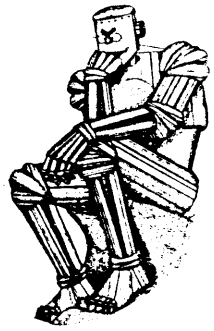
REVIEWS



TROUBLED SOCIALISTS

Kate Soper, *Troubled Pleasures, Writings on Politics, Gender and Hedonism*, London, Verso, 1990, vii + 294 pp., £32.95 hb, £10.95 pb., 0 86091 313 9 hb., 086091 536 0 pb.

Peter Osborne (ed.), *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*, London, Verso, 1991. 299 pp., £34.95 hb., £10.95 pb., 0 86091 326 0 hb., 0 86091 543 3 pb.

Troubled Pleasures is a collection of articles by Kate Soper from the last six years, most of them previously published; the articles in *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism* were originally offered as talks to a 1988 *Radical Philosophy* conference. Both volumes share a now familiar worry which could be summarised as 'whither socialism?', or even 'whether socialism'. 'Actually existing socialism' is busy ceasing to be actual, Marxism has been in crisis for so long that the use of 'crisis' is catachrestic, and socialists find that the ideals they would love to defend as their own - such as 'equality', 'liberty' and 'democracy' - are confidently, and all too convincingly, claimed by liberals as theirs. It would be tempting to do as many on the Left do, that is announce the end of socialist civilisation as we know it and join the growing ranks of Marxist apostates.

What is encouraging about these two collections is that, by and large, they combine honesty with optimism, reasserting what is valuable about the socialist project whilst recognising what it needs to incorporate and accommodate itself to. Kate Soper's is an articulate, sober and conscientious voice of reasoned but cautious optimism. It is particularly refreshing to find a style of philosophical argumentation which is direct, unambiguous and clear minded serving arguments which are free of political immodesty and overconfidence. Soper defends a perhaps now unfashionable humanist Marxism but remains aware of the difficulties it faces. She is a feminist who is not unafraid to defend reason against feminist 'irrationalism' or to share her troubled enjoyment of an allegedly misogynist James Joyce. Her scepticism about the value and validity of discourse theory is well expressed though it does appear to be almost too circumspect.

However, I am not entirely convinced that the inclusion of 'hedonism' in the sub-title is warranted. Need rather than pleasure is her real subject and her charge that the pleasures of modernity are self-defeating and empty is not defended at any length. Although her 'Introduction' promises discussion of sexual and aesthetic pleasure, as proper but neglected topics for utopians, nothing that follows really takes up this idea. Soper sees a continuing need for socialism but these essays at least do not do much more than state her belief that this is the case. Her tone is that of someone who knows she is talking to friends (and the sources of the previously published material confirm this). That does not of course diminish her value as a good and honest friend of socialism.

Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism is a mixed bag, as is often the case with published conference proceedings. The first three essays - in different and interesting ways exploring the 200-year-old legacy of the French Revolution - do not sit easily with the other contributions, and in this respect a chance is missed to combine a historical with a contemporary theoretical exploration of both liberalism and socialism. There is reason to be cautious of yoking the case for socialism to the idea of liberalism as having limits. The notion of socialism as lying on the other side of liberalism echoes Marx's description of communist right as crossing the 'narrow horizon of bourgeois right'. There is a justified fear that what lies over the horizon is not so much more and better as something completely different (and far worse) - namely a complete absence of rights.

Two contributions illustrate the continuing difficulties socialists get into with rights. Jay Bernstein's defence of the idea that, for Marx, rights are rightfully grounded in community is fascinating. But I share Richard Norman's bewilderment with this notion. Moreover, although socialists continue to berate rights for being individualistic, that in one sense is precisely their appeal - namely that they seek to protect individuals from the community. On the other hand Michael Rustin defends, against coercive and interest-based models of social organisation, the idea of 'normative order based on identification, shared membership, and consensus'. He is quite happy to admit that such a society, in constraining individuals, would be less free from the point of view of individual rights. But, he disarmingly adds, 'the rights of individuals to express themselves are not the only positive value to be considered.' I'm afraid I find this the kind of throw-away line that gets socialism a bad name.

In saying something positive Richard Norman and Anne Phillips do a good job of putting equality back at the top of the socialist agenda. They are not afraid of affirming their commitment to ideas of common humanity and dealing dispassionately with feminist and socialist criticisms of abstract egalitarianism. One also gets the sense - somehow absent from many others - that their contributions come out of a real debate. This is equally true of the final essays - Ted Benton's fine analysis of Marxism and Malthusianism, and, once again, Kate Soper wearing her green hat and defending an ecologically correct(ish) Marx. In these four pieces one does feel that socialism may be right to claim to go beyond liberalism - not least because their authors are prepared to accept the limits of socialism and the merits of liberalism.

Dave Archard

SMOOTH BUT FUZZY

Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* and *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (*Philosophical Papers*, Vols. I and II), Cambridge University Press, 1991. Vol. 1: x + 226 pp., £27.50 hb., £8.95 pb, 0521-353696 hb, 0521-358779 pb; Vol. II: x + 202 pp., £27.50 hb., £8.95 pb, 0521-35370X hb., 0521-358787 pb. (hb. set: 0521-404762, pb. set: 0521-404762).

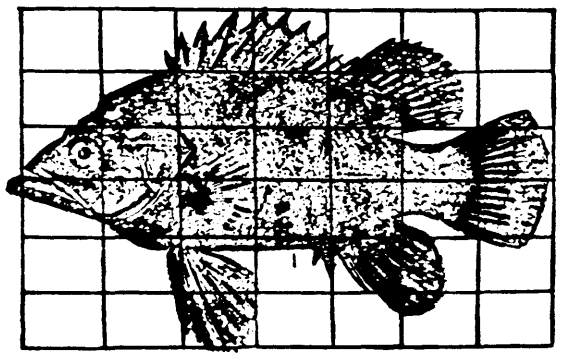
I have recently come across a reference in the writing of the Brazilian philosopher, Roberto Unger, to 'the rich, polished, critical and self-critical but also downbeat and Alexandrian culture of social and historical thought that now flourishes in the North American democracies'. It is tempting to invoke this as a summary put-down of the work, say, of Richard Rorty. The only snag about doing this is that I came across the reference in a paper by Rorty himself, where it is preceded by the words 'Unger has us dead to rights when he speaks of ...'

Of course, one might deal with this by focussing on that word 'self-critical', and insisting that Unger *has* got these Alexandrians dead right, because he has targetted the self-defeating quality of any attempt to ruffle their urbanity. It is no good getting angry with Richard Rorty. No good using words like 'rich', 'polished' and 'downbeat' as if you were going to upset him, because to be a rich, polished, downbeat North American Alexandrian is precisely politely to admit to it. This is the art of pragmatism, what makes it such a genial, unbuttoned practice for those with the armchairs and Amstrads to pursue it - and so frustrating and irritating o those who haven't.

Part of me wants to respond to Rorty like this, and indeed to get rather fierce and uncool about his smoothness. It is this part of me which finds me littering the margins of his books with very unlaid back exclamation marks. Most of these come at points where Rorty seems most blind to the ways in which the 'model' culture he would recommend for general adoption is built on practices which are actively preemptive of its own, more global extension. Let us by all means recognise what is admirable in the attitudes and institutions of North American liberalism. But let us also recognise that this is a society which has flourished in no small part because of its oppressive and self-interested exploitation of others, its greed in the use of natural resources, and the numerous spanners which its successive Administrations have put in the works of the democratization process elsewhere in the world. I think, too, that if Rorty is going to explain the idealization of science in this culture as due to nothing more deep than the rather exceptional moral virtues which its practitioners happen to display, then he should also mention that all too much of this explanatory pacifist virtue is only allowed its outlet today courtesy of research monies locked into some of the most coercive projects ever devised for dealing with one's fellow humans. Or again, when discussing 'the loss of America's hope to lead the nations', it is surely not enough to plead rhetorically that 'it does not seem inevitable that it should have been accompanied by the sense that we have been found *morally* unworthy of the role we once thought we might play', while failing to examine any of those deeds done in Japan, in the small islands of the Pacific, in Latin America, in Indonesia, not to speak of the corruptions within Washington itself, which might indeed have encouraged something of that sense. There are also, I fear, a number of passages in these volumes where Rorty's pragmatism seems close to apologetics or else plain naive. It is presented as if it were to the glory of America, for example, that its anthropologists have rescued the Indians from their previous non-person status. The preliterative native, we are told, is being 'persuaded rather than forced to become cosmopolitan just insofar as, having learned to play the language-games of Europe, he decides to abandon the ones he played earlier - without being threatened with loss of food, shelter, or *Lebensraum* if he makes the opposite decision'. The Third World is told to show the way to the First by doing something really 'romantically preposterous', like, say, equalising incomes (query: which bit of the First World has been most forcefully obstructive of any bit of the Third romantic enough to try on something of the kind ...?)

In short, it really is a little too glib to project a vision of the future in which none of us will be heavy things like Religious or Theoretical or Scientific, or bullying anyone else with our absolutist ideas about how things really are, and what ought to be done to correct them, but just unmetaphysically grateful to the 'stars and trees themselves' (which is to say, to ourselves for having linguistically disclosed them); and wherein all of us will be freely re-weaving our tapestries of belief to the best of our self-enhancement without every snagging or tangling up the threads of anyone else's bit of embroidery. Rorty, I suggest, knows the world too well not to suspect that this pragmatist successor to romanticism will strike any of his readers as a piece of whimsy rather than a compelling utopian image, so long as it fails to be a bit more stroppy and analytic about the forms of reality which stand in the way of its realisation.

This, then, is one half of my reaction to the subtle web of persuasion which Rorty has contrived within the covers of these two volumes. The other half wants to thank him for introducing me to Unger, for writing so interestingly (and so lucidly) about Davidson, Heidegger and Derrida, and for saying quite a lot of things to encourage me to re-weave some of my beliefs about the potential of North American liberalism. For if there is a certain complacency and evasion to the one side of his Millian tolerance,



what it flows into, on the other, is an extraordinarily wide-ranging and judicious engagement with the argument of other thinkers. Rorty not only moves with ease across the entire terrain of philosophy (and is equally at home in both its analytic and Continental modes), he also has the kind of interests in other human pursuits and the synoptic powers to show us why it matters what we think philosophically, and how this informs, if only implicitly, a great many of our other concerns and activities.

From Rorty's pragmatist perspective, in fact, philosophy is not a separate, let alone a purely academic discipline, but something more in the nature of a therapy through which we gradually learn to discard our commitment to cultural compartmentalisation

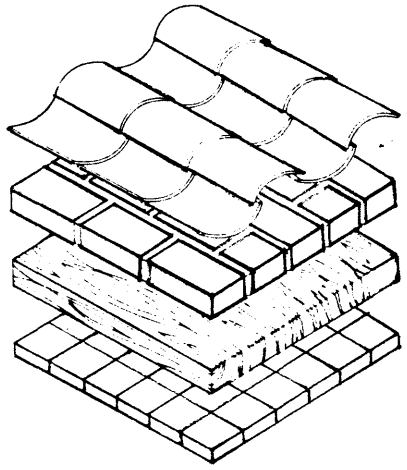
and metaphysical distinctions. If it can be called philosophy, it is a philosophy of de-demarcation, an invitation to throw out the old divisions (between world and language, science and non-science, literature and theory) which have been so closely guarded metaphysically in the past and provided philosophy with its own distinctive domain. In other words, if philosophy has something particular to tell us, it is that these different disciplines do not correspond to divergent bits of the world as so many methods of theories appropriate to its ontological kinds and determined in their adequacy by them. They are rather narratives, or coping strategies, devised to allow us to come to an essentially undifferentiated whole in the light of our varying interests. Instead of viewing our different discourses as forced upon us by intrinsic features of the world (the nature of rocks, for example, as opposed to that of texts), we should rather accept that our views about how the world 'really' is are themselves a function of our discourses about it, which in principle can always be (and indeed are always being) revised in the light of transformed aims and interests.

Much of the groundwork (if that is the right word) for this argument is laid out in the more analytical papers of Volume I. Here Rorty draws on Davidson's rejection of the 'scheme-content' distinction (the distinction between a set of discourses and a determinate reality which it may or may not adequately represent) to defend a robust, but 'ethnocentric' and non-relativist anti-representationalism for which it is as mistaken to claim that thought determines reality (atoms are what they are because we use 'atom' as we do) as to claim that reality determines thought (we use 'atom' as we do because atoms are what they are). Both claims are pseudo-explanations because, in an update of Berkeleyan objections to Locke, there is no independent test of accuracy of representation - no 'God's eye viewpoint', or place outside our own conceptual schema, from where we can compare conceptual schemes for 'accuracy' (which means no place from which we can offer a relativist appraisal of the equal accuracy of all possible candidates).

Anti-representationalists are not Berkeleyan idealists, of course. Nonetheless, they are no less obliged than Berkeley was to provide some account of the source of the concepts and language that we do use. It is here that Rorty's pragmatism is at its least convincing. His stimulus-response or causal account seems to beg as many questions as it claims to resolve. We are 'in touch with' reality, says Rorty, in a sense of 'in touch with' which does not mean 'representing reasonably accurately', but simply 'caused by and causing'. Language is thus 'shaped' by a brute reality, and all our 'posits' stimulated by it, but there are as many 'facts' brought into the world as there are languages for describing that causal transaction. But the key issue here is how Rorty can know all this without presupposing some privileged access to these 'causal transactions' of the kind which he so emphatically denies to be possible. There is the further problem that Rorty appeals to some description-free notion of causality as if what is going on in those situations called 'causal' were not itself put under differing descriptions, and indeed a matter of theoretical dispute. There would therefore seem something rather transcendental about Rorty's dismissal of transcendental argument. 'Taken at face value,' he writes, 'arguments such as Kant's amount to positing an unverifiable I-know-not-what to explain a fact - a fact that only seems in need of explanation because one has previously posited that ordinary, scientific causal explanations of it will not do.' But what counts as a 'scientific' causal explanation (or a 'scientific' account of causality)? Is not Rorty here presupposing that there is one right way of representing or talking about causes (that of scientific positivism itself)?

Rorty wants to avoid idealism and what he calls 'silly relativism' (all theories, however crazy, on an equal par), but it is difficult to see how he can invoke brute causes on the far side of language to avoid these pitfalls without compromising his anti-realism. It is true that Rorty at various points presents this supposed knowledge of the causal role of the world as if it were no more than an entrenched belief to which we happen to adhere because of our 'intuitions' about reality. But if this is no more than a belief which could in principle be abandoned in the re-weaving of some other network of beliefs, the problem re-emerges as to how we do then plausibly account for the widely shared beliefs we have about reality and the transhistoric continuity and sameness of our most basic activities in regard to it.

There is something similarly unsatisfactory about Rorty's discussion of radical interpretation and his anti-essentialist account of knowledge as recontextualisation. As part of his argument against any cleavage between linguistically and non-linguistically constituted items, he defends Quine's and Davidson's naturalist approach to the interpretation of other cultures (their view that this does not presuppose any prior participation in their language or special empathy of outlook). But it is difficult to see how he can do so without conflicting with his own dismissal of any 'common' human nature. Even if we grant that 'merely observing' (as opposed to participating in) a foreign culture can include doing things like asking questions and 'stimulating responsive native behaviour', it seems unlikely that on this basis the Persians *could* have got to understand the Athenians, or the anthropologist gain an insight into the native's unstudied language, without supposing something rather more universal in the way of a 'human nature' than Rorty in his opening paper seems prepared to allow.



Rorty is at his most provocative when he is putting his pragmatism to work on behalf of his ethnocentric approach to morals and politics (a view which would have us owing loyalty to nothing more transcendent than our own community and its historically relative values). I have already indicated some of my difficulties with his particular loyalties, but if one wanted to pursue the more philosophically debateable aspects of this position, one could do worse than look at Rorty's response to the putative objection that on his view 'a child found wandering in the woods, the remnant of a slaughtered nation whose temples have been razed and whose books have been burned, has no share in human dignity'. Agreed, he says, this would be the consequence, but it doesn't mean she should be treated like an animal. 'For it is part of the tradition of *our* community that the human stranger from whom all dignity has been stripped is to be taken in, to be reclothed with dignity.' Moreover, this is precisely why his postmodernist brand of morals is not a relativism, for it makes no bones about the superiority of this community, and has no time for the suggestion that every tradition is as rational and moral as every

other. This, however, does leave it rather wide open as to why any community ('ours' if you like) should have opted for this discrimination between animality and bare-forked humanity if not in virtue of some presumption that the latter has universal and objective qualities of being which endow it with 'rights' to be denied to the former. Nor, I think, does it sufficiently engage with the theories such a community might hold about its 'tradition'. Suppose, for example, that most of the members of this community, when asked to justify its values, were to say 'my culture believes that all human beings have a natural right to be treated with dignity simply because they are human beings'. What is the pragmatist line on this? That his community's beliefs are based on a delusion (which doesn't look like a very loyal thing to say)? Or that the members of his community don't really mean what they say when they talk about rights (or trans-cultural values, or objective states of affairs, etc.) - a position which also doesn't seem to be very solidly committed to the clarity of his community's ways of thinking? In other words, how far can a pragmatist claim to be in solidarity with the values of his or her community while rejecting the prevailing arguments offered in defence of them?

We can also ask how far Rorty can consistently defend his 'limits to tolerance' argument against the likes of Nietzsche and Loyola, while putting such a high premium on 'craziness' (i.e. wild utopian imaginings and the coining of new metaphors) as the vehicle of social progress. Faced with the dilemma that the fanatic poses for his liberalism (which, on the one hand, demands tolerance towards the mad ideas of others about how human beings ought to be, but, on the other hand, can only protect itself against fanaticism by urging the correctness of its own viewpoint), Rorty opts against any philosophical grounding of liberalism in favour of the view that 'accommodation and tolerance must stop short of a willingness to work within any vocabulary that one's interlocutor wishes to use'. In other words, those with whom, after much trying, we can ultimately reach no agreement, we can treat as beyond the pale. But how does this fit with the praise for Wittgenstein, Dewey, Stanley Fish and others for helping us to see that any attempt to erect 'rules' and 'criteria' for the playing of any language-game 'turn into attempts to hypostatize and eternalize some past or present practice, thereby making it more difficult for that practice to be reformed or gradually replaced with a different practice'? How does it fit with the claim that there are no 'linguistic islets', no such things as 'conceptual schemes', but only slightly different (Nietzsche's? Loyola's? Hitler's?) sets of beliefs and desires?

