

## Paradise postponed

David Schweickart, *Against Capitalism*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993. xiii + 387 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 521 41851 8.

Despite a dismal economic performance since its resurgence in the late 1970s, it is currently fashionable to be *for* capitalism. Throughout the Western democracies the self-styled 'progressive' parties have been busily ditching that 'utopianism' which had audaciously declared socialism to be an alternative to capitalism in favour of a 'realism' conceding that socialism is after all capitalism, but with a difference: better managed and (a bit) nicer ('Barbarism or Blairism'). Capitalism's world-historical victory, proclaimed by Francis Fukuyama in 1989, had been punctually confirmed by the collapse of the Soviet bloc later that same year: liberal-capitalism would *never* cease to be victorious, the time had come to abandon our dead to their own devices. But there is, of course, rather more to contemporary capitalism than 'The Victory of the VCR': in the 'First World' an unabated explosion of poverty, demoralisation, homelessness and unemployment; in the 'Second World' a similar tragedy following swiftly and inexorably on the heels of a farce (not the revolutions themselves, but the arrival of the management consultancy firms); and, of course, in the 'Third World', 'history' – provisioned with Western loans and Western arms – is set to persist in the all-too-tangible form of civil wars, colossal debt, ruthless exploitation, destitution and famines. All this to be set against the disarming honesty of Steven Rockefeller, as quoted by Schweickart: 'There is no justification for my family having the amount of money that it has ... the only honest thing to say in defence of it is that we like having money and the present social system allows us to keep it.'

As Schweickart recognises, an uncharacteristic encounter with the facts of the matter will not awaken capitalism's supporters from the 'illusion of *our* epoch' to the long overdue confrontation with *their* failed God, nor will it secure a reliable redoubt from which to launch the detour back through 'history' and towards the – or even *a* – victory for socialism. Three crucial tasks now confront those still unpersuaded of capitalism's triumph. Firstly, the arguments of those political theorists who have contended that capitalism is beyond contempt

*regardless* of its consequences require to be defeated: the *locus classicus* of this position being Nozick's highly influential, and deservedly infamous *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. People, it is argued, have rights – including property rights – which are not to be violated to secure even bloody marvellous consequences. Capitalists acquire their property quite legitimately through the cultivation and exercise of commendable time-preferences – 'abstinence' – and a heroic determination to shoulder our common risks for us (Steven Rockefeller take note). Being for justice, then, we are bound to be for capitalism: *abolishing* property is theft. Schweickart's assured demolition of such 'noncomparative' justifications of capitalism contains little that is new, but he offers a first-class review and discussion of the central points.

The second task is a more difficult one. If we are to stand against capitalism we must, it is here argued, find somewhere to stand: cookshops, after all, cannot cook much that is worth eating until they have been provided with recipes. Capitalism's apologists – not to mention the remnants of what was once the European left – continue to resort to a familiar strategy: however bad things are, 'There Is No Alternative' (happily for the Right; unfortunately for the Left). Schweickart's central preoccupation is therefore to propose and defend an alternative – a form of market socialism ('Economic Democracy') with four central features: abolition of private property in the means of production; a market economy for raw materials and consumer goods; a democratically-controlled investment fund raised through taxation; and worker-management of all medium and large-scale enterprises. Having defined Economic Democracy in this way, he proceeds to argue that it is the most viable form of socialism, and that it would be a very significant improvement upon *laissez-faire*, Keynesian, and post-Keynesian forms of capitalism.

*Laissez-faire* capitalism is incapable of delivering full employment; undermines consumer sovereignty; misdirects economic growth; alienates working people; is economically unstable; restricts liberty; and

undermines democracy. Of course, all this may be thought by some to be a price well worth paying to defeat the scourge of inflation. Leaving aside cost-benefit analysis, Schweickart points out that inflation was the totem of 'voodoo' economists, not only because Reagan was stupid – which he undoubtedly was – but also because Reagan was astute: inflation hurts (well-off) lenders and helps (badly-off) borrowers. Economic democracy, then, would be a huge improvement on laissez-faire capitalism, and also upon the kind of 'fair capitalism' (allegedly) exemplified in the writings of John Rawls – which stands condemned on a similar indictment. Schweickart's arguments here are painstakingly developed with close reference not only to the dynamics of (mercifully) non-mathematical models, but also to the available empirical evidence. For example, in the original debate concerning market socialism – in the 1930s – Hayek had been forced on the defensive by the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union; Cuba has maintained a level of economic growth and social provision unparalleled throughout Latin America (despite the best efforts of the USA); China is coming close to eliminating 'absolute' poverty just as it is being rediscovered in a 'liberalised' Eastern Europe; and the economic performance of Yugoslavia – the most significant experiment to date with market socialism – had been truly remarkable right up until the 1980s (between 1952 and 1960 Yugoslavia had the highest growth rate of any country in the world).

