism) and representations had their own material effects (another definition of ideology). Moreover, Guéry and Deleule's analysis perhaps makes it possible to see the same intersection at work in Foucault. As much as Foucault focused on the analysis of power, wondering if 'it wouldn't be more materialist to study first the question of the body and the effects of power on it', his own works also focus on the representation of power, the lingering effects of failing to analytically cut off the head of the king. This is not a matter of the anxiety of influence, of returning Foucault to the field of Marxism, but of extracting the real problem of double determination, the intersection of material relations and ideological representations in social relations.

Jason Read

Crossings

Louise Westling, *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2013. 208 pp., £55.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 978 0 82325 565 8 hb., 978 0 82325 566 5 pb.

This book is a welcome contribution to contemporary debates concerning animal communication and cognition. Westling's self-described aim is to introduce Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of nature to environmental humanists, and to place 'scientific studies of animals into dialogue with the humanities'. Writing as a literary critic, Westling guides readers towards an understanding and appreciation of the import of Merleau-Ponty's work as what she argues is a radically ecological philosophy – one that offers ecocritics a 'coherent theoretical ground on which to conduct their work of reevaluating cultural traditions in light of environmental concerns'.

The book is organized into three main chapters. The first, 'A Philosophy of Life,' begins by covering some familiar concepts in Merleau-Ponty's thought and ends by relating them in novel, illuminating ways to literature. Westling's brief historical and philosophical sketches of certain phenomenological and scientific influences on Merleau-Ponty provide readers unacquainted with his philosophy with enough background to understand its emergence, evolution and ecological sense. While she draws from various texts and essays throughout the book, she focuses primarily on Merleau-Ponty's later work. Special attention is paid to notes from three courses on the topic of nature that Merleau-Ponty gave at the Collège de France between 1956 and 1960 and the unfinished book manuscript on which he was working at the time of his death in 1961. The latter was posthumously published as *The Visible and The Invisible*; the former under the title *Nature*.

The radical and anti-Cartesian character of Merleau-Ponty's thought can be grasped from various perspectives, especially by tracing the development of his notion of the body to his later notion of flesh. His conceptions of embodiment were created to escape and exceed traditional philosophical divisions, such as those between subject and object. Merleau-Ponty rooted the mind or consciousness in a body always already enmeshed in and attuned to a world. His radical turn to the body led from his earlier *Phenomenology of Perception*, which he came to believe had failed to overcome the 'consciousness-object' distinction, to his *Visible and Invisible* ontology. The

ontology casts primordial nature as a relation of the perceptible to itself. Nature, dividing itself into sensible worldly and sensitive bodily 'flesh', is figured as brute or wild being (*L'Être sauvage*), in which all creatures and things are dynamically and chiasmatically intertwined.

An outstanding characteristic of Westling's text is its spotlight on Merleau-Ponty's lifelong engagement with the advanced sciences of his day and his anticipation of current discussions relevant to animal and literary studies. As she points out, 'Merleau-Ponty's description of the promiscuity and enormous, messy vitality of the natural world (ontological vibrations, generativity of brute essences) matches the kind of evolutionary history that biologists are beginning to document and that in fact is continuing in the biotic soup of our own world.' That Merleau-Ponty engaged the sciences of his day from an appreciative yet critical distance is clear from the extent to which his ecophenomenology also 'values literary openness to the mysteries of experience in the physical world'. Westling exemplifies this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thought with literary analyses that explore the shifting, uncertain boundaries between humans, animals and the natural world. The first chapter contains a passage from a short story of Eudora Welty's of a swim that becomes an epistemological journey. The description beautifully captures Merleau-Ponty's sense of an erotic 'embrace' or intermingling of the body with the world and skin as 'the organ of her perception of both visible things and invisible rhythms of time, emotion and memory'. Westling's citation of a poem by W.H. Auden reminds us, through its sardonic meditation on microorganisms living in and on our bodies, of the bewildering complexities of intimate, symbiotic interrelationships and of their potentials simultaneously to destroy and sustain.