I raise these points because I think it is important to engage with Rorty not by dismissing him as a relativist, caught up in the usual self-referential problems of relativism, but rather to consider how far his ethnocentricity can be sustained without anything more in the way of an objective theory of justification than he is prepared to allow. The problem, as I see it, is that Rorty wants to think there are good reasons why all of us should come round to his own way of thinking, but denies that there are intrinsic grounds for persuading those with radically different interests to shift their position.

That said, I am quite sympathetic to Rorty's willingness to defend an *engagé* postmodernism against the 'dryness' or political aloofness of his fellow French anti-foundationalists. That the abandonment of 'metanarratives' is the very stuff of rationality and progress, not the grounds for a sceptical or Stoical retreat from politics, is one of the central organizing themes of the more 'Continental' essays of Volume II, and the yardstick of his discriminations between the more or less progressive leanings of the various thinkers under review. Habermas here figures, as usual, as the misguided 'modernist' still clinging to an outdated model of progress (as requiring objective criteria for its assessment, and the principle of the 'truth' of the happiness towards which emancipatory efforts are directed). On the other hand, Habermas's French critics are also charged with re-introducing a kind of metanarrative of philosophy's own transcendence (it has revealed to us the 'end of progress' and the end of itself) just at the point where they should have taken the lesson of their own debunking of theological pronouncements to get into something altogether more useful and less pompous (a reformist tinkering with their own social context, for example). What this line of argument tends to overlook, however, is the tacit agreement between Habermas and his French critics as to the limitations of the liberal-market paradigm of progress. While the Continental postmodernists have produced the kind of self-referential critiques of Enlightenment which make it look as if they must give up on 'progress', there is no doubt that they could go pragmatist quite easily were it not for the negative assessment of the existing social order which they implicitly share with the Habermasians. It may be incoherent of them to sniff at current Western institutions and forms of happiness as if they were not quite the genuine article, while agreeing with Rorty that theories of 'true' happiness are philosophically deluded. But this is perhaps no more inconsistent than it is of Rorty to agree as to the delusion while insisting on the superiority of a certain form of happiness.

I have focussed here on a number of rather general points of abrasion at the cost, perhaps, of conveying a proper sense of the variety of these papers and the intriguing quality of some of their more detailed arguments. Rorty wants pragmatism without method, and Heideggerian philosophy without ontology, and this bid draws him into some fascinating and nuanced discussions both of his American pragmatist predecessors and of the meaning and aims of Heidegger's philosophy. I found his reading of Heidegger in the opening essays of Volume II as a would-be pragmatist trapped by his nostalgic and anti-technological impulses particularly revealing. One must, however, note in this connection the very glaring, and unexplained, inconsistency between his preference for the early Heidegger in Volume II (where we are told that the 'turn' was a failure of nerve), and his praise for the later Heidegger's resistance to the onto-theological tradition in the paper on 'Pragmatism without Method' in Volume I.

Rorty also has interesting things to say about Derrida and his admirers, some of them to the effect that Derrida may not be doing anything very much more than systematically writing down what other intellectuals have been doing more spasmodically in their heads; others more directed against the attempt to read him as a transcendental philosopher (even if, as Rorty admits, there is some encouragement from Derrida himself to do so).

In general, Rorty's inclination, which I suppose has a kind of generosity about it, is to discover as much pragmatism in everybody else as he can, from Dickens and Hegel to Derrida and De Man. This leads him into some pretty idiosyncratic readings, of which his treatment of the Freudian Unconscious as engaged in a kind of batty, but essentially cordial, conversation with our conscious selves, is perhaps the funniest (in both senses of the term). More worryingly, perhaps, there is a kind of relentless zeal about this quest for pragmatist virtue which at times lends his argument that Messianic tone which he so deplores in his 'totalitarian' opponents. Rorty paints a compelling picture of the nightmare wherein all philosophers have 'adopted a short, crisp set of standards of rationality and morality', but there is also something a little unsettling about his image of a community based on a 'common rhetoric'. Let us avoid totalitarianism, but let us not have the Manifesto of Fuzziness either.

Kate Soper

'WE ANTI-REPRESENTATIONALISTS'

Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, London, Verso, 1991. 242 pp. £32.95 hb., £10.95 pb., 0 86091 8 hb., 0 86091 538 7 pb.

The first chapter of this book begins by listing twenty senses of the word 'ideology', many of which are incompatible with one another. Eagleton does not regard this proliferation of inconsistent senses as a reason for dropping the word. 'My own view,' he says, 'is that both the wider and narrower senses of ideology have their uses, and that their mutual incompatibility, descending as they do from divergent political and conceptual histories, must be simply acknowledged. This view has the advantage of remaining loyal to the implicit slogan of Bertolt Brecht – "Use what you can!" – and the disadvantage of excessive charity.'

The excess of charity seems to me more obvious than the relevance of Brecht's slogan. But this is probably because I agree with the view which Eagleton goes on to attribute to 'Foucault and his acolytes' – 'that there are no values and beliefs *not* bound up with power' and therefore 'the term ideology threatens to expand to vanishing point'. Eagleton, however, thinks that abandoning 'ideology' in favour of Foucault's term 'discourse' is a bad idea because 'the force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles which are somehow central to a whole form of social life, and those which are not'.

Granted that 'ideology' may be handy as an abbreviation for 'central and important discourse, discourse whose replacement may be requisite for desirable social change', the utility of the definition of 'ideology' with which Eagleton emerges at the end of his 'What is Ideology?' chapter is another question. In a series of definitions arranged as 'a progressive sharpening of focus', he comes to a fifth: 'ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation'. The sixth and final definition is a gloss on the fifth, specifying that we should 'retain an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs' but regard such beliefs 'as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole'. The 'most celebrated instance of this sense of ideology,' Eagleton says, 'is Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities.'

This quasi-definition puts a heavy burden on the notion of 'the material structure of society as a whole', a notion which seems to me on a par with 'ideology' in respect to ambiguity and lack of evident utility. But the utility of the former notion is pretty much taken for granted by Eagleton, who has written his book primarily for his fellow-Marxists. This readership gets smaller all the time, because Eagleton's paradigm case of ideology-critique, the theory of the fetishism of commodities, only looked convincing as long as one thought that Marxism offered a feasible proposal for an alternative material structure of society.

Since nobody is clear what socio-economic arrangement Marxists now wish, in the light of the Central European experience, to propose, the Marxist vocabulary is going out of style. The plausibility of that vocabulary depends upon its being used to sketch a concrete political alternative, and that is just what Marxists are no longer offering us. If you have tried Marxist terminology and found it unhelpful, Eagleton's book will do little to reconvert you to it.

The bulk of *Ideology: An Introduction* is history of ideas, interspersed with criticism of various thinkers (from Mannheim to Habermas, from Freud to Bourdieu). But it is not avery exciting or dramatic history of ideas. The organizing principles of chapters 3-6 are not perspicuous. Those in search of an 'introduction' to the history of uses of the term 'ideology' might do better to consult a recent 50-page article by Daniel Bell in *The Berkeley Journal of Sociology*. The central chapters of Eagleton's book should be read not as an introduction to that area, but rather as a compendium of Eagleton's evaluations and criticisms – often pointed, and always at least suggestive – of various authors who have recently attracted his attention.

These central chapters are flanked, however, by an 'Introduction' and a concluding chapter called 'Discourse and Ideology'. In those parts of the book, Eagleton takes on 'post-modernism' and offers straight-out philosophy, as opposed to history. They are quite different in aim and in flavour from the central chapters, and I shall focus on them in what follows – not only because I find them of most interest but because, as a philosopher rather than an historian, I am better qualified to comment on them.

In his 'Introduction' Eagleton asks 'Why is it that in a world racked by ideological conflict, the very notion of ideology has evaporated without trace from the writings of postmodernism and post-structuralism?' His answer is that 'three key doctrines of post-modernist thought have conspired to discredit the classical conception of ideology.' These are: (1) 'a rejection of the notion of representation'' (2) 'an epistemological scepticism'; and (3) 'a reformulation of the relations between rationality, interests and power, along roughly neo-Nietzschean lines'.

I am pretty sure that the down-turn in the fortunes of the term 'ideology' owes more to dissatisfaction with Marxist explanations of recent history, and thus with Marxist categories and terminology, than to the prevalence of the philosophical views which Eagleton lists. But, however this may be, his list does zero

in on a philosophical standpoint which is common to many recent thinkers (notably Nietzsche and Foucault, and also, I should argue, Davidson and Dewey). It is a standpoint which I have been recommending in my own books.

From this standpoint, the distinction between appearance and reality is one which makes sense within a linguistic practice – within, say, the vocabulary of art dealers, or that of theoretical physicists – but is of no use when applied to linguistic practices as wholes. When we ask 'Is there any such thing as X?' – where 'X' is something like 'micro-structure' (in the case of physics) or 'the material structure of society as a whole' (in the case of Marxism) or 'God' (in the case of religion) or 'art' (in the case of connoisseurship) – neither 'only in appearance' nor 'Yes, there *really and truly* is' is a helpful answer. What is helpful is to be told 'Here is an alternative way of speaking which fulfils the purposes served by talk of X even better than X-talk does', or else to be told 'There is, at present, *no* plausible rival to X-talk'.

Assuming this standpoint makes one an anti-representationalist, in that one stops asking 'Are we representing reality accurately?' and starts asking 'Are there more useful conceptual instruments at our disposal?' But it is hardly clear that it makes one an epistemological sceptic; we anti-representationalists think of ourselves as saying that our knowledge of the world is as much knowledge as it ever was, even when truth is thought of in terms of utility rather than in terms of correspondence to intrinsic features of the world. This sort of pragmatism does indeed, however, bring about 'a reformulation of the relations between rationality, interests and power along roughly neo-Nietzschean lines'. For it entails that a lot of choices between linguistic and other practices boil down to 'utility for what?', and thus to 'utility in serving whose interests?' So, on at least two out of three points, Eagleton gets us right.

Our way of thinking – that common to wet pragmatist liberals like me and dry postmodernist radicals like the Foucauldians – overlaps with a prominent historicist and pragmatist strain in Marx and Marxism. (Think of the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, of the idea that morality is relative to class interests, and so on.) But it has been stoutly resisted by many Marxists – from Engels, through Lenin's criticisms of Berkeley and Mach in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, to Milton Fisk's *Nature and Necessity* (a pre-Kripkean repudiation of Quinean holism and revivification of Aristotelian essentialism) and Hilary Putnam's politically-driven quest (in his Marxist period) for a physicalist theory of reference. It is as if Marxists were, on the whole, more eager to save the claim that scientific socialism represents the world as it *really* is than to carry through on Hegelian historicism. This eagerness causes them to resist Foucault with the same sort of arguments as they once resisted Dewey and later resisted Wittgenstein. It leads them to say the same sorts of unpleasant things about us neo-Nietzschean (or, as we Americans prefer to say, neo-Emersonian) anti-representationalists as are said about us by people on the political right (sophisticated Straussians in learned journals; simple-minded Blimps propounding 'sound common sense' in letters to newspapers).

The main unpleasant thing said about us is that we have forgotten the difference between ideas and things, or between words and things – that we represent some new-fangled kind of idealism, or perhaps some sort of decadent aestheticism, and so are unable to appreciate the hard, resistant, character of reality. As Johnson thought to refute Berkeley by kicking a stone, so Marxists think to refute pragmatists and post-modernists by emphasizing the pre-linguistic character of suffering, and suggesting that anti-representationalists are oblivious to this suffering. So the centrepiece of Eagleton's final chapter is a description of someone who occupies 'an objective location within the social formation known as third galley slave from the front on the starboard side. This location brings along with it certain responsibilities such as rowing non-stop for fifteen hours at a stretch and sending up a feeble chant of praise to the Emperor on the hour.'

The tone of Eagleton's criticism of us anti-representationalists is illustrated by the following passage:

> The galley slave might be instructed by the odd discourse theorists ... that the interests he had now begun to articulate [e.g., an interest in escaping from the galleys] were in no sense a mere passive reflection of social reality, and he would do well to take this point seriously. He would no doubt appreciate the force of it already, recalling the long years during which he held the view that being lashed to ribbons by the emperor's captain was an honour ill-befitting a worm such as himself, and remembering the painful inner struggle which brought him to his current, more enlightened opinions. He might well be brought to understand that 'oppression' is a discursive affair, in the sense that one condition is identifiable as oppressive only by contrast with some other less or non-oppressive state of affairs, and that all this is cognizable only through discourse.... The galley slave, however, would no doubt be churlishly unimpressed by the suggestion that all this meant that he was not 'really' oppressed at all. He would be unlikely to greet such a judgement with the light-hearted playfulness beloved of some postmodernist theorists. Instead, he would doubtless insist that while what was in question here was certainly an interpretation, and thus always in principle controversiable, what the interpretation enforced was the *fact* that the situation was oppressive.

This last sentence is, I take it, supposed to remind us that, as Eagleton goes on to say, 'The "real" here certainly exists prior to and independent of the slave's discourse, if by the "real" is meant that specific set of practices which provide the reason for what he says, and form the referent of it.' Like Berkeley and Kant, however, contemporary anti-representationalists insist that they do not deny the prior and independent reality of the referents of many beliefs. It is one thing to say, paradoxically and pointlessly (as Foucault, alas, sometimes did), that X did not exist before people used the term 'X'. It is another thing to say that sentences about X are true because they accurately represent, or correspond to, the way the world is in itself. You can drop the idea that true beliefs represent this way, and the idea that there *is* any such a way, while still believing that many referents antedated the discourse which made them cognizable. (e.g., there were electrons before 'electron' came into use, even though there were no bills of lading before 'bill of lading' came into use.) So anti-representationalists see Eagleton's emphatic use of '*fact*' as either smuggling back the view he elsewhere explicitly repudiates – that some objects are somehow 'given' independent of discourse – or as beside the point.

Anti-representationalists can happily agree with Eagleton that when the galley slave thought he was a justly lashed worm, he was wrong, and that he is now right in thinking that his interests consist in escaping the galleys. But they will construe this claim as saying: if the slave tries the discourse of emancipation he will come out with better results than those he achieved with the discourse in which he viewed himself as a worm. Better by whose lights? Ours and Eagleton's. What other lights should we use? (As Putnam puts it: we should use somebody *else's* conceptual scheme? A *worm's*?) So when Eagleton says all women ought to become feminists because 'an unmystified understanding of their oppressed social condition would logically lead them in that direction', we anti-representationalists construe him as saying 'Those non-feminist women will get more of what we think they

ought to want if they become feminists'. Analogously, we think that the claim that only 'prejudice and superstition' blinded our eyes to the truth of the Copernican theory is a way of saying that Copernicans get more of what we think astronomers ought to want than Ptolemians. 'Mystification' and 'prejudice', for us anti-representationalists, point to a difference between our wants and interests and somebody else's wants and interests, not a difference between somebody else's wants and the way the world is independent of anybody's wants and anybody's discourse.

A clear difference between this position and Eagleton's emerges only when he stops talking about 'prior and independent existence' and starts talking about the need for an object which will put a stop to argument about what interests are to be served, what needs fulfilled. Consider the following passage:

> The thesis that objects are entirely internal to the discourses which constitute them raises the thorny problem of how we could ever judge that a discourse had constructed its object validly. How can anyone, on this theory, ever be wrong? If there can be no meta-language to measure the 'fit' between my language and the object, what is to stop me from constructing the object any way I want?

Anti-representationalists say: nothing stops you except other people, with other wants and interests, construing the object in different ways.

But this reply is not good enough for Eagleton. Like the Straussians and the Blimps, he wants back-up from the intrinsic nature of things. He wants a Way The World Is, and what Putnam calls a 'God's-eye view'. So he continues:

> The pragmatist move here, in other words, simply pushes the question back a step: if what validates my social interpretations are the political ends they serve, how am I to validate these ends? Or am I just forced back here, aggressively and dogmatically, on asserting my interests over yours, as Nietzsche would have urged?

Anti-representationalists say: yes, you *are* so forced. If you cannot find any conversational common ground with your opponents, you may indeed have to be aggressive and dogmatic. Indeed, in the end you may have to right it out with those opponents. (E.g., in the end the galley slaves may have to stop trying to talk the captain into providing fair wages and hours, and just try to overthrow the imperial system of government by force and violence.)

Anti-representationalists accept the consequence which Eagleton regards as a *reductio ad absurdum*: that 'there can be no way of countering an objectionable political case by an appeal to the way things are with society, for the way things are is just the way you construct them to be." They do not see the force of 'just' in this last sentence. (Somebody *else* should construct them? The *emperor*, maybe?) So when Eagleton protests against the suggestion that 'The working class, or for that matter any other subordinate group, thus becomes clay in the hands of those wishing to coopt it into some political strategy, tugged this way and that between socialists and fascists', we anti-representationalists cannot see the point of the protest. Sometimes subordinated groups *are* clay – happy slaves whom we try to make unhappy as a step toward helping them to become even happier than they were before. (Consider, e.g., feminists trying to convert complacent matrons in Sicily or Utah.) With luck, we happy few, the good and enlightened vanguard, will mould those subordinated groups into an instrument for the purposes we think they ought to have.

When Eagleton asks 'If socialism is not necessarily in the workers' interests, since the workers in fact have no interests outside those they are "constructed" into, why on earth should they bother to become socialists?' I am baffled by the phrase 'not necessarily in the workers' interests'. What does 'necessarily' mean here? Founded upon the way the intrinsic nature of the working class – the one socialists represent accurately and fascists don't?

The reason we anti-representationalists bother to hold the controversial philosophical views we do is that we think that this idea that some descriptions get at the *intrinsic* nature of what is being described brings the whole dreary Cartesian problematic along with it, and that this is a problematic which nobody needs – the result of being held captive by a picture which it was in Descartes' interests to paint, but not in ours. We see the choice as between sticking with this problematic in order to avoid epithets like 'Nietzschean' or 'irrationalist' or 'relativist' and abandoning it in the hope that others will see it as in their interests to abandon it also, and that the epithets will therefore cease to be hurled.