Moreover, Japan and the East Asian Tigers have achieved 'economic miracles' somewhat more convincing than the Lawson or Reagan booms on the basis of massive state intervention. In Japan, such intervention has been combined with lifetime employment guarantees for workers; wages tied to seniority; regular bonuses indexed to profits; and a high level of worker participation in the decision-making of their companies. In so far as capitalism can boast of any genuine successes, it has been a capitalism that has kept its teeth and claws unbloodied, and has rather more in common with 'Economic Democracy' than with the laissez-faire project that was spectacularly failing elsewhere. Schweickart's comparative arguments will not all be convincing to everybody, but they are consistently engaging and important, and often persuasive too.

The third task is the most daunting: even if Economic Democracy – or any other form of socialism – were both materially possible and clearly desirable, there remains the problem of achieving the transition from capitalism to socialism. Neither police forces, armies, newspaper barons, foreign governments, the IMF, nor international

speculators are likely to lie down and die in the face of a few carefully argued defences of socialism. Schweickart – unlike many recent defenders of market socialism – does engage with this problem, although what he has to say here is rather less convincing. In the advanced capitalist countries, such a transition could be effected by the simple expedient of passing four laws, nor would this result in any significant economic dislocation: the next day there would be fewer commuters disembarking in the City of London (and those who did would be in for a nasty surprise), but most of us would carry on much as before. Schweickart concedes that this is not really 'on the horizon'! Instead, he gestures towards current proposals and developing institutional structures which might, with some conjunctural assistance, converge into a powerful movement for reform: the success of cooperatives; the rejection of macho-management in favour of the 'team concept' (yuk!); the prospects for a revitalised labour movement; the possibility of introducing both restrictions on international capital flows and measures to block international wage competition; and the trend towards democratic imposition of non-market investment priorities (in particular, environmental controls). Schweickart finally concedes that none of this provides socialists with any grounds for an excess of optimism: even if such a movement were eventually to take shape, it would confront some powerful and wealthy opponents. Who, then, might be the agents of the risky and protracted political struggle required to defeat this opposition? Not, it appears, a revolutionary (or even a socialist voting) working class: that class – or any coalition of classes – as agent, if not as beneficiary, of epochal social transition is more or less abstract from his book – presumably on the grounds that Schweickart believes it to be more or less absent from history having been effectively neutralised by easy access to VCRs.

Doubtful of Economic Democracy's prospects in the advanced capitalist countries, Schweickart proceeds to consider the prospects for socialism in the 'Second' and 'Third' Worlds. While 'economic democracy' might be a viable model for the development of the LDCs, he concedes that, where people are not sure or getting anything to eat, command socialism may be an even better option. The reconstruction of the countries of Eastern Europe holds out the best prospects for a transition to market socialism – John Roemer, incidentally, takes the same line in *A Future for Socialism* (1994). Accusations of a lack of realism from capitalism's apologists would ring pretty hollow here, given their own hallucinatory 'modernisation' strategies. Market socialism is certainly more promising than the

'impossible project now being attempted: creating *ex nihilo*, capitalist institutions, capitalist values and a capitalist class' ('Barbarism or Baloney'). This optimism is revealing, pointing up the recognisably Fabian flavour of Schweickart's project. Reform will – at least in the first instance – be under the direction of a technocratic élite charged with the construction of a rational and just society. Political and economic vacuums attract social engineers: as the lunatic right flies out of Eastern Europe (or is thrown out, as in Lithuania, Poland and Hungary), the liberal-Left flies in. So, the transition to economic democracy is not on the immediate horizon in the First World; is possible, but not necessarily optimal, in the Third World; and is a real prospect in an Eastern bloc eternally cast in the role of international capitalism's weakest link.