Environmental humanists take issue with the tendency in Western philosophy and science to situate humans as outside of nature by assuming human superiority to, or sharp divisions between, humans and all other animals. The book's second chapter, 'Animal Kin', extends Merleau-Ponty's existential notions of our coexistence with the world to our co-evolution with animals within it. Here, his remark in *Nature* that myths provide us with the best indication of the humanity-animality relationship accords well with the chapter's literary commentary and analyses. Westling investigates symbolism and anxieties found in ancient literary works concerning humans and our relationship with animals and the natural world. She reads the Mesopotamian *Epic of*

Gilgamesh as a cautionary tale of ecological tragedy. Its description of a sacrilegious devastation of the natural world is set in the historical context of the actual environmental devastation Mesopotamian civilizations suffered due to changes in the climate and environmental degradation by humans.

Westling is concerned to free environmental discourse from the trap of dualistic thinking. She draws a sharp distinction between Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's philosophies in this regard, arguing that Heidegger's mystification of language, resistance to an evolutionary kinship between humans and animals, and insistence on the unique status of humans make his work less suitable for ecocriticism than Merleau-Ponty's. Heidegger's claim that animals are 'poor in world' and his description of the human body as 'something essentially other than an animal organism' are used to make her case.

Heidegger does indeed contend, in a frequently discussed passage from his 'Letter on Humanism', that an 'abyss' or chasm separates humans and living creatures that are 'in a certain way most closely related to us', whereas Merleau-Ponty figures this relationship as a chiasmatic intertwining or, borrowing the expression *Ineinander* from Husserl, an inherence of one in the other. (Merleau-Ponty uses this same term to describe the relationship between life and physicochemistry.) Despite this difference, and given Heidegger's influence on Merleau-Ponty, some of Westling's distinctions between their views are too sharply drawn. Merleau-Ponty is, after all, also interested in the human body's emergence from the animal 'as different from the animal'. Even for Merleau-Ponty, 'kinship between the human and the animal' is 'strange' and likened to a caricature. Westling acknowledges these passages in his notes on *Nature*, but responds to those commentators who argue that Merleau-Ponty's position remains 'indelibly humanistic' with the supposition – certainly reasonable under the circumstances of his untimely death – that he was still working out his thinking on the human-animal kinship. Construing 'world' in its existential sense as a network of significances, it does seem clear that Merleau-Ponty could not have believed that animals are 'poor in world'. Nor did he think that the distinguishing mark of humanity consisted in a hierarchical 'addition of reason' to an objectified, mechanical, passive or unthinking animal body.

Theoretically and historically, Westling positions Merleau-Ponty's work between early evolutionary biologists and contemporary biosemioticians to show

how it was influenced by the former and served to inspire the latter. His conception of the environment is particularly indebted to the Umwelt theory of the ethologist Jakob von Uexküll. In this theory, an organism's environment is conceived not in a purely 'objective way' but as a milieu where each animal 'defines its territory as a privileged emplacement' and functions in a symbolic realm. Westling shows how Merleau-Ponty's use of this concept helps balance a certain Darwinian-inspired picture of 'ruthless environmental selection pressures' on relatively passive organisms by emphasizing their active, symbolic and cultural behaviours. The roles these play in defining an animal's habitat or worldly surroundings is another radically ecological aspect of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, for whom the expression *Umwelt* conveys 'a relation of meaning' between 'the situation and the movement of the animal' that defines 'a species of pre-culture' within Nature. Because we can observe animals using the same object for different ends, they bring an 'architecture of symbols' to the 'living plans' they are – as he puts it in *Nature*, 'defining within Nature a species of pre-culture'. To speak, as Merleau-Ponty does, of incorporated meaning or animality as the 'Logos' or intelligence of the living world is already to take a position removed from concepts of human superiority to animals and other life forms as well as to any philosophy or scientific practice that reinstates a traditional mind-body dualism or assigns a unique or exceptional status to human beings.