Eagleton, it seems to me, would like to concede enough to Hindess and Hirst, Laclau and Mouffe, Saussure and Foucault, to free himself from imputations of philosophical naivete, but not so much as to deprive himself of the epithets and sneers which he, like the Straussians and the Blimps, likes to use on the post-modernists. I do not see that he has found a middle ground which permits him to do this.

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Despite this strenuous philosophical disagreement, however, I feel considerable sympathy with Eagleton's motives for writing this book – with his hostility to the take-over of leftist politics by people who specialise in 'analyzing discourses'. Though, unlike him, I think that Marxism is pretty well finished, I hope that what takes its place on the left will not be post-modernism. For too many post-modernists take philosophy just as seriously as the Marxists did. They thereby drain the left's energy off into unproductive channels – channels which trickle out in the sandy wastes of discussion of, e.g., the difference between 'the signified' and 'the referent'. In my own country, one in which university literature departments think of themselves as (and, God help us, probably *are*) the centres of radical politics, post-modernism has produced a farcically over-theorized left which is not only politically useless but seems proud of being so (because it thereby avoids wetness and what it calls 'complicity').

What we need from left intellectuals is not more of what my fellow-pragmatist Stanley Fish calls 'anti-foundationalist theory hope' (the hope that by seeing things as 'products of discourse' we shall automatically see the oppressed and their needs more clearly) but answers to questions like: what remains of the traditional socialist programme in the light of the results of various experiments in nationalization and central planning? Just the sort of welfare-statism which Laclau and Mouffe suggest toward the end of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*? Or something more radical?

I cannot envisage anything both plausible and more radical myself, but maybe Eagleton can. I wish that he could tell us, rather than delving into the history of Marxist ideas and into anti-anti-representationalist philosophy. *Ideology: An Introduction* will do little to alter the opinions of those who (like some of my left-looking students) would relish the spectacle of the last Marxist being strangled with the entrails of the last post-modernist.

Richard Rorty

PENULTIMATE WORDS

Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. xx + 530 pp., £10.65 pb., 0 8047 1822 9.

David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*, London: Routledge, 1990. 198 pp. £8.95 pb, 0 415 05038 3.

Malcolm V. Jones, *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoyevsky's Fantastic Realism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. xvii + 221 pp., £25.00 hb, 0 521 38423 0.

If it is accurate to speak of a 'Bakhtin industry' (as one commentator has called it), then it is not inappropriate to characterise Morson and Emerson as major shareholders. Already established and prolific writers, editors and translators of all things Bakhtin, they have not only co-edited a recent collection of essays *Rethinking Bakhtin* and co-authored *Mikhail Bakhtin*; they also promise *Heteroglossary*, a dictionary or glossary of Bakhtiniana. Their *Mikhail Bakhtin* is easily the most significant and substantial study of Bakhtin and the 'Bakhtin Circle' since the publication in 1984 of Katerina Clarke and Michael Holquist's path-breaking intellectual biography (also entitled *Mikhail Bakhtin*). Morson and Emerson have produced a book which does justice to the intellectual expanse, the richness, and the sheer *quirkiness* of Bakhtin's vision. They do so without succumbing to hagiographic excess, and they are quick to point out his various dead-ends and unproductive digressions, and are keen to avoid some of the more implausible claims made by Bakhtin's most fervent apostles. *Mikhail Bakhtin* is particularly welcome because Morson and Emerson are able to paint the most complete picture of Bakhtin's activities to date. This is mainly due to the fact that they are able to draw upon a large number of unpublished and untranslated (or only recently available) works of considerable interest, and have managed to cull invaluable information from the Bakhtin archives in the Soviet Union.

"One day she had a visitor who came in without knocking"

Morson and Emerson also make a serious attempt to study Bakhtin in the *spirit* of his enterprise, by striving to remain faithful to his anti-totalizing philosophy and his stress upon the open-ended qualities of discourse and the human subject. This intention is best evinced by the formal organization of *Mikhail Bakhtin* and the interpretive strategies which Morson and Emerson self-consciously adopt. As to the latter, Morson and Emerson's hermeneutic strategy involves the delineation of three master tropes or 'global concepts' in the opening pages of *Mikhail Bakhtin*, which then constitute the optic through which they bring the entire corpus of Bakhtin's writings into sharper focus. The first such concept is what they call 'prosaics', which is described as a 'form of thinking which presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary'. In aesthetic terms, this involves a valorization of prose and popular artistic genres over poetry, but more generally it indicates a pronounced hostility toward abstract, systematic philosophising (what Bakhtin termed theoretism or monologism, although Morson and Emerson prefer the phrase 'semiotic totalitarianism'). They claim that Bakhtin's allegiance to 'prosaics' is exemplified by his attacks on various theoretical approaches which he felt reified human thoughts, actions or utterances by reducing them to elements within an overarching explanatory system, such as Formalism, structuralism, and 'vulgar' Marxism. This condemnation also contained a strong ethical component – not only because such methods ignored or denigrated the sphere of everyday life (which for Bakhtin was the essential context for the realization of creative deeds and moral actions), but because they expressly violated the integrity of his second global concept, the principle of 'unfinalizability'. This indicates Bakhtin's rejection of any form of determinism, and his concomitant privileging of novelty, potentiality, and openness (although he did argue that some form of constraint was necessary, particularly with respect to the realization of artistic creativity or moral conduct). The final concept is 'dialogue', which stresses continual interaction, relationality, and the permeability of (physical or symbolic) boundaries not only *vis-à-vis* language or the social but also biological and physical processes. Dialogism is therefore not a 'theory' in the usual sense; it is a 'model of the world' which embodies both a coherent image of truth (one that resists the epistemological arrogance of monologic theories) and a discursive (and time-space or chronotopic) structure of the novel, particularly those novelistic traditions which drew upon the 'carnivalesque' genres of European culture (Menippean satires, Socratic dialogues, Medieval scholastic parodies, etc.). This helps to explain his life-long preoccupation with the novel form and with the historical development and internal dynamics of various literary genres.

It is Morson and Emerson's contention that the interaction between these three global concepts in particular phases of Bakhtin's career provides a framework for understanding both the evolution of his ideas and his development of more 'localized' concepts, such as 'polyphony', 'carnival laughter', and 'heteroglossia'. This is the focus in parts two and

three of *Mikhail Bakhtin*, respectively. A central element of this interpretive approach is the postulation of four relatively discrete phases (and three major shifts or 'watersheds') within Bakhtin's work, which they characterise as follows: (i) the earliest aesthetic writings produced during his Nevel'/Vitebsk period, which predate his later preoccupation with language and dialogue and represent an idiosyncratic fusion of neo-Kantianism, Husserlian phenomenology and Bergsonian vitalism; (ii) the 1929 study of Dostoevsky's poetics, which introduced his distinctive metalinguistic paradigm and the notion of 'polyphony'; (iii) the texts of the 1930s and 1940s dealing with the theory of the novel, various literary genres, and carnival; and (iv) the final, recapitulative phase, culminating in a series of gnomic philosophical fragments written shortly before his death in 1975. By so periodizing Bakhtin's *oeuvre*, Morson and Emerson demonstrate the significant discontinuities and shifts in his theories over time (as well as his ability to work in a plethora of very different intellectual styles and idioms), against those who see different works as variations on a fixed set of themes or else teleologically, as culminating in the quasi-revolutionary conception of carnival as a 'festival of the oppressed'. Moreover, by setting up a recognizably 'dialogical' alterity between analytical and chronological modes of exposition (which acquires increasing resonance as the book progresses), the authors manage to reintroduce previously discussed concepts in new contexts and with different concerns in mind, which yields a number of fruitful insights. In the main, this is an audacious and largely successful procedure, and it does clear up numerous misunderstandings about the overall trajectory of Bakhtin's work and the more 'regional' tasks he set himself at specific points in his career.

Mikhail Bakhtin therefore admirably fulfils a double purpose: it is a clear and perceptive introduction to Bakhtin's life and work, which should prove invaluable to neophytes; yet its sophisticated presentation and use of previously unavailable materials will undoubtedly hold great appeal for long-time admirers. Morson and Emerson's discussion is extensive (even exhaustive), lucid yet challenging, and their exegesis well-supported by literary, philosophical and psychological examples and a judicious selection of quotations from Bakhtin's own texts. They resist the widespread impulse to construe Bakhtin as just another 'literary critic', and they discuss at some length the pan-disciplinary ramifications of his thought (although they are fully cognizant of his contribution to literary theory). They also unhesitatingly enter into the fray of the infamous 'authorship debate' (that is, the controversy about whether certain published studies originally attributed to other members of the Bakhtin Circle – especially Voloshinov and Medvedev – were actually written by Bakhtin himself) by arguing that the evidence for Bakhtin's authorship is largely anecdotal and unconvincing, and in any event transgresses the ethical content of dialogism and Bakhtin's own comments on language and authorship.

Morson and Emerson's study will undoubtedly set the agenda for future debates over Bakhtin's legacy for many years. Their stress on what they term 'prosaics' in Bakhtin's thought is in my opinion a correct and productive move, and I have enormous sympathy with their desire to tease out the hitherto-overlooked *ethical* implications of Bakhtin's dialogic world-view. However, I have some reservations about their estimation of the overall worth of particular elements of Bakhtin's critical project. They argue that the global concepts interrelate in distinct ways in different phases of Bakhtin's career. In certain of his writings (they cite 'Discourse in the Novel' and the *Bildungsroman* essay on Goethe as paradigmatic examples), Bakhtin achieves a 'proper balance' between the three concepts, a kind of conceptual symmetry between the dialogic conception of truth, the unfinalizability of the human subject (which eludes the stultifying reification of monological modes of thought), and the tangible ethical principles of reciprocity and solidarity (which must ultimately be grounded in the realm of prosaic social life and therefore subject to certain practical constraints). By contrast, Bakhtin's 'carnival' period places a misguided emphasis on unfinalizability at the expense of dialogue and prosaics, and this results in an 'anarchically irresponsible' nihilism which sharply contradicts the overall tone of his other writings. They conclude, therefore, that the notion of carnival has 'ultimately proved a dead end', and that the widespread image of Bakhtin as an advocate of a 'semiological guerrilla warfare' (to use Umberto Eco's pithy phrase) is an ultimately impoverishing one.

Of course, it is precisely the utopian and deconstructive implications of carnival (and such related Bakhtinian tropes as the 'grotesque body', 'folk-festive laughter', and so on) which have proven so alluring for Marxists and other practitioners of radical social thought. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that an implicit goal of *Mikhail Bakhtin* is to polemicize against such 'left' appropriations of Bakhtin. Morson and Emerson are emphatic that Bakhtin did not subscribe to any species of Marxist thought (or Freudianism and structuralism) because any such scientistic and totalizing philosophy was antithetical to his outlook, and they continually downplay his utopian excesses, describing his 'prosaic' outlook as a profoundly *anti*-utopian one. (Parenthetically, this perhaps explains why they are so keen to attribute the disputed texts to Voloshinov and Medvedev, which are unarguably Marxist, although they do suggest that the latter's more overtly sociological orientation did influence Bakhtin's 1930s writings in turn.) In order to vindicate their assessment of

"As soon as the inn was reached the horses stopped"

the different periods of Bakhtin's career, Morson and Emerson perhaps *over*emphasise the discontinuities. More importantly, they present a somewhat selective and misleading picture of Bakhtin's relation to the various strands of utopian thought (and they tend to ignore the heterogeneity of this tradition) and they do not pay sufficient attention to the specifically *political* implications of his conception of carnival. For instance, they are reluctant to acknowledge the importance of the 'positive pole' of carnival, the image of a de-alienated, egalitarian *communitas* that Bakhtin holds up as an exemplar of a fully 'dialogic' society. This results in a severance of the theoretical connections Bakhtin drew between power, language, and particular cultural formations and social ideologies. In short, Morson and Emerson manage to obscure some of the more radical and subversive implications of Bakhtin's thought and his sense of desperate political urgency that pervades many of his writings (most notably *Rabelais and His World*), overshadowed as they are by the terrible mono-logic of Stalinism. Finally, their recourse to 'prosaics' seems to ignore the extensive ideological colonization of 'everyday life' that is a central characteristic of modernity; that is, what Foucault has called the *disciplining* of the life-world by the various technologies of social control. The issue is whether there can be a productive dialogue between Bakhtin and an exploratory and self-critical tradition of Marxist thought (best represented by the 'warm stream' of Adorno, Benjamin and others), a tradition which is just as wary as Bakhtin of the dangers of monologic thought and the aggrandizement of abstract Reason. Morson and Emerson seem determined (for whatever reason) to foreclose this potential dialogue.

At the more literary end of the spectrum there is *After Bakhtin*, a collection of essays by literary critic and novelist David Lodge covering such diverse topics as crowd imagery in Victorian literature and the work of the Czech novelist Milan Kundera. It should be noted at the outset that only about half of the essays in *After Bakhtin* actually refer to Bakhtin's theories, although this is not necessarily a complaint (for instance, one of the book's more entertaining pieces concerns the academic star-system in American universities). Lodge explains in his introduction that he turned to Bakhtin's work after the dissolution of classical structuralism and when the emergence of post-structuralist theory threatened to abolish the 'conceptual boundary between creative and critical discourse which was one of the basic assumptions of the traditional humanist model'. Lodge accepts certain post-structuralist arguments about the ideological status of literary 'realism' (at least in its 19th-century form). Yet, whilst he does not wish to resurrect a moribund humanism, Lodge is reluctant to jettison the humanist legacy *tout court*, because for him it still has much to tell us about the actual experience of authorship and reading.

This explains Lodge's evocation of Bakhtin's post-formalism. His central thesis is that Bakhtin's dialogism is a more sophisticated reworking of the Platonic distinction between *diegesis* (telling) and *mimesis* (showing). Insofar as a complex interweaving of diagesis and mimesis (or authorial and character narrative voices) is the primary feature of the modern (and now post-modern) novel, Bakhtin's typology of discourse-types is tailor-made for contemporary literary analysis and for probing the interrelation between authorship, narrative and textual interpretation. Lodge argues that Bakhtin's dialogism allows us to grasp the polyvalent discursive structure of the literary text without wholly abandoning the category of authorial agency. By avoiding the hermeneutic nihilism of a full-blown deconstructionism on the one hand and a self-legitimating authorial monologism on the other, Bakhtin, according to Lodge, can help to ensure a viable future for literary criticism.

Setting aside Lodge's Bakhtinian reading of given literary texts, which are on the whole accessible, well-observed and often humorous (especially when characters from his own novels make brief appearances), his use of Bakhtin does have certain shortcomings. Whilst Lodge has a keen sense of the technical innovations Bakhtin developed for textual analysis during certain phases of his career, he lacks a wider appreciation of the radicality of Bakhtin's approach and the pan-disciplinary relevance of his thought (the ethics of dialogism, his philosophical objections to theoretical monologism, the politically-transgressive nature of carnival, and so on). And some of his theoretical interpretations of Bakhtin are questionable. At one point, for example, he depicts Bakhtin as a 'theorist of *parole*', which seriously underestimates the force of his attack on Saussurean linguistics. Morson and Emerson effectively demonstrate in their study that Bakhtin's metalinguistics was intended to demolish such reifying binarisms, not simply reverse the terms of the dualism *langue* and *parole*.

Lodge's criticism seems somewhat pedestrian in comparison to Malcolm Jones's *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin*. Jones is concerned to interrogate a number of key interpretive questions associated with Dostoyevsky's novels, using Bakhtin's theories (and especially his *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*) as a 'theoretical starting point'. Jones agrees with Bakhtin that what is most significant about Dostoyevsky is not his ideological stance, but rather his formal innovations in the architectonics of novelistic discourse (such as his creation of what Bakhtin called 'polyphony', his relationship to the carnival tradition of debasement and inversion, and so on). Jones claims that by examining this aspect of Dostoyevsky in depth, we can appreciate his writings in relation to what he terms a 'modernist (or even post-modernist) conception of art on the edge of the abyss'.

Central to Jones's approach is his reconstruction of the notion of 'fantastic realism' as an analytic tool which he uses to comprehend Dostoyevsky's artistry. Dostoyevsky wrote in his *Diary of a Writer* that he was a 'realist in a higher sense' – which for him meant that he could 'depict all the depths of the human soul' by visualising a higher spiritual reality obscured by the banalities of everyday life. For Jones, Dostoyevsky's use of techniques such as carnivalesque destabilisation, 'departures from the norm', scandal scenes, juxtaposition of opposites and so forth, has the effect of galvanizing emotionally-charged viewpoints into a state of intense interaction. Jones asserts that by using these textual strategies, Dostoyevsky undermines the possibility of a faith in 'logocentric certainty' and demonstrates the manifest inability of language to convey 'ultimate truth'. Fantastic realism is therefore designed to 'repeatedly challenge the reader's (and the character's) easy identification of signifier with sign, sign with meaning, verisimilitude with reality'. Of course, Bakhtin was also acutely conscious of this schism between word and world. Yet rather than indicate a descent into nihilism, for him it signalled the possibility of freedom from the constraints of a monologic totalitarianism, and it also necessitated a Sartrean refusal of 'bad faith' and acceptance of responsibility for one's own words and deeds. Jones counters that Bakhtin was much too sanguine about the 'threat of chaos, the pathological, the apocalyptic' implied by the demise of logocentrism, and he also ignored the presence of a Nietzschean 'will to power' in the realm of interpersonal relations – all of these being major Dostoyevskian themes. Jones's position would therefore seem to be closer to post-structuralism in certain respects – and, indeed, he often supplements his Bakhtinian readings with deconstructionist ones. He also draws on Freud, arguing that there is an important emotive-psychological dimension in Dostoyevsky's 'literature of subversion' which (so he claims) Bakhtin tends to overlook.