This is an important book and should be required reading for anyone still inclined to stand against capitalism. Schweickart offers the most detailed and accomplished recent defence of market socialism, and even those unconvinced by the case for Economic

Democracy will find much here that is worthwhile. Three things are particularly commendable. Firstly, a wealth of empirical evidence has been marshalled in defence of the central arguments (footnotes are worth the trouble). Secondly, this is an *angry* book (all too rare in contemporary Marxist and socialist political philosophy): if its pages do not actually burn with indignation, they consistently smoulder with it. Thirdly, Schweickart – despite having started out as an assistant professor of mathematics – resists the temptation to baffle us (or, at least, to baffle *me*) with vectors and graphs. The obsession with mathematical logic amongst contemporary Anglophone Marxist philosophers – in the name of 'clarity' no less – has too often placed debate over crucial issues beyond the reach of all but an initiated few. Schweickart's model of Economic Democracy, then, *compares* favourably with capitalism. Whether this sort of comparative assessment will have much impact upon the dynamics of current and prospective political developments is, of course, an entirely different matter.

**Marcus Roberts**

## The music of ordinary language

Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises*, Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1994. xv + 196 pp., £20.75 hb., 0 674 66980 0.

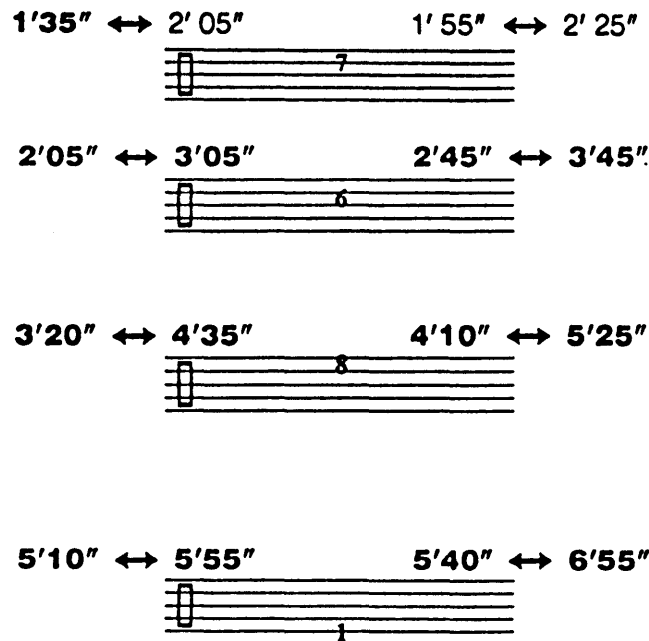
The three lectures contained in this book form the latest steps in the progress of Stanley Cavell's life-long attempt to inherit the work of Wittgenstein and Austin for philosophy in America. The first recounts certain passages of Cavell's biography, focusing on his relations with his parents and the ways in which he left home and came to dedicate his life to philosophy rather than music; in the second, he attempts to revise the story of Derrida's encounter with ordinary language philosophy by responding to 'Signature Event Context' otherwise than Searle, in a tone he considers more genuinely authorized by that of his first teacher, Austin; in the third, he discusses fragments from a number of operas, claiming to hear in the female voice thus set to music versions of the despair and hope ignited by a perception that the world as it stands neighbours one which, in its furthering of justice and authentic individuality, constitutes at once a rebuke and an attraction. The sequence as a whole is framed by an overture, concluding acknowledgements and a set of epigraphs from Gershom Scholem that firmly locates it in Jerusalem – the place of the lectures' original delivery, the ground of a distinctively Jewish mysticism, and a site verging upon both the Eastern and the Western worlds. As is increasingly the case with Cavell's recent work, a familiarity with the broad outlines of his earlier

writings is, if not essential, then at least mightily helpful in appreciating the deeper reasons for what may otherwise appear as a startling and obscurely motivated conjunction of topics and texts within and between the book's chapters. I will try to sketch in some elements of this backdrop, whilst looking at the lectures in reverse order.