Westling's focus on animal intelligence and agency in the second chapter leads to the third and final one, 'Language is Everything', which addresses the place of language in Merleau-Ponty's thought and the complexities of semiotic behaviours throughout the living world. Westling gestures towards a broad understanding of language as 'the voicing of immanent meanings in the world'. She ties this understanding to literature and Merleau-Ponty's work to that of the Danish biosemiotician/biochemist Jesper Hoffmeyer, who was influenced by his philosophy. She shows how Merleau-Ponty's radical grounding of meaning as immanent in the world itself along with his view of intentional, bodily movements between animals and their situations provides ecocritics with a new understanding of reflection: reflection as revelation of the unreflected; the drawing of invisible meanings out of the visible world.

In sum, Westling offers a compelling argument, through Merleau-Ponty's understanding of human thought and languages, for a 'paradigm shift' in our

view of nature and the place of humanity within it. She demonstrates how his later work with its acknowledgement of communicative modes found in nature and apart from human languages can account both for kinship and for separation between human and non-human animals. With its ontological notion of *écart* helping to place a spread or divergence between them, his philosophy is able to avoid the twin mistakes of anthropomorphic projections and deep ecology's erasure of distinctions.

As Westling's book evolves into an illustrative intertwining of its three topics, 'Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language', one comes to appreciate how original and informative it is. It is as much a book about cross-species communication as it is about the kinds of cross-disciplinary conversations that we should be having. Scholars engaged with the aesthetic dimension of his work will come away with a broadened perspective of what scientists are discovering about the aesthetic activities of animals. Readers interested in the question of whether other European thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida or Giorgio Agamben, took the notion of evolutionary continuism as seriously as Westling believes Merleau-Ponty did should find her arguments worthy of careful consideration. Westling's hope is that humanists 'will begin to familiarize themselves with contemporary studies of animals the way Merleau-Ponty did in his own work'. I cannot think of a better argument than this book for us to do precisely that.

Suzanne Cataldi Laba

War, peace and tourism

Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, *Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai'i and the Philippines*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2013. 256 pp., £63.16 hb., £12.42 pb., 978 0 82235 355 3 hb., 978 0 82235 370 6 pb.

Modern mass international tourism emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century as part of mass consumer society; tourism practices have transformed how people – tourists, the recipients of tourism and non-tourists alike – think of the places they live and visit, as well as the ways their lives are lived. Yet these transformations through tourism can give rise to a certain hyperbole. Not long ago the UN World Tourism Organization (as it is now

known) asserted that, 'Through the direct, spontaneous and non-meditated contacts it engenders between men and women of different cultures and lifestyles, tourism presents a vital force for peace and a factor of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the world.' Underpinning such ideas of tourism is a sense of travel that wants to be seen as innocent. Yet tourism is usually characterized as an activity somewhat detached from the places it frequents; a view that even 'high-end' tourists, who like to think of themselves as travellers, inevitably fall into. Unsurprisingly, many have interpreted the idea of tourism as a force for peace as naive, seeking to suggest that tourism is a non-political practice when it cannot be other than a diverse range of politically engaged practices – with the UNWTO themselves pushing a neoliberal agenda (or 'liberalization' with a human face) for regional and global tourism developments that can hardly be seen as innocent.

In recent years a host of studies have endeavoured to show how tourism cannot be anything but political, and is often intimately connected with differing aspects of imperial power and militarism. At a basic level, it has been shown how the US military has contributed to the development of time-space compressing, consumer-friendly, safety-related and surveillance-based technologies that have helped facilitate current forms of tourism among other practices. Tourism, rather unsurprisingly, has also been argued to have been used as a tool of foreign policy during the Cold War, with tourists, business owners and service workers being pushed to advance their nation's foreign affairs while pursuing their own pleasure or work. US tourism in South America has, in particular, been claimed to have aided the internationalization of US culture in the region.

Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez continues in the tradition of such works, whilst also claiming that '*Securing Paradise* departs from existing studies in tourism and militarism because it foregrounds how tourism and militarism's *mutual* work produces the possibilities for American historical and contemporary dominance in the [Asian and Pacific] region.' So, the same logics that rationalize landscapes that emerge from unregulated tourism 'justify the continuing presence of the American military in the Pacific: jobs, stability, protection, and foreign exchange'. How much of a departure from existing studies this actually is, though, is open to some debate. Certainly, Hawai'i provides fertile ground for how imperial power can work to the extent that the military infrastructure and memorializations of past conflict have

themselves become important attractions to visitors. Hawai'i was desired by the late-nineteenth-century US military and government, and was occupied and gradually absorbed. As tourism developed, local elites and business 'leaders' saw their own interests served by staying a part of the United States. Gonzalez points to resistance to this occupation, but it's unclear just how widespread this was or is, and more detail about this would have considerably enlivened this history. Certainly the studies I have seen have pointed to how 'native' Hawai'i peoples – who make up the majority of the poorest inhabitants of the islands – have benefited little from rampant and largely unregulated tourism development. When native Hawai'ians do work in the hospitality industry they tend (for a variety of reasons, it seems) to be at the low end of the hierarchy of workers, well below the different migrant workers that characterize much of the industry. Moreover, as Marita Sturken, in her study *Tourists of History*, has noted, there is perhaps a strong link between the way that tourism tends to be portrayed as an innocent activity and the ways in which US exceptionalism itself reaffirms a notion of innocence that masks imperialist policies and the extent to which violent conflict is, and has been, an overt aspect of US society. This kind of connection, while suggested by Gonzalez in her interpretation of the sites of the Pearl Harbor military-tourism complex, it is nonetheless rather underplayed.

The Philippines were also annexed by the USA as part of their war on Spain in 1898, and granted independence after the Second World War, although large US military bases were only closed in 1992. Here, to a lesser extent, military sites have also become visitor attractions, such as the Subic naval military base abandoned by the Americans along with jungle survival-training facilities run by indigenous peoples that were used by the American military in Vietnam. The low-level, US-backed counter-insurgency against the Muslim-dominated southern Philippines may indeed be partly justified by the need to protect jobs, stability and foreign exchange. Yet this insurgency has been going on sporadically since the US invasion, and it seems simplistic to characterize the conflict in these terms.

Back in 1989 the anthropologist Valene Smith argued that war was probably the largest single category of visitor attraction (and yet, of course, puts most visitors off visiting places where war is active). She includes in her tally of war attractions visits to monuments and memorials like the Champs-Élysées or Brandenburg Tor, Tuol Sleng or Culloden Moor,

Gettysburg and numerous other cemeteries dedicated to the war dead. Also included are war literature and films, and the reproducing of the tourism of developing countries like Vietnam around war spaces, including US Army rest and recreation sites like 'China beach'. As such, it may be little surprise to learn that, in Hawai'i, Pearl Harbor and the USS *Arizona* memorials have become two of the biggest tourist attractions, whilst the US occupation and annexation of Hawai'i is all but ignored in memorializations. Gonzalez wants us to hear the other histories and memories of Hawai'i and the Philippines, of the gendered and racialized depictions of the past that helped spur colonization, and which characterize today's memorializations of war and of 'friendship' between peoples. She wants us to be open to other readings of these spaces, focusing on how tourism was intertwined with increased militarization in the very ways that journalists on military expeditions described spaces, on how military highways quickly became tourist attractions, and on the brutal domination of these two regions. Yet, in relating these interesting stories – for example, when describing the USS *Arizona* memorial, part of a much wider memorial – her text tends to veer towards a somewhat unequivocal view of how spaces and events should be read, should be seen, and have this or that effect, which can make for hard reading in places.

Gonzalez does add, productively, to the tally of activities associated with war and militarization. That helicopter tours of Hawai'i could be a way in which war is venerated is clear. However, that military highways might be included in this assembly was not something that had occurred to me. Gonzalez shows us how memorialized sites symbolize a peace too often secured by violence and sacrifice, one that is to be celebrated as part of narratives of liberation to which tourist gazes should be pointed, away from other potential gazes of imperialist wars, coups and violence that has made these landscapes and that reproduces them. Yet, tourists are also an easy target, perhaps too easy a target here, both for those struggling for various causes around the world who occasionally kidnap them, and for those who see tourists as simple agents of a neo-imperialism. The forms of tourism documented here trade on, among other things, a desire for some kind of real experience which itself might be seen as emerging from certain emergent dissatisfactions. In short, there seems more to tourism and its links with militarism than might be on show in *Securing Paradise*.

Chris Wilbert