However, *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin* is not primarily a theo-

retical study. Most of it consists of detailed readings of Dostoyevsky's major fictional texts. He arranges Dostoyevsky's novels in a roughly chronological fashion, to explore the thesis that they demonstrate a thematic movement from introspection and self-alienation (for example, *The Double*) toward complex intersubjective situations which shed light upon the social dynamics of emotional-dialogic interaction (*The Idiot*, *The Devils*). Whilst some of the readings are more convincing than others, together they constitute an impressive testament to the author's grasp of both the fecundity of Bakhtin's theories and the peculiarities of Dostoyevsky's artistic vision. Jones is also to be complemented for not slavishly imitating Bakhtin's own analyses. Accordingly, *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin* is written in a refreshingly open-ended and exploratory manner which, like Morson and Emerson's study, can be compared to Bakhtin's own stylistic and conceptual approach.

My only real doubt concerns the last two chapters, where Jones tentatively sketches a 'Christian poetics' based on his reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*. He suggests that although his texts are deliberately mysterious and ambiguous, Dostoyevsky's intent was not to promote a form of existentialism or nihilism, but to encourage a 'voyage of discovery' – the revelation of a divine truth which cannot be expressed directly. That is, for Dostoyevsky the disjuncture between sign and referent is not indicative of the inherently metaphysical status of language, but rather a necessary outcome of humankind's Fall from divine grace. Thus, Jones claims that Dostoyevsky's novels can be interpreted as a passionate yearning after the Edenic word, an expression of the desire for a pure communicative efficacy which was lost after humanity's expulsion from the Garden and the disruptive heteroglossia which, according to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, followed the destruction of the Tower of Babel. Jones argues that, whilst this stance does not contradict the structure of interpersonal dialogue in Dostoyevsky's novels (i.e., polyphony), it does indicate his assent to a divine 'authoritative word'. This is certainly an interesting interpretation, but it departs significantly from Bakhtin's own position (as Jones acknowledges). Bakhtin – though a profoundly religious man – never developed such a Christian poetics; it would have contradicted his view that one should not attempt to escape personal responsibility by appeal to an external ideology or tradition. As Bakhtin himself puts it, there can be no 'alibi for Being'. Jones's Christian reworking of dialogism does not really confront Bakhtin's powerful moral and philosophical objections to the 'authoritative word' in whatever form.

In his 1930s essay 'Epic and Novel', Bakhtin wrote that 'there is no first word (no ideal word), and the final word has not yet been spoken'. Given the burgeoning literature on Bakhtin, it would seem unlikely that the 'final word' on this subject will be uttered for some time. Whatever their particular strengths and deficiencies, the three studies reviewed here testify eloquently to the vast domains to which Bakhtin's intellectual legacy can be fruitfully applied.

Mike Gardiner

MORAL DEPTHS

Freya Mathews, *The Ecological Self*, London, Routledge, 1991. 192 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 415 05252 1.

Lawrence E. Johnson, *A Morally Deep World: An Essay on Moral Significance and Environmental Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. 301 pp., £25.00 hb., 0 521 39310 8.

It must be something to do with the open spaces. Ever since Green politics forced us to reassess our relationship with the non-human natural world, writers almost exclusively from Norway, the United States of America or Australia have decided that the best way to ensure its protection is to argue for its intrinsic value. The two books under review are both from Australia. On the face of it the intrinsic value strategy is a good one – after all, if we could only begin to think of the natural world as an end in itself rather than as a means to extraction, production and consumption, some kind of a barrier against its despoilation would have been erected.

Four sets of problems have arisen though. First, how do you best argue for the intrinsic value of the natural world in the first place? Second, how far do you extend the boundaries of moral concern? Are they to be so wide as to include inanimate nature too, or so narrow as to include only sentient creatures? Third, to what categories of the natural world (e.g. individuals, species, ecosystems) do you award intrinsic value status? And fourth, do all holders of intrinsic value hold equal amounts of it? Now that these problems have become so clearly delineated, and given that most theorists who work with the notion of intrinsic value are obliged to deal with them at some time or another, their work can be judged by how adequately they cope.

Lawrence Johnson and Freya Mathews are united by their concerns, but separated by their styles and the extent of their success. Johnson's is a discursive, lucid and committed text in which he self-consciously sets out not to provide a set of moral rules or a complete list of principles, but to 'advocate an attitude'. The vagueness that ensues is both engaging and frustrating. Johnson argues that it is not sentience or rationality that makes a thing morally considerable, but its having an *interest*. He denies, heretically but probably correctly, 'that there is such a thing as peculiarly *environmental* ethics'. 'As I see it,' he goes on, 'there is just *ethics*, based on respect for interests.'

As far as the third question is concerned, Johnson suggests that 'animals, plants, ecosystems, and even species have interests', and much of the book is taken up with discussing this position. But he stops short of allowing inanimate nature to have interests – although he does believe that we diminish ourselves if we raze Ayer's Rock (for example) to the ground. This seems to me like a version of the 'Seven Wonders Fallacy': of course we'd think twice before destroying one of nature's spectaculars, but what about the ugly bits?

As for the fourth question, Johnson will not go the whole hog on 'biospherical egalitarianism' as he argues that some bits of the natural world are more morally considerable than others – or that while 'all interests count ... not all interests are equivalent'. On this reading, the chimp has 'more of a life to live' than an amoeba. Indeed it's curious how, for all their sophisticated thinking on these issues, environmental philosophers usually end up where most of the rest of us are – with human beings both deserving most moral consideration and heading a fairly standard hierarchy of value.

In this regard, Johnson is disingenuous when he writes that, 'A living being's intrinsic good is a good life – good as measured according to the inherent wellbeing requirements of *that* life.'

This is fine-sounding, but it's proved unworkable by his determination to make human beings more morally considerable than mice. More clearly than in most books of this sort, human beings are the ultimate arbiters of interest (despite Johnson's claim to be participating in a revolution of Galilean proportions), and his conclusion, while admirable in intent and notable for subscribing to a widening of the moral community, does not push environmental ethics into uncharted territory: 'The thing for us to do is to find our way in the world, while giving due respect to the widely disparate interests of other beings.' Johnson's book will appeal to newcomers for its clear-sighted summaries, but it falls short of being an original contribution to the debate.

Freya Mathews, though, has attempted something more ambitious, and has written a book that is closer to the cutting edge of environmental ethics. While subscribing to the basic conclusions of Deep Ecology regarding intrinsic value, Mathews is unhappy with its unduly axiomatic nature, and she tries to give a metaphysical basis to these intuitions. Those who are unpersuaded by the suggestion that values can emerge from facts will lose her very early on, because Mathews believes that how we see things implies how we should behave. This may be unfashionable but it has its analogues in other aspects of Green theory (I'm reminded of Keekok Lee's *Social Philosophy and Ecological Scarcity*), and is entirely in line with the general Green point that the description of a finite planet has prescriptive implications for behaviour. In this case, Mathews' rejection of Newtonian atomism and the subsequent sophisticated deployment of Einsteinian cosmology together with Spinoza's metaphysics makes for a compelling description of 'the way things are'. The originality of this book lies not so much in the ethical conclusions reached, but in providing a metaphysical description which underpins (indeed, necessitates) them.

Mathews' monism leads to an unusual conception of the self: a 'special kind of individual, whose autonomy and integrity are a function of its interconnectedness with its environment'. Further, a 'self' is defined as a 'self-maintaining system' capable of 'self-realization'. Mathews identifies three levels of value on this basis: there is value in the cosmos as a whole because it's a self (she considers this an improvement on Arne Naess's seminal characterisation of the universe as an extension of our own selves because she gives the universe its own selfhood while Naess doesn't); value is attached to selves (like us), as selves rather than particulars in the cosmos; and each self has utility for other selves in the cosmos – elements which help or hinder a self's self-preservation.

While the complex nature of the possible resulting value-permutations is recognised, only one chapter out of four is devoted to the normative implications of the metaphysical description, and so the questions that dog Deep Ecological ethics are posed rather than discussed. Once again, a hierarchy of value-holders at the second level emerges – based this time on the 'degree of power of self-maintenance', which turns out to be a function of that environmental-ethical favourite, the *complexity* of the self in question. Human beings will do pretty well according to this sort of criterion, and in this sense neither Mathews nor Johnson conform to the hysterical characterisations of Deep Ecologists as fascists who'd rather see human beings die than the AIDS virus eradicated.

The twist to this tale of interconnectedness, though, is that the hierarchy might 'have to be modified in the light of ecological considerations'. This means that, while the Blue Whale might have a greater power of self-maintenance than the krill on which it feeds, the reciprocal dependence of the two implies that the identities of these (and other) selves are interconnected. According to Mathews the result is that there is a 'flow of intrinsic value, from one self to others'. Once again, the rules of engagement are vague: a self may not 'thwart the interests of other selves if it is not necessary to one's flourishing to do so' – there are enough indeterminates here to warrant a forestful of paper for clarification. But if the prescriptions are imprecise, both Johnson and Mathews are clear that the grounds on which we make them have shifted, and that the burden of proof is settling on those who would interfere with the non-human natural world rather than on those who would protect it.

Andrew Dobson

BLOODY WOMAN

Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, London, Routledge, 1991. x + 241 pp., £35.00 hb, £9.99 pb., 0 415 05968 2 hb., 0 415 05969 0 pb.

I am delighted to be reviewing this book. Whether one reads Irigaray in terms of a poetic, gloriously grubby and messy female sexuality always in a state of subversive disorder in relation to the patriarchal world, or hears in her work the voice of a more serious theorist of women's identity and utopian politics, her writing overflows with inspiring observations and beautifully crafted argument. Margaret Whitford's Irigaray is the calmer and more politically committed of the two – or the many – but this is a book which reveals the breadth and quality of all Irigaray's ideas with remarkable clarity and impeccable reference to other commentators, fans, and critics of Irigaray's work. Whitford manages to place Irigaray in the context of Anglo-American feminism without reducing the challenge her work makes to the dead ends in which so many of its attempts to confront the problem of sexual difference have found themselves, and while there are moments in this book at which the tendency to render Irigaray comprehensible does begin to flatten the liberating extremes of some of her work, the overall impression is one of a very fair, ambitious, and successful attempt simply to tell us about Irigaray's ideas.

It is of course the thorny question of essentialism with which Irigaray is most often associated. Her idea of essence is, like the woman's answer to the question 'What are you thinking?', both everything and nothing and also neither: some 'thing' which

cannot be described in terms of things at all; the other of the patriarchal order, the disruptive force which resists conceptualisation. But it is the argument that the lack of a home in the symbolic order is precisely women's problem, and not at all a state to which we should aspire, which enables Whitford to suggest that Irigaray is 'obliged to use the language of onto-theology, the language of essentialism', in order to even discuss the point at which women are both excluded and hostile to the possibility of inclusion in the symbolic order which excludes them. Essentialist readings of Irigaray, she argues, completely miss the point of her strategic insistence that women must be something before they can undo themselves; that 'if multiplicity is to be celebrated, it has to be *after* sexual difference and not, as at present, by simply bypassing it.' But although Whitford's tendency is to read all Irigaray's work through her more recent, less confusing texts in which the controversy about essentialism recedes, the best thing about this compelling, informative, and accessible book is that it reveals Irigaray's ability to sustain the dialogue and play with the terrible dilemmas of silence or complicity in which women find themselves.

One of the best things about Irigaray's work is that it offers us so much to argue about. Sometimes Irigaray implies that the imaginary is dangerous and subversive because it is composed of the left-overs, the excluded, the trash can of the male symbolic; sometimes she seems to be positing a more 'authentic' imaginary which is threatening by virtue of its intrinsic hostility to order and conceptualisation. There are points at which she suggests that women need to enter the symbolic realm in the attempt to construct the senses of identity and subjectivity which have been denied us, and others at which she insists that we need to subvert the identities and subjects which populate the patriarchal symbolic order. The 'two lips' of *This Sex* can be read as an invocation of anatomical superiority, or merely an indication of the extent to which women and men read and write the world through very different bodies. And it is these explosions of ambiguity which give Irigaray's work its strength and potential for an extremely challenging and disruptive engagement with feminist currents hitherto wary of French feminism or unfamiliar with Irigaray's writings. Only a continual engagement with the problems of whether, how, and with what purpose to engage in the symbolic order will allow women to get a sense of how they want to read, write, and become themselves. Irigaray keeps asking questions and, like every wayward woman, refuses to be pinned down; of *Speculum*, she says that it is 'a collection of questions. It does not "really" answer them. It pursues their questioning. It continues to interrogate.' It is this Irigaray which I hope those encountering Whitford's book will come to love.

Sadie Plant

UNTIMELY REFLECTIONS

Friedrich Nietzsche, *My Sister and I*, Los Angeles, Amok Books, 1990. lxxiv + 255 pp., $9.95 pb., 1 878923 01 3.

Lester H. Hunt, *Nietzsche and the Origin of Virtue*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990. xxiii + 200 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 415 04053 1.

Alan D. Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation. Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990. xvii + 249 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.95 pb., 0 415 90311 4 hb., 0 415 90312 2 pb.

Alan White, *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990. xiii + 188 pp., £30.00 hb., £8.99 pb., 0 415 90327 0 hb., 0 415 90328 9 pb.

The proliferation of books on Nietzsche shows no signs of abating. A substantial body of work now exists which is able to show why Nietzsche is philosophically challenging and important and why he is also dangerous and disturbing (and not only philosophically). The books under review are a mixture of the good, the bad, and the downright ugly, and they provide a fair indication of the current state of play in Nietzsche studies. The republication of *My Sister and I*, which purports to be Nietzsche's final but suppressed work, composed in the Jena mental hospital in the year after his collapse in the streets of Turin, is clear proof that a great deal of the current interest in Nietzsche is both morbid and reactionary. The history of this bizarre book is as follows: During the year of his descent into madness (1889-90) Nietzsche writes his final revaluation, which the publishers sanguinely describe as 'a confessional and reflective counterpoint to the megalomania and stridency of *Ecce Homo*'. In order to prevent the manuscript from being discovered and suppressed by his sister, Elisabeth (who delayed the publication of *Ecce Homo* and suppressed several significant alterations Nietzsche made to the final manuscript), Nietzsche entrusts it to a departing fellow-inmate. It is at this point in the story that we move from the sublime to the ridiculous. Unaware of the significance of the scribbled notes of the 'mad Professor' the patient to whom Nietzsche had entrusted the manuscript fails to do anything with it and leaves it to his son; the son emigrates to Canada and sells the manuscript to an ex-clergyman who passes it on to an American journalist as a reward for helping him to dodge the immigration laws; the journalist, unlike the poor dim-witted fellow-inmate and his son, recognises the significance of the manuscript and draws it to the attention of the renowned Nietzsche scholar and chief apostle of Nietzsche in England, Dr Oscar Levy. Levy allegedly authenticates the document and translates it. This is in 1927. Out of fear of the wrathful hand of Elisabeth descending upon him in the form of a law-suit, Levy does not dare to publish the work while she is still alive. She dies in 1935, Levy in 1947. The work is eventually published in 1951.

The current publishers, Amok, are convinced of the book's authenticity, but then well they might be, for masquerading as Nietzsche's final work in which he reveals all, including sordid details of incestuous relationships, it stands to make them a good sum of money whether it is authentic or not. As a prologue they print a series of responses to the book when it was first published, including a damning review by Walter Kaufmann, and a current defence of the authenticity of the book by Walter Steward, 'Professor of German and Philosophy at California Lutheran University. There are numerous problems with this text. For a start, no copy of the original manuscript has ever been forthcoming; just as bad is the fact that in 1952 Levy's daughter declared the alleged involvement of her father in translating the book to be bogus. The condemnations of the book by Kaufmann and Levy's daughter were enough to guarantee that the book disappeared from sight for the best part of forty years. In his defence of the

book, Professor Stewart engages in some dubious psychoanalytical accusatory reading of the motives behind Kaufmann's hostility towards the book and, in effect, accuses him of prudishness. The book was hailed by the original publisher in 1951 and again by the current one, for its 'startling revelations' about Nietzsche's alleged incestuous relationship with his sister. But any revelations that this book contains are on the level of pulp fiction. In fact, when 'Nietzsche' talks about his romps with his sister it is done in such a coy way as to be risible. An example will suffice. It is from what purports to be 'section 41' of 'chapter four':

> I have been trying to imagine what my sister is capable of telling the world about me. Would she tell how early in childhood she made a practice of crawling into my bed Saturday mornings to play with my genitalia and, after a while, got into the habit of treating them as if they were special toys of hers.

Titillating perhaps, but hardly scintillating.

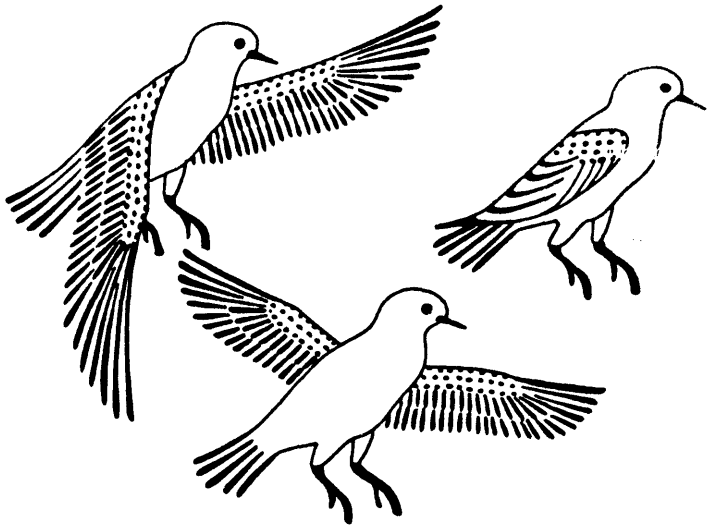
Professor Stewart makes a plausible defence of Nietzsche's state of mind in that fateful year, arguing that a person in the throes of the agony of madness could possess the mental capacity to write a book; secondly, he defends the case for believing that there was an incestuous relationship between Freddie and Lizzie, which again is plausibly done; and thirdly and finally, he gives one good reason, and it is the only one, why a book such as this, which discloses certain bizarre revelations about his sister and his mother, should be taken seriously and as authentic, namely, that Elisabeth wilfully suppressed fragments of revisions Nietzsche had carried out to the manuscript of *Ecce Homo*. Indeed, it was not until 1969 that Mazzino Montinari, the Italian Nietzsche-scholar who edited with Giorgio Colli what is now the definitive edition of Nietzsche's complete works, discovered two fragments in the Peter Gast Archives which Nietzsche wrote at the end of 1888 but which were suppressed by Elisabeth before reaching the publisher. The fragments reveal the extent of Nietzsche's hostility towards his sister and mother. In spite of this, the whole book has a ring of anachronicity to it. There are too many passages which give the impression of being written by someone who wished to redeem Nietzsche's ideas from the dreadful fate they met in the hands of the Nazis:

> How clever of the Nietzscheans to turn Nietzsche against himself! When I praised war I did not mean the butchery of populations towards which modern wars are tending.
>
> ... the guards are strict and won't let me spit at the gibbering idiot who thumbs his nose at me all day and quotes: *Thus Spake Zarathustra. Professor Treitzschke.* He has confused me with the rabid Prussian militarist, and the idiots of the next century will make the same mistake, making me do a goose-step with imperialists like Bismarck whom I detest as the assassin of culture.

What really gives this book away as a forgery are the references to the 'Nietzscheans', which is completely anachronistic. Nietzsche was almost completely unknown until several years after his decline into insanity, and was probably read by no more than about two hundred people during his lifetime. We are offered crudities such as the following: 'The power-lust of the Marxists matches the power-lust of the Nietzscheans, but I prefer to ride to Jerusalem on an Arabian charger rather than a proletarian democracy.' Nietzsche was certainly acquainted with Marx in some shape or form, but his knowledge of his writings was very scanty, derived in the most part from his reading of the American political economist, Henry Carey. There are too many passages in the text where things are said that Nietzsche would never have felt compelled to say, as in the following example, where for some strange reason 'Nietzsche' finds it necessary to disassociate his idea of the *Ubermensch* from the savage blond beasts of Nietzsche legend. The whole passage is phoney and the use of Rousseau quite bizarre. 'These Rousseauan savages, these *blond beasts* of mine, were at the polar extreme to my Superman and therefore met in a collective negation, a bold refusal to participate in the idiocies of Philistine culture'. This passage, and many others like it, represents a domestication of Nietzsche's thought that is disturbing in its timidity and naiveté.

My guess is that the book was written in 1951 – after the publication of Kaufmann's book, which inspired tremendous interest in Nietzsche in America (Kaufmann himself suspected this). In his defence of the book Professor Stewart says that if the book is genuine 'it could have a significant effect not merely on Nietzsche scholarship but also on history's estimation of his contribution to Western thought'. But even if the book were genuine, it would make no contribution at all to our understanding of Nietzsche or his 'contribution to Western thought'.

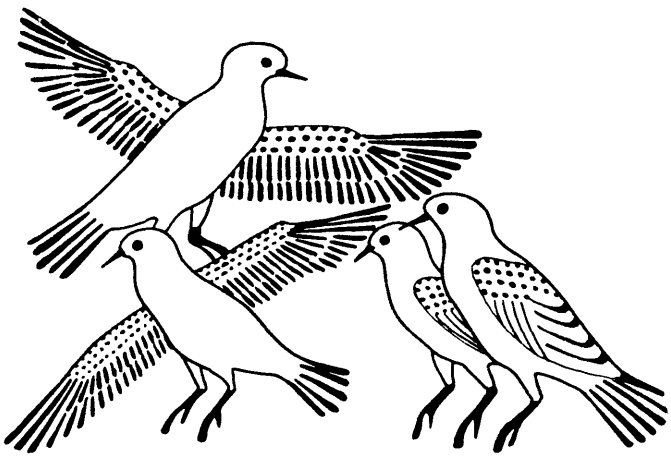
The remaining three books under review, I am happy to say, can be taken more seriously. Lester Hunt's book is the first in a new series of *Nietzsche Studies* published by Routledge and edited by Richard Schacht. Schacht is an American philosopher whose long book on Nietzsche has done much to make Nietzsche respectable for an analytical philosophical community. In his Introduction to the series Schacht argues that our reckoning with Nietzsche and his legacy has only just begin, and that what is needed is a series of volumes that will provide philosophers who are not Nietzsche scholars with introductions to various aspects of his thought and show the contemporary relevance of his ideas. But the engagement with Nietzsche has been going on for decades. What Schacht seems to mean is that established academic philosophers are at last giving Nietzsche's writings serious consideration. This may be so, but a number of the most challenging readings of Nietzsche have been developed *outside* the academy. I do not think that the neglect of his work by academic philosophers would have troubled Nietzsche too much – his disdain for their activities is well known ('The problem with university philosophy is that it never harms anybody,' as he wrote in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. While the fact that a major academic publisher has had the courage to launch a 'Nietzsche Studies' series is to be welcomed and applauded, it would be lamentable if it confined itself to publishing diluted and bowdlerised introductions to aspects of Nietzsche's thought, failing to support work which would take risks and experiment with styles and substances. The last thing we need is a series of emasculated Nietzsches.



Lester Hunt claims two novelties for his book: first, that it focusses on Nietzsche's ethical and political reflections, an area that many current writers, largely working under the influence of the French reading of Nietzsche, neglect; and secondly, it devotes a fairly significant amount of attention to some of his lesser-known early works which many readers neglect or cast aside as immature. In fact, the book does contain an interesting discussion of the early essay, 'Homer's Contest', but at the same time it curiously neglects the no less important early essay on 'The Greek State'. The reason for this neglect may become apparent shortly. Hunt's basic approach is to argue that Nietzsche's arguments on ethical and political matters are not wrong or proto-Nazi, but rather that they lack premises which would make them work. He is thus going to make Nietzsche a much more coherent and consistent political thinker than anyone has previously realised. If only Nietzsche had not embellished his arguments with *style*, with rhetorical excess, and with outrageous provocations (against slaves, plebs, women, and admirers of George Eliot), then he would be recognised for the good liberal that he is. Hunt's interpretation amounts to the claim that a combination of Nietzsche's theory of virtue and character, in which the task of each individual is to unite the various aspects of their discordant self into a pleasing aesthetic whole so that one is able 'to give style to one's character', with rational, consistent premises produces a challenge to contemporary political thought in the form of a 'liberalism with teeth[. It is a liberalism which is able to have the best of all worlds, where virtue and equality exist side by side. While this may well be a plausible and interesting conception of a just society, it is a long way from anything Nietzsche dreamed of. What Hunt forgets in his idea of a 'liberalism with teeth' is that there are teeth and teeth: while his seem to be of the blunted false type in need of a cutting edge, Nietzsche's, it seems to me, are vampiric fangs as sharp and as deadly as a razor.

Hunt's neglect of the 1872 essay on 'The Greek State' is a significant omission because it means that he is utterly unable to grasp why Nietzsche is so *un-liberal* in his political thinking. Nietzsche's political theory is fairly straightforward: the State is not an end-in-itself, but a means for the production of culture and great human beings. Nietzsche laments the rise of modern liberalism because it introduces into political life individualistic ethos which undermines the ethical basis of the true State. Nietzsche criticises liberalism for reducing the relationship between the individual and the State to a purely prudential level, so that the basis of our obligation to political authority arises purely out of rational self-interest. What is absent in the modern liberal polity is the 'ethical impulse' which would reveal to individuals their higher destiny and higher responsibility (it is at moments like this that Nietzsche becomes incredibly Rousseauian, which is not that surprising given their respective admiration for Spartan discipline). Against socialism, it is interesting to note, Nietzsche argues in this essay that 'the cry of compassion' must *never* be allowed to tear down 'the walls of culture'. There is a real pathos in this essay, and a discussion of it would have added a lot to Hunt's task of exploring the relationship between Nietzsche and liberalism. Perhaps Nietzsche's most telling remark on the whole problem of politics in the modern period is to be found in section 356 of *The Gay Science*.

> To say it briefly... What will not be built any more henceforth, and *cannot* be built any more, is – a society in the old sense of that word, for to build that, everything is lacking, above all the material. *All of us are no longer material for society*; this is a truth for which the time has come. It is a matter of indifference to me that at the present time the most myopic, perhaps most honest, but at any rate noisiest human type that we have today, our good socialists, believe, hope, dream, and above all shout and write almost the opposite. Even now one reads their slogan for the future 'free society' on all tables and walls. Free society? Yes, yes! But surely you know, gentlemen, what is required for building that? Wooden iron! The well-known wooden iron! And it must not even be wooden. [In German 'wooden iron' – *hîlzernen Eisen* – is a proverbial *contradictio in adiecto*.]



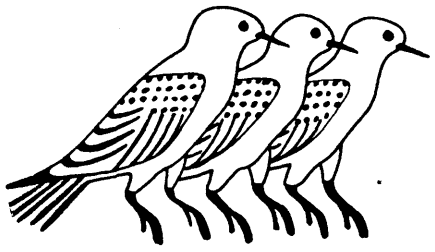
Alan Schrift's book is an instructive attempt to situate Nietzsche's thought in the context of the 'question of interpretation'. He wishes to use Nietzsche's ideas to illuminate the hermeneutic predicament which he characterises as the problem of avoiding interpretive dogmatism without giving up hope of choosing between different interpretations. After an introduction to the problem, Schrift in parts one and two goes on a detour through Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche and Derrida's reading of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, before returning in the third and final part to Nietzsche himself. The chapters on Heidegger and Derrida are as illuminating about those writers as they are about Nietzsche. They serve Schrift's purposes well, for he uses Heidegger's reading as an example of interpretive dogmatism (subsuming Nietzsche within a grand history of Being) and Derrida's reading as an example of interpretive relativism (deconstruction encourages a proliferation of styles but is unable to adjudicate between them).

Yet for all the book's instruction (it is lucidly written), I found myself wanting to ask Schrift for whom and why does he write? He argues that Nietzsche's conception of genealogy provides a way out of the impasse of dogmatism and relativism in that it offers a mode and a criterion of judgement that does not require epistemological foundations. Thus, genealogically-inspired hermeneutics does not ask whether something is 'true' or 'false' but whether it is 'life-enhancing' or 'life-denying'. But is this to avoid or bypass the problem of relativism? What Schrift considers 'life-enhancing might be completely different from what I consider life-enhancing: interpretive pluralism quickly degenerates into the anarchy of an interpretive war of all against all. The problem with Schrift's book is that such questions are posed in an annoyingly sober and purely academic manner, when for Nietzsche the exercise of genealogy was no arcane, academic venture but rather something which was to be placed in the services of cultural regeneration, of great politics, of a sacriligious attack on all forms of piety, whether of the Church or the State, and of a vivisectional analysis and critique of morality. Schrift completely depoliticizes genealogy, rendering it a harmless exercise in stating and legitimising preferences. He spends the whole book arguing that we need to cultivate a mode of interpretive practice that is able to

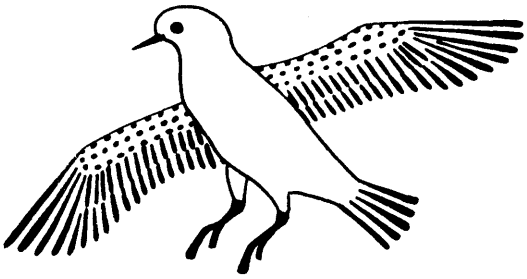
achieve a careful balance between objectivity and relativism, when we all know that Nietzsche had no problem – hermeneutic or otherwise – in arguing in favour of aristocracy, masculinity, strength, and *against* democracy, feminism, and weakness. On what basis does Nietzsche express his preferences other than those of interpretive dogmatism? The texts of many thinkers are buried under the weight of his interpretive practice, which certainly shows no respect for textual fidelity (Rousseau and Kant to name but two).

Nietzsche's aims and goals as a philosopher are pretty clear – to promote cultural renewal, a rebirth of tragic culture, and a great (aristocratic) politics. What are Schrift's aims and goals? Why does he interpret? For whom does he interpret? Schrift gives his 'answer' near the end of the book when he says that 'my interpretation attempts to instantiate the values affirmed within interpretive pluralism in seeking to *open* the *Nietzschean* text to a *new* reading, thereby revealing within this text new insights which can give rise to further interpretation'. But this begs the question. Why liberalism? Why the spirit of tolerance and generosity? Nietzsche might well have tolerated a democratic reading of history, but he would have been prepared to *die* for aristocracy. Nietzsche was prepared to fight for interpretive pluralism so long as, at the end of the battle, *his* interpretation reigned supreme. The philosopher-legislator, let us remember, is also a philosopher-tyrant. I fail to see how anyone can interpret Nietzsche's notorious statement in *Beyond Good and Evil* that a healthy aristocracy must accept the 'sacrifice of *untold* human beings' (my emphasis) in liberal terms of an interpretive pluralism. Schrift obviously likes his Nietzsche diluted, shaken perhaps but certainly *not* stirred.

Alan White's journey into Nietzsche's labyrinth resembles that of someone who has reached a mid-life crisis and who has found in Nietzsche's writings much existential sustenance. It is clear who White has written this book for – himself and, he reveals at the end on a poignant and touching note, his children. It is a very personal book and refreshing in many ways in that it has none of the dullness of many academic books – the book draws its inspiration as much from 'literature' (Calvino and Kundera are frequently cited) as from 'philosophy'. Indeed, White reads Nietzsche as 'at once poet and philosopher'. His book is the sort that one might recommend to a teenager – it shows Nietzsche's rebellion against conformity and convention and his search for individuality and authenticity in its best light.



The book is divided into three sections: the first, entitled 'Fish Hooks', repeats the familiar themes of Nietzsche's thought that are in danger of becoming over-interpreted (themes such as 'Nihilism', 'Tragedy', and 'Genealogies'); the second, on the 'Eternal Return', is the best, as it is in his reading of *Zarathustra* that White is at his most inspired and inspiring; the final section on the 'Labyrinth' raises the question whether 'life without kitsch' is possible given that the world is full of 'shit' (full of scary monsters and super creeps). It is an honest book, but not without difficulties. White declares at the beginning that he will concentrate his attention on the positive aspects of Nietzsche's thought (its promotion of authenticity), and will not be deterred by its more troubling aspects. In his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, written at the end of his sand life, Nietzsche divided his writings into two periods: those up to and including *Zarathustra* constituted the 'Yea-saying' part, while the works after *Beyond Good and Evil* represented the 'Nay-saying' part. Most would agree that it is in the latter that Nietzsche becomes frighteningly *excessive* and his politics close to fascism. White chooses to ignore them on the grounds that they are not the authentic aspects of Nietzsche's thinking which, it is argued, are found in the 'Yea-saying' of *Zarathustra*. But this distinction between 'yea-saying' and 'nay-saying' tasks is arbitrary. There is plenty of nay-saying to be found in the works of Nietzsche's middle-period (*Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, *The Gay Science*, etc.) and plenty of yea-saying in his later works. The distinction is in fact a clever piece of rationalisation Nietzsche made at the end of his intellectual career in order to give a convenient unity and coherence to his



life's work. That White's argument is a weak one is evident in the fact that his own book draws quite heavily on the *Genealogy of Morals* (1887), and therefore, clearly a 'nay-saying' work) in the first section.

So what is the basis of his avoidance of a direct confrontation with the question of Nietzsche's politics? White argues that *his* Nietzsche may not be as 'exciting' as the notorious Nietzsche who speaks of 'blond beasts' and the need for a 'master race', and admits that his 'Nietzsche' has 'little to say that is of political importance'. Within the 'positive Nietzsche' White finds respect for human creative life and an encouragement of plurality and diversity of lifestyles. But there is little that can illuminate 'our political action'. The danger White faces, as he himself acknowledges, is that he paints a portrait of Nietzsche that comes close to advocating a 'bland combination of individualism and tolerance'. All this would be fine if White had had the guts to deal directly with the issue of Nietzsche and politics, but as it is he leaves it all unsaid and in the process leaves us in the dark. It is my belief that Nietzsche recognised that *all* politics is by definition 'Machiavellian' (that justice grows out of injustice, morality from immorality, etc., and that one must get one's hands soiled in the labour of achieving one's noble end). White certainly succeeds in showing us an 'inspiring' Nietzsche, but he fails to answer the doubts and allay the anxieties one might have about his work.

It would be an interesting exercise in cultural history and *Ideologiekritik* to analyse why Nietzsche is currently receiving such lavish attention in academia and why he has such a bewildering and complex fascination for us, but such an analysis clearly lies beyond the scope of this review. These books give a good indication of the current diversity of interest in Nietzsche and the perspectives that are being brought to bear on his work. Whatever one's 'position' on all of this interest in Nietzsche might be, he will continue to fascinate, inspire, perplex, and haunt. As befits a radical philosopher, Nietzsche remains a troublesome bugger.

Keith Ansell-Pearson

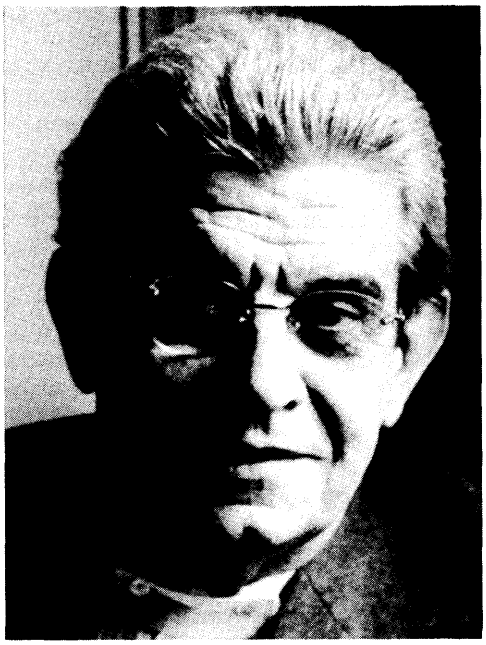
WILD ANALYSTS

Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co. A History of Psychoanalysis in France 1925-1985*, translated, with a foreword, by Jeffrey Mehlman, London, Free Association Books, 1990. 766 pp., £25.00 pb., 1 85343 X.

Roudinesco's history of psychoanalysis in France was originally published to considerable acclaim in two volumes (1982 and 1986) under the general title 'The Hundred Years' Battle'. It is unfortunate – if understandable on commercial and financial grounds alone – that only the second volume has been translated. As it is, the hundred years' battle becomes sixty years of guerrilla warfare and a history of psychoanalysis becomes the history of Lacan, which may not be quite the same thing. The non-appearance in English of Volume 1 is particularly unfortunate since it is there that Roudinesco traces the origins of Lacan's 'foreclosure' (the blocking out of key signifiers, and supposedly the key to understanding psychoanalysis) back to the almost forgotten work of Edouard Pichon, psychoanalyst, linguist and monarchist. The translation itself is fluent; the English title is at best irritating, at worst glib.

This history is at once intellectual, political and institutional. At times conversationally anecdotal in the best sense of the term, it is also intellectually and conceptually rigorous. It is, moreover, eminently readable. Moving from the surrealists' early interest in Freud to the aftermath of Lacan's dissolution of his own school in 1980, it traces the repeated schisms – most of them focussed on Lacan – that punctuated its development with wonderful clarity and provides the best available field guide to the subject. As an account of the intestinal warfare that sometimes seems to be the very stuff of psychoanalytic life (and Parisian intellectual life in general), it is unlikely to be bettered, whilst interviews with some of Lacan's former analysands provides a rare, and not always flattering, insight into his clinical practice.

Encyclopaedic in its ambitions, the text has some of the failings of most encyclopaedias in that its very scope leads to a certain tendency to digress. The biographical sketches of the entire cast of characters, which includes virtually every French psychoanalyst of any note, are in themselves fascinating and valuable, but can lead to a certain loss of narrative focus.



Inevitably, there are some omissions. There is no discussion of Devereux's ethnopsychoanalysis, nor of the Jungian and Adlerian tendencies, which Roudinesco regards as being outside her remit on the grounds that they have always been marginal in France. More surprisingly, Sartre's existential psychoanalysis is not really discussed and nor is Franz Fanon's openly political attempt to use Lacan's concept of the mirror stage in his analysis of colonial racism. Given the magnitude of Roudinesco's chosen task, it might seem churlish to dwell on these minor gaps, yet the reluctance to address attempts at cross-cultural therapeutic practices is worrying in that it does strengthen a lingering suspicion that psychoanalysis is/might be a purely White European affair.

The author was a member of Lacan's Ecole Freudienne de Paris for over ten years, and her mother was a protagonist in some of the central events described here. She has had privileged access to a wealth of private archives and other unpublished material, and was granted interviews by many of those involved in this tumultuous history. This is very much history from the inside and, for the author herself, family history. Despite her own involvement, Roudinesco achieves and retains a remarkable degree of objectivity, but her impatience with the way Lacan's seminar has been edited by Jacques-Alain Miller is only thinly disguised. Rarely less than fascinating as a narrative, Roudinesco's *History* is also an indispensable work of reference for anyone working on psychoanalysis or on French intellectual history.

David Macey

'WAIVING RULES'

Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices; Power Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989. viii + 201 pp., £25.00 hb., £9.95 pb., 0 7456 0390 4 hb., 0 7456 0891 2 pb.

The view that the 'grand narratives of socialism and Marxism' have now given way, with unambiguously beneficial consequences, to the plurality of voices from the new social movements, is interrogated by Nancy Fraser in *Unruly Practices*. Fraser describes her own political stance as 'democratic-socialist-feminist-pragmatism', thereby indicating her sympathy for the anti-foundationalism of much contemporary philosophy while simultaneously stressing her continued commitment to the normative frameworks of socialism and feminism.

The set of eight essays collected together in *Unruly Practices* represents the interventions made by Fraser, during the course of the last decade, into the politics of theory. Despite the 'conjunctural' nature of these interventions, they are united at the level of objective; drawing on Marxist terminology Fraser describes her own theoretical practice as contributing to the 'self-clarification of the struggles of the age'.

The most sustained engagement in the book is with Foucault's work. Using the presence of a normative framework, either explicit or implicit, as the net through which to sift the theories she discusses, Fraser examines Foucault's claim to have superseded the humanist project in his anti-essentialising genealogical approach to the functionings of power. In Fraser's view, Foucault implicitly draws on the rhetoric of humanism even as he rejects the humanist project on philosophical grounds. This, Fraser claims, is particularly evident in Foucault's characterisation of modern society as 'the disciplinary society' or the 'carceral archipelago', and in his use of terms such as 'domination', 'subjugation' and 'subjection'. This language is far from being

neutral and merely technical. It is clearly 'engaged', but the normative framework which underpins this engagement is itself not clearly set out, and Fraser concludes that Foucault's work is 'normatively confused'. This confusion can be traced to Foucault's notion of power which Fraser argues is dependent on three somewhat 'innocuous' statements. These are that social practices are necessarily norm-governed, these norms are both enabling and constraining, and such norms enable only insofar as they constrain. Such claims are familiar in twentieth-century philosophy, and are implied, Fraser suggests, in Habermas's theory of universal pragmatics.

The humanist ideal of autonomous subjectivity posited by Habermas's conception of a free and democratic speech community must be distinguished, conceptually and normatively, from the fully panopticised society wherein self-regulation is merely the latest and most insidious form of a disciplinary regime. Confronting the Orwellian prospect of a society in which subjects regiment themselves according to the best 'Habermassian' principles of 'free' and 'unfettered' communicative interaction, Fraser's response is to suggest that a familiar devil is perhaps a better option, politically speaking, than the unfamiliar kind that haunts Foucault's work. Panopticism, Fraser implies, has become a ghostly enemy against which the material and moral advantages of a fully democratised, communicatively dialogic society appear comfortingly solid. In pragmatist mode, Fraser believes that the strategic political benefits of the humanist project far outweigh any philosophical disadvantages it may possess.

Foucault's critique of disciplined bodies depends, however implicitly, on an evaluative framework which opposes to rationalist humanism the counter framework of a politics of the body. However, as Fraser reminds us, feminist philosophers have been engaged in an intense and sustained debate on issues such as 'autonomy', which would seem to connect directly and fruitfully with ideas which are little more than gestures in Foucault's writings. Because of his failure to address these debates, Fraser argues that Foucault's rejection of humanism lacks adequate political embodiment. As Fraser notes, any final assessment of humanism must wait until all quarters, including feminism, have been heard from.

In Part Two of *Unruly Practices*, Fraser turns her attention to the French Derrideans and their search for a politics that retains a deconstructive innocence, and to Rorty's philosophical pragmatism. In her essay on the French Derrideans, Fraser considers the work done under the auspices of the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political, an organisation originally based at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, and dedicated to examining the conditions of possibility of 'the political' as a discourse. Rejecting the claims made by such as Gayatri Spivak, that the political project of deconstruction should be the destabilisation of the West, to be achieved by forcing the Western world to confront its 'other' (women, the 'East', and 'victims of capitalism'), the Centre opted for the continuance of the practice of deconstructing politics rather than working towards the clarification of the politics of deconstruction. In a prescient assessment of the subsequent rightward turn of the Centre towards economic neoliberalism, Fraser argues that the quasi-Heidegerrian stance of 'retrait du politique' of the Centre's founder members, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, was politically untenable. Other members of the Centre, mapping 'the political' on to Marxist conceptions of the social, and seeing an asocial neoliberalism as the only possible answer to the domination of 'the political', effectively broke the 'transcendental pact' demanded by the Centre's founders. Rather than associating themselves with an overt and this-worldly anti-Marxism, Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe suspended the activities of the Centre, this time retreating, if with honour, from politics and not just 'the political'.

Fraser's sympathy for anti-foundationalist philosophy leads her to engage with deconstructionist attempts to define 'the political' from a position which might be described as 'critical solidarity'. Things are quite otherwise when she turns to the anti-foundationalism represented by Rorty's brand of philosophical pragmatism. Fraser maintains that a fundamentally disabling distinction between the private world of the romantic or ironist and the public world of the liberally minded solidarist is present in all the various versions of the relationship between romanticism and pragmatism that Rorty offers. The masculinised voice of the lone romantic is set, either in tension or in harmony, alongside the pragmatic social engineer, thereby excluding the possibility of collective and oppositional solidarities. Fraser insists that pragmatism can be rescued from the liberal trappings that Rorty gives it, and that anti-foundationalism need not be equated with anti-collectivism. And Fraser's 'recipe' for this counter practice is a rich one indeed, one that all socialist feminists would find appetising. The view that competing solidarities can coexist with a non-authoritarian socialist-feminist framework, and that critical theory can, and indeed should, be fallibilistic and non-foundationalist without sacrificing its radical democratic commitments, is one which many on the left will find hard to resist. Fraser amply demonstrates her commitment to the normative framework of democratic socialist feminism; what is much less clear is how pragmatism can be included within this framework. Fraser provides a politically convincing rebuttal of liberal pragmatism from the position of a radical pragmatism which seems to lack philosophical foundation.

In the final part of *Unruly Practices*, Fraser brings the normative framework of feminism to bear on Habermas's theorisation of modern capitalist societies and welfare state capitalism; and in the final essays of the book provides a convincing critique of the gendered nature of welfare provision. Habermas's failure to theorise the gendered subtext of the conceptual distinction he makes between symbolic and material production and public and private lifeworlds reproduces the devaluation of the work of childcare and reinforces the ghettoisation of women within the 'private' world of the family. Habermas's characterisation of welfare capitalism as a form of 'colonisation' in which system requirements increasingly prevail over lifeworld values ignores the fact, Fraser claims, that for women the 'public patriarchy' of welfare capitalism, while far from satisfactory, may be preferable to the private patriarchy that preceded it.

In her own theorisation of welfare systems, and their relation to women, Fraser argues that purely quantitative assessments – should there be more or less welfare provision – deflect attention from the gendered nature of that provision. Women, by far the largest recipients of welfare provision because of their role as unpaid carers, are predominantly consigned to client status, whereas men, as paid employees in receipt of unemployment and pension benefits, are defined as possessing 'welfare rights'. Implicit in this dualistic treatment is a politics of needs interpretation which privileges men over women, individual rights above collective needs, and administrative efficiency above democratic process. Fraser sees talk about needs as a site of struggle between 'expert' and official voices and those, such as women heads of households and people of colour, who articulate oppositional interpretations. It is abundantly clear that Fraser sees in these oppositional discourses the basis for a more democratic and fully socialist definition of needs. And yet Fraser refuses to base this on a philosophical account of epistemic superiority. In this perceptive and challenging book, this is the only argument that seems to lack sufficient justification.

Anne Beezer

THE PHILOSOPHER'S NEW CLOTHES

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, translated by Peter Collier, Oxford, Polity, 1991. 138 pp., £25.00 hb., 0745607020.

Pierre Bourdieu was a top-flight student in Paris in the early 1950s. Like his friends of that time, including Derrida and Foucault, he was enchanted by the prospect of becoming a great intellectual. The idea was to be a real philosopher, a cool hero of the spirit who would face up to awful truths that everyone else would run away from. His birthright would be a sense of superiority not only to the provincial petty bourgeoisie, but also to those servile intellectuals who were not philosophers at all, but mere empirical theory-constructors and bureaucratic fact-gatherers.

Those young men have all moved on since then, of course, and renounced their aspiration to be universal intellectuals. But none, perhaps, has changed so completely as Bourdieu. He has said that if he had known, in the '50s, that he might end up as a sociologist, he would have killed himself at once. But by the sort of irony which he now relishes, he has in fact grown up to be a leading operator in the French sociology trade.

As a sociologist, Bourdieu has developed a ramified theory of the social function of academic institutions, especially in France. Intellectuals like to think that they have freed themselves from ordinary unthinking social conformism so as to pursue truth for its own sake; but really, on Bourdieu's theory, their social function is precisely to manufacture a fiction of social functionlessness, and then conform to it. Some way of imagining one's social position as set apart from everyone else's constitutes, in Bourdieu's terms, the distinctive *illusio* of each academic discipline. This enables intellectuals to suppose that they are pushing back the boundaries of knowledge when they are really just reproducing cultural *fields* within which social distinctions can be defined. A *habitus* is constructed, which operates in pre-established harmony with its field, and which intellectuals identify with in the name of their supposed autonomy. This produces individuals who are miraculously at home with themselves in the most unnatural of cultural worlds. Their linguistic styles and social manners mark out a range of life-styles and hence of locations in the social process, and it is these that constitute the real meaning of the intellectual life.

It is not difficult to discern the lineaments of the keen young philosophy student behind the gentle cynicism of this mature sociologist of education and class. The cliquish prestige of philosophy in France in the '50s is still his central concern, though negatively now, and perhaps as a thing of the past (on the whole, French students today study philosophy only if they are not qualified to do anything else). The main motivation for his sociology of intellectuals is his sense of the ridiculous but impermeable snobbery of the philosophers' 'philosophy of philosophy', as he calls it. They sideline as 'naive' any question which is not already phrased in the language of the philosophical tribe, and display exquisite unease at the failure of outsiders to grasp the ineffable differentness of philosophy.

Back in the 1950s, the obvious (all too obvious) personification of the idea of the superman-philosopher was Sartre, and Bourdieu has recalled how French students of his generation used to try to diminish this energetic if inelegant figure by setting up Heidegger in opposition to him. Sartrean existentialism, they all agreed, was a facile travesty of the works of Martin Heidegger – which, Bourdieu characteristically asserts, 'they had, no doubt, not actually read'.

It was not till 1975, however, that Bourdieu got round to publishing an essay on the social meaning of Heidegger and Heideggerianism. It was not well received by the philosophers: the link he drew between *Being and Time* and Nazism was regarded as superficial muck-raking, and he was accused of failing to observe the vital distinction between authentic ontology, which was the province of philosophy, and mere anthropology – a distinction which Heidegger himself had used (in the *Letter on Humanism*, 1947) in order to disown Sartre. Bourdieu was informed that this essential difference would naturally be incomprehensible to a mere sociologist, since it could only be validated through the procedures of philosophy itself. It took a true Heideggerian, apparently, to furnish Heidegger's works with an adequately philosophical 'reading' (to use a much-fetishised word).

From Bourdieu's point of view, of course, the contemptuous rejection of his analysis only confirmed its accuracy. Twelve years later, a storm was to break over French philosophy, when Victor Farias's *Heidegger et le Nazisme* informed the Heideggerians, as if for the first time, that Heidegger had been a Nazi. Bourdieu expanded and re-worked his essay and it was published as a book, pouring more oil onto the troubled flames, and provoking another round of philosophical outrage at his sociological insubordination. The book has now been made available in an excellent English translation.

The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger is, at the very least, an extremely illuminating essay in the almost non-existent genre of externalist history of philosophy. It confirms the allegations in Theodor Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), that Heidegger's apparently elevated ontological vocabulary – words like 'decision', 'authentic', 'existential', and 'concern' – is identical with that of a ghastly popular moralising which, Adorno said, 'overflows with the pretence of deep human emotion', but which is in reality 'just as standardized as the world that it officially negates'. Bourdieu extends Adorno's analysis in two important ways: first, by elucidating the social context in which Heidegger operated, and second, by offering a sustained interpretation of the 'social unconscious' which, he says, lurks in the depths of *Being and Time*.

The first half of *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* sketches an 'ideological mood' comprising a yearning for lost roots and inwardness and culture on the one hand, and a revulsion from intellectualism and wealth and civilisation on the other. Bourdieu traces the migration of this mood from 'arty intellectual groups', through the junior student body, to its flourishing amongst members of the philosophical professorate in the '20s, before it spread to Nazi organisations of popular culture in the '30s. In the case of Heidegger, the mood was transformed into a philosophical system which claimed the status of an 'insuperable overcoming of all overcoming', and an 'overcoming of all possible radicalism' – a system which, as Bourdieu observes, 'provides conformism with its most water-tight justification'. Heidegger was able to play this role because of his special status within the 'philosophical field'. He had 'considerable capital within the field itself', but refused to adopt the life-style of its leaders. Bourdieu quotes a story about a special old-fashioned folksy suit, with tight trousers and a frock coat – the 'existential suit' – that Heidegger had made for himself in the 1920s. He also quotes from various memoirs about Heidegger's behaviour towards the philosophical old guard, especially Ernst Cassirer, 'a white-haired man, Olympian not only in appearance but also in spirit, with his open mind and wide-

ranging discussions, his relaxed features and his indulgent amiability'. He cites Cassirer's wife too: 'We had been explicitly warned about Heidegger's odd appearance; we knew about his rejection of all social conventions and ... his penchant for anti-semitism was not unknown to us either; ... what seemed the most worrying thing was his deadly seriousness and his total lack of sense of humour.' There was a smart dinner party: 'All the guests had arrived, the women in evening gowns, the men in dinner suits. At a point when the dinner had been interrupted for some time with seemingly endless speeches, the door opened, and an inconspicuous little man came into the room, looking as awkward as a peasant who had stumbled into a royal court. He had black hair and dark piercing eyes, rather like some workman from southern Italy or Bavaria; an impression which was soon confirmed by his regional accent. He was wearing an old-fashioned black suit.' It took someone with this oblique relation to the life-style of the old professors, according to Bourdieu, to create a new set of positions and oppositions 'at the heart of the philosophical field' in Germany, one which was able to impose 'a form of respectability' on 'stances that were heretical, and thus likely to appear vulgar'. Heidegger was able, thereafter, to operate within the philosophical field so as 'to produce routinely the illusion of being above routine'.

The second way in which Bourdieu extends Adorno's analysis is by making use of a simple Freudian model of interpretation: every intellectual, for him, is impelled by an 'expressive drive', which must, however, be 'contained within the limits imposed by the censorship which any cultural field exerts through its very structure'. As a consequence, any academic or intellectual discourse can be seen as a 'compromise formation', where an unconscious labour of sublimation or 'euphemisation' allows ideas to get expressed indirectly so as to evade the censor. On this basis, Bourdieu sets out to identify the latent political content of Heidegger's manifest criticisms of 'average everydayness'. The difficulty he confronts is that Heidegger's political message is not usually so heavily disguised, even in the rather carefully explained case where Bourdieu unmasks Heidegger's 'snowballing puns' on the idea of care (*'Sorge als besorgende Fürsorge* – caring as careful procuration') to reveal a bigoted attack on the idea of the welfare state as dispenser of 'social care' (*Sozialfürsorge*). It is, for Bourdieu's purposes, all too easy to see *Being and Time* as 'a structural equivalent in the "philosophical" order of the "conservative revolution", of which Nazism represents another example'. Bourdieu's ingenious argument is that the structure of the philosopher's world, revealed by the theory of *illusio*, *habitus* and field, functions so as to make this obviousness seem arcane and profound. Heidegger's 'new euphemistics' then takes the form of reeling off 'the commonplaces of academic aristocratism' whilst emitting loud groans about the difficulty of conceiving such untimely thoughts, and decreeing in advance that any readers who think they detect anything grossly political in them are only showing that they are not qualified to enter into discussions of the philosophical mysteries.

The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger, though brief and sometimes scrappy, is probably the best case-study in the sociology of philosophy there has ever been. But Bourdieu leaves its implications crucially unclear. In the first place, he is in danger of projecting the prestige of philosophy in the education systems of France and Germany in the early twentieth century onto other countries and different times, where the idea of a single 'system' may be less applicable, and where philosophy may never have been a particularly imposing or self-confident presence (such as England and Wales, for example). He also makes the risky assumption that the life-styles available to intellectuals are basically those that are supplied by academic careers, thus drastically underestimating the role of amateurs and outsiders, including many who have been financially independent, or aristocratic, or female, or some combination of the three.

And secondly, there seems to be some inconsistency in his attitude to his own discovery of a 'political ontology' in Heidegger. No one has done more than Bourdieu to show how meaning may vary with the position of the interpreter, or to draw attention to the élitism that is presupposed by all accusations of naivete. But he sometimes gives the impression that the 'social unconscious' which he finds at work in *Being and Time* constitutes its one true meaning, and that anyone who finds anything else in it is guilty of sociological naivety. He makes some very apt comments on the ways in which imported philosophers may make a greater impact on a culture than native ones. When cultural products come from abroad, he observes, they are stripped of 'all the subtle signs of social and political origins, or all the often very discrete marks of the social importance of a discourse and the intellectual position of its author'. Bourdieu's analysis of Heidegger's situation in the intellectual life of Germany in the '20s certainly restores for us certain social signs in *Being and Time* that may have got lost in translation. But who is to say that the loss was not our gain? By what right does Bourdieu denounce sociologically innocent interpretations of Heidegger as 'pernicious effects of the exportation of cultural products'? If putting *Being and Time* into its social context turns it into a more boring and less rewarding book than it was before, would we not be better off naive?

Jonathan Rée

PLURALITIES

Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought*, Women's Press, 1990. xiii + 225 pp., £7.95 pb., 0 7043 4228 6.

If one takes the degree to which a political movement can afford to question its own founding principles as a measure of its success, then feminists may begin to congratulate themselves. As its title suggests, Elizabeth V. Spelman's *Inessential Woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought* treats what has come to be known in recent feminist theory as 'the problem of essentialism'; the question of whether, and in what ways, feminists can make use of a notion of essential 'womanness' without replicating the same oppressive patterns of thought imposed on women by a male-dominated society and intellectual tradition. Much attention has been given to this problem, notably by the French feminists in their attempt to clear a space for the representation of women's conditions, thoughts and feelings which in no way aligns itself with what they see as the dominant patriarchal tradition. The main concern motivating such notions as 'écriture feminine' is a refusal to abide by the battle-lines drawn by the enemy, and thus the force of the critique remains firmly directed at the source of the oppression. What distinguishes this new contribution to the debate, however, is its daring attempt to hunt out the enemy at home, and locate the ways in which the feminist movement itself has been guilty of treating as 'inessential' large numbers of the women it claims to be representing, this being the other implication of the book's title. The result is a bringing of critical pressure to bear on feminist theory which takes its cue from the grassroots: 'Many women who have turned to the history of mainstream feminist thought for enlightenment about the condition of their lives have found that there was no mention of women like themselves.... All too often feminists have been as sloppy in our

descriptions of "the women's condition" as philosophers have been in their description of "the human condition".' That there are parallels between the treatment of women within the long-established Western philosophical tradition and that within contemporary feminist theory is an uncomfortable thought, but in recognizing such a claim what is opened up is not only the possibility of a more open debate, but also feminism's age-old problem: how to establish the framework for a politics which is applicable both at the level of theory and to the everyday lives of ordinary women.

Spelman's book succeeds admirably in traversing both these terrains, moving easily between interpretations of texts now canonical to the feminist tradition, both those subject to and those constituting feminist analysis, and the wider issues which they imply. Thus, in pointing out that, at a theoretical level, the logic of feminist inquiry leads to a focusing on a universal 'womanness' of all women ('the paradox of feminism') – precisely the perception on the part of men that feminism sets itself up against – she draws out the political implications of this approach by showing that the result has frequently been the conflation of the conditions of one group of women with the condition of all. What this issues in is a false commonality, which, while claiming the status of a universal truth speaking for all women everywhere, in fact only represents and serves the interests of a white middle-class minority. The problem, then, is not so much the narrowness of the representation, but the fact that it claims a wider validity than it actually has. The task espoused in the following chapters is the unmasking of this false commonality and this informs a series of very precise analyses of accounts of the female condition in which, it is argued, the perspective of a certain group of women is unwittingly privileged. These investigations are used as a springboard for an articulation and exploration of a series of fundamental questions: what is the true object of feminist inquiry? Is an examination of gender identity separable from one of race and class? Can one treat one form of oppression as being more fundamental than another, and, finally, in the absence of a generalised account of the condition of women, is a theoretical basis for a feminist politics possible?

Thus, in chapters on Plato and Aristotle, Spelman argues that feminist readings which attempt to give a generalised account of those philosophers' views on gender are misguided, for they leave out of account the fact that, in the texts under examination, gender identity is in part determined by 'race' or class identity, and so, for example, in Aristotle, the status of free women is quite different from that of slave women. In this way the interpretations reflect a certain bias on the part of their authors. Writing on de Beauvoir, she highlights the discrepancy between her acknowledgement of the diversity of women's experiences and her generalised account of the female condition, attributing this second, contradictory move to the need to produce a coherent basis for political action. This leads into the question of whether a feminist theory which takes the differences among women seriously is indeed possible, and by way of an examination of Chodorow's *Reproduction of Mothering*, Spelman concludes that the degree to which women have a shared experience comes into view only when an examination of their social positions in terms of racial and class identity is also included. The validity of an approach which treats these aspects of identity as separate components is firmly ruled out, as is the desirability of proceeding from the assumption that one form of oppression is more 'fundamental' than another.

The result is what amounts to a series of methodological recommendations for future theoretical work in which Spelman rejects all approaches which abstract from or efface the homogeneity of women's experiences. Such a recommendation might sound like a rather obvious piece of good common sense, but, as this book demonstrates, it is one which has often been ignored in the eagerness to lay a universal foundation for political action. Indeed, by concluding with a positive interpretation of the existence of plurality and debate, Spelman's measured arguments go some way to relieve 'us' of the dismay that has beset the women's movement in recent years at its lack of internal unity. And, while the book is first and foremost written in an American context, its treatment of the issues is equally relevant to a wider audience, not least for its positive construal of the fact that it is not always the emperor, but sometimes also the empress, who has no clothes.

Alex Klaushofer

REVOLUTION IN HISTORY

Noel Parker, *Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution*, New York, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990. vii + 244 pp., £12.95 pb., 0 7108 1272 8 pb.

Noel Parker's *Portrays of Revolution* is divided into two parts. The first part examines the ways the contemporary culture of the French Revolution attempted to represent the Revolution to itself and shows the difficulty from the outset of embodying the apparently abstract concepts of the Enlightenment within concrete historical images. The Revolution is analysed as an 'event in culture' in which that culture 'tried to address its audience in a way that would help integrate the latter into the "nation" which was supposedly engaged in reconstituting itself'. A crucial aspect of this, Parker suggests, is the question of how to portray a sense of the Revolution as a formative 'moment in the movement of history'. In the second part of the book this problem is related to the history of subsequent attempts by historians to articulate the Revolution's place within history – a history which shows that, as Douglas Johnson puts it, 'The Revolution made historians necessary.'

Parker examines the ways a range of contemporary cultural forms – journalism, political rhetoric, everyday language, the festivals, theatre, prints, fine art, fashions, and historical writing – sought to deal with this set of problems. This material is particularly fascinating because the Revolution can be seen as an experiment in which the interaction between politics and culture takes place under the pressure of producing the modern nation state: 'In the language, in the creation of symbols and in the developments in forms of culture during the Revolution, we can analyse the meanings deployed to hold together the modern polity at the moment of its inception and of their greatest strain.'

Parker begins with an intriguing account of political journalism of the Revolution period which shows how it typically worked to place the journalist at the centre of political action and to develop 'that Enlightenment mode of thinking in which practical prescriptions could be derived from incontrovertible general principles available to all'. These tendencies are also found throughout the political discourse of the revolutionary period, in which 'speakers employ a rhetoric which brings their own identity to the fore and equates it with that of the people, who are conceived still as the centre of political and moral right'. Parker goes on to analyse some of the problems with such strategies. Political speakers inherited from Rousseau ideals about public speaking in democracies whose contradictions continue to dominate our own understanding of political rhetoric: 'Rousseau's posture made it seem necessary to appeal to the naive feelings of

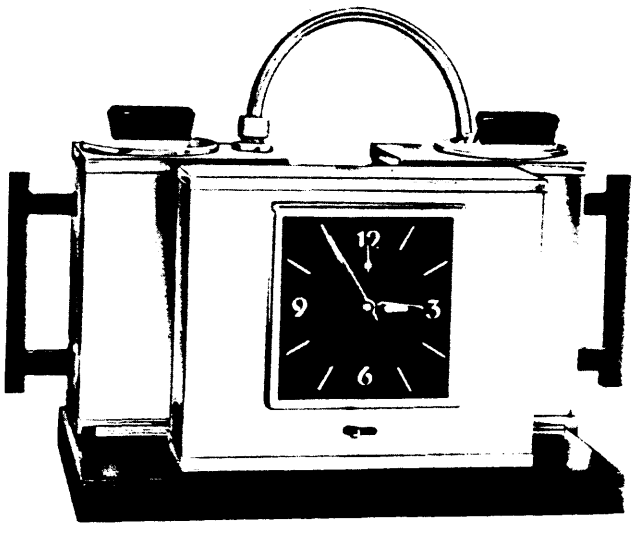
one's audience in skilful professions of simplicity of heart, which denied all artifice.'

Parker's discussion of this material is fascinating, yet his attempts to theorise this discussion run into problems. One of the oddities of Parker's reflections upon his own project is that, although his book shows that cultural forms in the Revolution were political through and through, he strives to differentiate between culture and 'social reality', discourse and the 'real' world, as if culture and discourse were not themselves crucial and formative aspects of 'social reality' and the 'real' world.

These assumptions seem to be challenged by Parker's discussion of theatre and festivals in the Revolution – in which the aesthetic paradigm was not realism but performance. Parker's interest in these ways of 'performing the Revolution' focuses on their attempt to put the public centre stage of political life by giving a performative role to audiences. Parker shows that this was most clearly the case in 'the post-revolutionary period's only truly original cultural form, the revolutionary festival', the possibility that festivals might have unpredictable political meanings and effects drove the revolutionaries to exclude comic portrayals of the Revolution and to 'impose a strict, rational order on the fête'. In doing so, Parker argues, they deprived the festivals of 'the flexibility needed for history to be both firmly established and a field for change' – though he also concedes that the festivals were 'powerful cultural means to resolve the tensions of the new order's identity and history'.

Parker's argument is that each of the cultural forms he investigates runs into difficulties because its tendency towards invoking the ideal and the universal prevents it from figuring the Revolution (or the people at its centre) as part of a historical moment. This is why he ends the first part of his book with an investigation of 'how contemporaries conceptualized the Revolution's location in history'. Thus *Portrayals of Revolution* is really a book about how the French Revolution entailed a revolution in historiography – which is why I would suggest that the title of this review would be a more appropriate title for the book than the rather rambling and inaccurate one it was given.

Parker traces the changes in the way historians have conceived the Revolution according to the way they conceptualise the interplay between the people, passions, rationality, human agency, culture, reality, and he writes as if these problems had been solved. The historical perspective now available to us – the French Marxist account modified by revisionist and particularist criticisms – 'places culture at the centre of the agents' self-identification' and diverts 'historical writing away from both grand claims about the action of classes and from an insistence on the inchoate primacy of individuals or small groups'. But if this is so, if culture not only constitutes 'those involved in their own eyes, [but also] constitutes an understanding of the objective reality of which they are a part', then does this not undo the distinction between culture and political reality or the experience of real human beings which Parker ostensibly wished to maintain in the first part of his book?



Tom Furniss

VICTIMS OF MODERNITY

Ross Poole, *Morality and Modernity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991. xii + 196 pp., £35.00 hb, £8.99 pb., 0 415 03600 3 hb., 0 415 03601 1 pb.

Ross Poole has written an admirable book, important both for what it achieves and for what it fails to achieve. His arguments are designed to enable his readers to understand why the moral limitations of modernity and of modern moral philosophy have to be and perhaps can be transcended. In making this his aim he distinguishes his position from that of those, such as myself, to whom he ascribes a merely negative rejection of modernity. But I shall suggest that, in aspiring to overcome modernity from within, he may be in danger of becoming one more victim of the system of thought and practice whose inadequacies he sees so clearly.

Poole's case against modernity is constructed dialectically: the modern world 'provides no good reason for believing in its *own* principles and values. Modernity has called into play a dominant conception of what it is to have reason to act; this conception has the consequence that the dictates of morality have little purchase on the motivations of those to whom they are addressed'. So utilitarianism, which structures morality under the constraints of a market economy, presents the general happiness as the required aim for a moral agent, but 'the psychological basis for market behaviour is concern for oneself'. Individuals in market societies thus tend to understand themselves in ways which make the demand for altruistic virtue inexplicable and irrational.

By contrast the juridical framework of a commercial society needs individuals who conceive themselves as not wholly determined by self-interest and 'able to do their duty because it is their duty'. Kantian formulations of what is involved in this point us towards more fruitful conceptions of freedom and reason, but these cannot be developed in Kant's own terms, just because it is also impossible in those terms to understand how reason can motivate. So Kantianism and utilitarianism are incoherent in ways symptomatic of the inadequacy of forms of reason which have become dominant in capitalist society.

Another consequence for morality in this type of society is a split between public duty and private virtue. The concept of virtue has application where 'there is a systematic convergence between that behaviour which is conducive to the good of the individual and that required to sustain the society to which he or she belongs', something now restricted to private life. Traditional conceptions of virtue are no longer available to the inhabitants of modernity,

since they presuppose predetermined social roles and identities. But freedom as now understood demands that we be able to choose identities and roles.

An adequate social identity of which we are deprived by the forms of thought and practice of a capitalist society would be one for which the reasonable and the morally required would coincide in some way of life which would 'provide for a convergence between our individual well-being and the conditions necessary to sustain the way of life as a whole'. In our situation of deprivation we are always threatened by nihilism. Poole evaluates the claims of liberalism, of what he rightly calls the illusory community of the nation-state and of Nietzsche's stance and project in the light of this threat and argues compellingly against all three. What then is to be done? The premises from which Poole derives his negative conclusions are not always entirely clear, but it is when he turns from negative critique to spelling out his own positive view that the most serious doubts and questions arise.

A first set are philosophical. Poole needs to say more about a wide range of concepts, including those of reason, freedom, identity and community, both to provide stronger grounds for his negative critique and to show what an alternative and adequate conception of social identity would be. In particular, Poole does nothing in his book to reconcile two strands in his thought which are at least in tension, perhaps in contradiction. For, while he recognises that any adequate account of morality will have to exhibit it as something other and more than an expression of individual desires and preferences, he also seems to deny that moral truths can hold independently of our recognising them. People are in some large measure to be able to determine the nature of the good life for themselves, but some conceptions of the good life are nonetheless rationally superior to others. Clearly there is more than one way in which Poole could further develop the statement of his views. Until he has done so, it will remain unclear that he has in fact overcome the limitations of the conceptual scheme which he criticises.

Secondly, if 'our' present situation is what Poole says it is, where are we to find in the impoverished and deformed present the resources from which to construct a very different future? Poole rejects the answer given by classical Marxism – his own sociology is a perceptively eclectic blend of Marx, Weber and others – but he provides no account of how anyone might learn, either from theory or through social practice, what would need to be learnt. Poole rejects the Aristotelian answer which I have defended, that it is through participation in certain types of practices that we learn and relearn, even in inimical and deforming social environments, how to understand and embody the virtues, supposing that it involves a reactionary nostalgia. But he does not as yet supply us with his own answer. Until he does so, he is open to two further accusations: that his negative critique, lacking a positive counterpart, will strengthen the case for the nihilism that he rejects and that the unspecific character of his alternative is one more version of a kind of utopianism which Marx diagnosed in *The German Ideology*. So there is more to be done. It is a mark of a good book that it provokes as well as enlightens. In both respects Poole succeeds.

Alasdair MacIntyre

EMERSONIAN DESCENTS

Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: the Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1990. xxxix + 151 pp., £7.25 pb., 0 226 09821 4 pb.

Russell B. Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. xi + 162 pp., £27.50 hb., 0 521 39443 0 hb.

Stanley Cavell is the charismatic leader and Russell Goodman an effective disciple in the movement to make out of Emersonian romanticism a formative influence on the American philosophical tradition. To succeed they have to accomplish both a general and a specific project. The general project is a familiar feature of the American Studies world: to add something called 'American Philosophy' to the canon of American exceptionalisms dominated otherwise by history, politics and literature. At least as far as the undergraduate curriculum is concerned this has been largely achieved (see 'American Philosophy: R.I.P.' in *Radical Philosophy* 40).

The specific project is more problematic. Most twentieth-century apologists for 'American philosophy' are wary of the literary seductiveness and apparent lack of rigour of Emerson's essays and the work of his fellow transcendentalists of the 1830s and 1840s. For those most defensive about a distinctive American tradition (like the members of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, generously acknowledged for their comradeship by Goodman) the canonic descent normally avoids the transcendentalists. The preferred lineage jumps from the achievements of Calvinist theologians (like Jonathan Edwards) and early Unitarian thinkers – against which Emerson was explicitly reacting in all of his most celebrated works – to the semiotics and science of Charles Sanders Peirce. Emerson is all too easily dismissed as an emotionally satisfying but philosophically empty detour. An exception to this tendency is provided by William James, a promoter of Emerson as well as Peirce, and as well as by those like Santayana and Goodman who see much of what they admire in James prefigured in Emerson. However, this is only another manifestation of the ability of James – America's best-loved if not its best philosopher – to provide the determined interpreter with evidence of almost any trait. Dependent as he is on a more simple view of national philosophical descent, this is more of a problem for Goodman than Cavell.

To return to the projects: Cavell and Goodman both depend upon an American tradition that is *different* from its European counterparts. It also represents 'starting again' – a thing Cavell says is impossible for Europeans. Emerson, for Cavell, was simultaneously 'founding thinking for America' and 'finding our own access to European thought'. For Goodman, the Romantic tradition in America provided 'a redirection or reinflection of European romanticism that would offer it a permanent home in the New World in the altered guise of philosophical discourse'. Put even more prosaically the thesis is that Kant, Coleridge and Wordsworth, once domesticated by Emerson and Thoreau, supply a peculiarly American philosophical sensibility structured around personal transfiguration or conversion (for Cavell) and 'a cognitive role for feeling' (Goodman). These elements are characteristic of the best American philosophical enterprises and, in particular, serve the defeat the rationalist and positivist scepticism of the arch-enemy: twentieth-century analytical philosophy.

The difficulties here are legion. They begin with the epistemological. Cavell, quoted by Goodman, refers to the Emersonian tradition as 'America expressing itself philosophically'. This bold statement is susceptible to various interpretations. Is he referring to a particular mode of philosophical discourse (for example the openness or restricted vision of the writer or thinker), or to specific philosophical commitments? In other words, is the issue about expression or content ('poetry' or 'philosophy'; feeling or thought)? Is the key enterprise creative 'reading' of a text or its logical understanding? Of each of these pairs of alternatives the first options are the critical ones for Cavell and Goodman, who see them encapsulated in Emerson's doctrine of 'mood' or 'whim'. They make of the American philosophical tradition an exercise in individual voluntarism. Goodman in particular refers to Hannah Arendt and her doctrine of the will as the 'organ of the future'.

The problem is that the second option of each of the pairs is at least as important to John Dewey, with whom the exposition has to deal if it is to be taken seriously as a statement about the course of American philosophical activity. Dewey's success in promoting the doctrine of instrumentalism, despite his well-documented early excursions with the theology of James Marsh, the metaphysics of Hegel, and the ethics of Thomas Hill Green, represents the triumph of the scientific over sentimental confidence in human progress. By science is meant secure, community-tested procedures and results, however open-ended and personal the initial viewpoint of the investigator. In other words Dewey represents an essential link in the chain for any proponent of a linear American philosophical descent, and as such, is especially problematic for the neo-Romantics.

For Goodman the descent is, however, uncomplicated. We are led from the domestic development of European romanticism in Emerson's 'American Scholar' through James's mixture of empiricism and spirituality (what he terms the 'sentiment of rationality') directly to the mature work of John Dewey. For Goodman the centre of gravity of the latter is Dewey's often ignored forays into aesthetics, particularly *Art as Experience* (the last major work of an extraordinarily prolific career), with its emphasis on the 'imaginative reconstruction of experience'. For most sympathetic readers this account will be plausible, but partial. There is little here about James's panpsychism or Dewey's logic, while the image of the latter as a 'cracker-barrel Heidegger' is perhaps more humorous than its author intended it to be.

Cavell's account, set out in three Lectures framed by a lengthy introduction and several items of postscript, is significantly more complex. First, while recognising the importance of Dewey to any American philosophical descent, he has strong doubts about this apparently least romantic of writers. Confessing his difficulty in reading, let alone re-reading the often turgid Dewey, he suggests that this is because he so often misses or ignores 'the worlds I seemed mostly to live in, missing the heights of modernism in the arts, the depths of psychoanalytical discovery, the ravages of the century's politics, the wild intelligence of American popular culture'. Cavell is also more rigorous and complete than Goodman in trying to show the relevance of the Emersonian descent to other major currents in twentieth-century thought. The burden of his second and third lectures is the impact of an Emersonian mode of thinking on Wittgensteinian philosophy of language (misunderstood, as Cavell sees it, by Saul Kripke) and Rawls' neo-utilitarian account of justice (which in dismissing a Nietzschean concept of perfectionism simultaneously slanders Emerson).

Positively, the three main lines of argument advanced by Cavell are neatly articulated in the introduction and first essay. They centre on the 'argument of the ordinary' (a familiar theme in Cavell) in Emerson's view of the natural and man-made world, the exemplary nature of his call to action (transposed into Wittgenstein's 'scene of instruction') and the 'conversation of justice' (most eloquently captured in contemporary thought by John Rawls). His goal is a satisfactory contemporary theory of moral perfectionism (the theme of his Harvard course, juxtaposing philosophical texts with episodes in literature and film) that is democratic and non-teleological.

What we are being urged to accept is the continuity of a process, discovered by Emerson, based on self-reliance as 'aversion' to social conformity, 'friendship' being the epistemological presentation of 'another self by myself', and significantly the role of representative thinking, embodied in the text. Cavell rarely summarises without branching off in other, even more complex areas, but this passage comes closest to a compression of the positive and negative themes: 'My thought is that a certain relation to words (as an allegory of my relation to my life) is inseparable from a certain moral-like relation to thinking, and that the morality and the thinking that are inseparable are of specific strains – the morality is neither teleological (basing itself on a conception of the good to be maximised in society) nor deontological (basing itself on an independent conception of the right), and the thinking is some as yet unknown distance from what we think of as reasoning.'

What captures this process most directly is the moral encounter, in which individuals come together (again) with mature knowledge of the world and their place within it. Both writers have to overcome the charge that this is a selfish, elitist set of arguments to offer as constitutive of a culture. Neither succeeds fully in this endeavour, but Cavell's case in particular is wide-ranging, generous and ingenious.

David Watson

FAIR ENOUGH?

Richard Kuper, *Electing for Democracy: Proportional Representation and the Left*, London, Socialist Society, 1990. 63 pp., £3.95 pb., 872481 05 1.

It used to be that support for Proportional Representation was largely restricted to the Liberals, the Nationalist parties and an assortment of slender strands on the fringes of British politics. No surprise there of course, since these were the groups who stood to benefit from it ... and with *ad hominem* observations such as that the 'two parties of government' were apt to dismiss it.

More recently, however, some have begun to wonder whether there really are *two* parties of government. And some senior figures in the Labour Party have suggested that the disaster of the last twelve years would never have taken place had it not been for our iniquitous electoral system. Perhaps by the time the Labour Party manages one of its occasional forays into office (*office*, mind you: not *power*) the argument may have been won and a public commitment made to electoral reform. Is PR an idea whose time is coming?

Whether or not reform is on the way *Electing for Democracy* will stand as a useful and succinct contribution to the discussion of PR on the left. In it Richard Kuper sets out just what is wrong with our method of electing members of parliament, considers the arguments against PR, and sets out the main alternative methods of electing representatives. In doing so he illustrates how bedevilled by bad arguments and red herrings much of the debate about electoral reform has been. Why for instance do opponents of PR invariably turn their critical attention towards the likes of Italy and

Israel when there are many more countries whose adoption of PR has not left them with unstable government? And, even allowing that we are all agreed about what 'strong government' is, it must be a foolish socialist that would prefer a 'strong' Tory administration to a 'weak' one.

Kuper builds a compelling case for the 'list' system of election, in which parties field lists of candidates in multi-member constituencies (or at national or regional level in combination with single member constituencies) and seats are allocated according to the party's share of the vote. There are arguments about what is the fairest method of determining allocations – some tend to favour the larger parties and some the smaller – but all are fairer than the current system. They are also fairer, as Kuper points out, than the Single Transferable Vote system favoured by the Electoral Reform Society, which can still allow a situation in which a minority with as much as 17% of the vote is denied representation.

All that said, I am still not persuaded to give up my opposition to PR. A just system of representation is one in which, as nearly as possible, all votes count equally: in which size of representation is determined by size of vote. This being so our current system stands condemned as unjust. Applying the principle more widely, however, our country is damnably unjust in many more respects than this. If my vote was of nearly equal weight to that of every other citizen it would still count for very little beside the board room vote of the director of a trans-national – even my representative's vote might count for little next to that.

An elected government has access to power. Labour governments traditionally have been rather fearful of that (and the current front bench looks like being the worst of the sorry lot), but a radical Labour government, if that does not require too much effort of imagination, could use the power available to it to begin to redress the inequalities of power and wealth which exist in this country.

According to Kuper such talk reflects a 'kind of debased economic Jacobinism'. He argues that the 'only secure guarantee for a socialism worth the name is not a packed parliament or reform imposed from above, but a mobilisation of class and other social forces, a majority of the population in a genuinely popular alliance for radical change'. Agreed, but strategic action by a radical Labour government could be one means (among others) of enlarging that mobilisation and building a majority.

Given the current socioeconomic and party political makeup of this country and anything remotely resembling it, PR would render the election of a majority Labour government, committed to radical policies, virtually impossible. It was for such a class partisan reason that Peregrine Worsthorne declared himself in favour of PR during the high tide of Bennism. It is for the same class partisan reason that I will, despite Kuper's otherwise persuasive case, continue to oppose it.

Kevin Magill

BATAILLE LINES

Allan Stoekl, ed., *On Bataille* (*Yale French Studies* 78), New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990. 265 pp., £10.95 pb., 0 300 04843 2.

Georges Bataille (1897-1962) is one of the more fascinating enigmatic figures of his period. Librarian and archivist, author of erotica (which some find offensively pornographic) and theorist of transgression, sometimes surrealist and occasional anti-fascist activist, he was also a founder of *Critique*, one of the most influential French journals of the post-war period. For the young theorists of *Tel Quel*, Bataille had an almost totemic importance (and the inclusion here of a 1966 essay by Denis Hollier is an eloquent testimony to that), but it is largely thanks to Barthes, Derrida and Foucault that he is known to most English readers. It may be time to begin to read Bataille himself rather than his interpreters. The interest is certainly there: more of his work is becoming available in translation (mainly from American university presses) and Bataille was recently the subject of an international conference in London. Yet Bataille is not easy to read. Its intrinsic difficulties aside, his work – twelve bulky volumes to date in the French *Oeuvres complètes* – is fragmentary and much of it was published posthumously.

The present volume of *Yale French Studies* is very welcome in that it covers most aspects of a confusing body of work which is as difficult to systematise as that of Nietzsche. The twelve contributors, some of whom took part in the London conference, deal *inter alia* with Bataille's tangential relationship with Heidegger (Rebecca Comay), his writings on Sade (Jean-Michel Heimonet), and his essay on the cave paintings at Lascaux (Steven Unger). Excellent studies by Michèle Richman and Jean-Michel Besnier help to situate Bataille in, respectively, the context of the 1930s and the immediate post-war period. Allan Stoekl contributes a major exercise in political contextualisation by looking at the ambiguities of the idea of economic planning and its appeal to Bataille, exploring a marginal world in which right and left were not necessarily polar opposites with remarkable skill and erudition. The political undergrowth of the Third Republic has rarely been mapped so effectively.

Insofar as there is a consistent core to Bataille's work, it is an improbable alloy of Hegel and Mauss and a sacred-profane dualism which is well described by Hollier. The Hegel in question is of course the Hegel of Alexandre Kojève's reading of the *Phenomenology*, the ghost which hovers over so much of Lacan. The Hegelian-Kojèvian strand appears mainly in the form of the struggle for pure prestige, which supplies the core of Bataille's theory of eroticism (admirably elucidated here by Suzanne Guerlac) and of his notion of sovereignty. Mauss's theory of the gift in turn provides the basis for Bataille's rather curious economics, in which the emphasis falls upon expenditure rather than upon utilitarian production. The model is of course the *potlach*, but it also encompasses the notion of sacrifice (a conspicuously bloody form of expenditure), at which point economics overlaps with erotics. In his essay on 'General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism' Jean-Joseph Goux sees Bataille as anticipating the work of ideologues like Gilder who, in his *Wealth and Poverty*, argues that it is supply which creates desire and that it is the spectacular *potlach* of the supermarket that generates capitalism's frantic search for the new. The suggestion is intriguing, but catch-all expressions like 'postmodern capitalism' must surely inspire a degree of scepticism.

For the editor, Bataille is a 'precursor' of the post or anti-humanist theories that came to the fore in the 1960s. It is difficult to disagree with that assessment though a harsher or more cynical critic might argue that much of the 'postmodern' is in fact pre-war. After all, it was Kojève and not Foucault who first coined the expression 'the death of man'. And Baudrillard's notorious fasci-

nation with sacrifice, in particular, looks positively jejune compared with Bataille's treatment of the same theme decades earlier. It would, however, be unfortunate if the focus falls exclusively upon Bataille. It is the work of the generation – Klossowski, Kojève, Leiris, Caillois ... – that imported Hegel into France, tried to rescue Nietzsche from Nazism and flirted with Sade that needs to be exhumed and reevaluated. The developing interest in Bataille is positive, if only because it helps to dispel the illusion that Lacan's views on desire are unique to him or derived solely from Freud. A major study in English of the work and influence of Kojève, recently the subject of a major biography in France, is now long overdue and would be more than welcome.

David Macey

***In Science We Trust* (Lund University Press, 1990)** is a collection of papers given at a conference held in Dubrovnik in 1988. Its aims were to consider some of the main political and moral issues raised by science in society, constructing a field of 'science studies', concentrating on explaining the interpenetration of social and cognitive factors in science at a macro-level. The collection covers a wide range of areas: the links between science and ethics, appraisals of postmodernism, the problem of integrity of science and specific case studies. As the editors Elzinga, Nolin, Pranger and Sunesson note, none of these areas is covered exhaustively and sometimes the papers are too short really to provide an adequate analysis of the issues. There are some weak papers in the volume, particularly in the section concerning postmodernism, where the effectiveness of applying such models to a critique of science look highly doubtful under the authors' interpretations. There are also some awful typing and spelling errors that are disconcerting at times. However, the highlights of the book are the illuminating discussions that appear at the end of each paper, which clarify and raise points that the papers themselves have not fully covered. The discussion on feminist epistemology between Sandra Harding and Margaret Hallberg is an example of this, with Harding giving a rejoinder to Hallberg's paper that answers some of the criticisms that have been levied at her feminist standpoint theory. The collection as a whole does not break much new ground, but within it there are some very useful papers and discussion.

Lucy Frith

Iain Chambers' third book, ***Border Dialogues: Journeys in Postmodernity*, Comedia/Routledge, London, 1990. 146 pp., 0 415 03554 hb, 0 415 01375 pb.**, is a significant contribution to a range of contemporary debates in cultural studies and radical philosophy. Chambers, who has now taught for a decade in Naples in Italy, was a major contributor to the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham under the direction in the 1970s of Stuart Hall. Chambers' book from that period, *Urban Rhythms* (published in 1985) gave an idiosyncratic subcultural history of popular music up until the early 1980s. *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*, published a year later, ranged across various cultural theory debates, especially postmodernism. *Border Dialogues* is his most satisfying work to date, returning to both of the earlier subject areas and expanding them to include discourses on so-called Italian weak thought (for instance, Gianni Vattimo) and the cultural construction of 'Englishness'. Some of the essays have been published elsewhere in different forms ('A Handful of Sand' came out previously in *Block*) but as a set of related chapters they are a stimulating and challenging read – especially for their openness, their capacity to express self-doubts and self-criticism and their recognition of the difficulties created by the incorporation of 'yesterday's marginal signs and voices – rock music, subcultures, cultural studies'. There are also twenty pages of insightful and comprehensive notes. My only reservation is that the reference to two countries and cultures (Italy and England, 'Italian-ness' and 'Englishness'), which is seen as a strength by the publishers, can frequently be a block; for example, it is frankly bizarre to see theoretical discussion of British youth culture of the 1980s and 1990s without mention of the importance of *house* music and styles, particularly given the pervasive influence of Italian House.

Steve Redhead

There are two reasons why a book entitled ***Speech Acts and Literary Theory*** should cause misgiving. The first is that the theory of speech acts is so much part of our intellectual universe that unless we are first year undergraduates we do not need yet another introduction to performatives and illocution. The second is that the relationship between speech act theory and literary theory has been singularly disappointing so far, witness John Searle's (in)famous essay on the logic of fictional texts. Yet Sandy Petrey's book, **London, Routledge, 1990, 175 pp., £9.95 pb, 0 415 90181 2 hb, 0 415 90182 0 pb.**, although it does fulfil the first boring task (it begins with a competent introductory reading of Austin), largely escapes those strictures. Why read this introduction, in spite of the yet-another syndrome? There are two reasons for this. The first is that the book is a clear-sighted and consistent reading of Austin. We realize that he has suffered the same fate as Paul Grice: he is too much summarised and not read enough. By retracing Austin's argument in all its aporetic detail, by pointing out the lacunae in the text, Petrey constructs an Austin who is far more complex than is often thought – in particular, he shows that Austin has a conception of the social background of speech acts which preempts the usual Marxist objections. This 'social' Austin he opposes, very effectively, to the 'intentional' Searle. The second reason is that the discussion of speech act theory is now rich enough to form a tradition, as the names of the authors Petrey discusses show: not merely Searle and Derrida, and their celebrated transatlantic *scène de ménage*, but also Stanley Fish, Shoshana Felman, Paul de Man (it is a pity Petrey was too early to include Genette's discussion of Searle in *Fiction et diction*, Paris, Seuil, 1991). In this context the introductory aspect of the book is closely linked to its greatest quality: a reappraisal of the grandeur of Austin. And you don't have to be an undergraduate to enjoy that.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

***Modernism and the European Unconscious*,** an accomplished collection of sixteen essays edited by Peter Collier and Judy Davies **(Polity, 1990, £35.00 hb, 0 745605 192)**, is an attempt to situate the Freudian unconscious in relation to the wide variety of modernist writers and artists who are in some sense to be seen unleashing its force in their own work. Mann, Kafka, Woolf, Joyce, Artaud, and the surrealists are among those considered in this book, which offers both specific studies and more general reflections on the relationship between Freud, the unconscious, and artistic expression. While this is a rather sober collection, suffused with an atmosphere of serious but rather disengaged interest in the untamed excesses of the European unconscious, it is intelligently illustrated, beautifully produced, and provides a thought-provoking context for the fascinating questions it raises.

Sadie Plant