'Opera and the Lease of Voice' knits together two strands in Cavell's previous work – his identification of a dimension of moral thinking which he has labelled 'Emersonian Perfectionism', and his characterization of a film genre that he calls 'The Melodrama of the Unknown Woman'. Moral perfectionism pictures the self as doubled or split between an attained state and an unattained, but attainable, state that constitutes a further development of its personal (and so its moral) powers. The split is ineradicable (each unattained state, once attained, can be seen to neighbour a further, unattained one), the balance between the two halves is delicate (if one does not eclipse the other, it is eclipsed by it), and the goal of continuously striving to attain one's unattained self can be decisively helped or hindered by the interventions of society and its members. In the film melodramas, Cavell finds women whose attained state is typically – sometimes unbreakably – enforced by the

men (and women) they encounter, but who sometimes find it possible to refuse such conformity even in the absence of a man (or a woman) capable of attracting them to non-conformity. In this lecture, Cavell finds their sisters to be everywhere in opera – to the point at which he is prepared to claim that film (of this and related kinds) is or was our opera, that opera transformed itself into film. His guiding idea is that opera, with its distinctive conception of the relation between voice and body contesting the parallel emphasis on relations between character and actor that are central to the ontology of theatre and film, thereby establishes a distinctive mode of representing the male need and fear of the female voice, a voice that makes manifest the perfectionist dimension of language and thought and whose fate (variously appropriated, suffocated and liberated) therefore figures the fate of the human capacity (integral to men and women alike) for self-overcoming.

'Counter-Philosophy and the Pawn of Voice' is by far the longest and the most self-contained of these lectures, and constitutes the most sustained treatment Cavell has yet given of the relations between his version of ordinary language philosophy and deconstruction. His first book, with its questioning of the border between philosophy and literature and its diagnosis of a concern for the presence of the world in sceptical doubts about its reality, suggested affinities with Heidegger and Derrida; and later work – on Romanticism, psychoanalysis and politics – seemed to confirm these thematic and methodological links. But his equally persistent reliance upon ordinary language, and his characterization of his work as an attempt to restore the human voice to philosophy, just as strongly suggested fundamental disagreements. Here, Cavell demonstrates how deeply these mutual affinities and repulsions run. Unlike Searle, Cavell is sensitive to the fact that every term relevant to the debate between Austin and Derrida – intention, context, communication, and so seemingly endlessly on – is contested; and he respects Derrida's project enough to wish to elicit from Austin's text answers to – rather than dismissals of – the questions he poses. But in the course of providing them, Cavell shows that what Derrida treats as suspicious exclusions from Austin's account of speech acts (the phenomena of excuses and of 'non-serious' utterances) are in fact dealt with in detail elsewhere in Austin's work, that these detailings add up to a profoundly perceptive (if significantly skewed) portrayal of the fact that human life is constrained at once to the life of the body and the life of the mind, and that



such insights are traceable in the lineaments of (our life with) ordinary language. In so doing, Cavell enacts his conviction that the voice he wishes to return to philosophy is opposed to that of metaphysics rather than being an effect of it, and that the ordinariness of its natural language encompasses structures of figuration, issues of politics and morality, and reaches of implication going beyond personal decision. What he contests at every point is the idea that these extraordinary complexities take meaning beyond ordinary human acknowledgement.

'Philosophy and the Arrogation of Voice' confronts head-on the objection most often made to the tone of Cavell's philosophical voice – its seemingly unremitting reference to (at once equated with display of, and thence with indulgence of) self. In part, this is simply a function of the increasingly complex and idiosyncratic path of his thinking; without constant reference to, and elucidation of, his earlier writings, the point of his later work is increasingly hard to discern. Most fundamentally, however, it is a function of what he takes the method of ordinary language philosophy to demand. In so far as this depends upon recalling 'what we say when', recounting the criteria of words held in common, it necessarily embodies the presumption that a claim grounded in the speaker's imaginings of what he or she would say and do can be representative or exemplary of any and all other speakers, and so of the human condition as such. In other words, ordinary language philosophers ground their authority to speak for others in autobiography (rather than logic or intelligence or purity); modes of self-reference, or self-reliance, empower everything they do. And the claim Cavell

makes in this lecture reiterates this insight at the level of philosophical method: if the basis of his claim to be speaking for others concerning the criteria of ordinary words is and can only be autobiographical, then the same must be true of his claim to be speaking for philosophy in so doing. In other words, if his claim to be speaking as a philosopher in speaking this way is itself to be philosophically well grounded, its basis must also be autobiographical; the features of his life that led to his inheritance of this method as exemplary of philosophy as such must themselves be exemplary of what it is to inherit philosophy, to live a life of which philosophy is the condition.

And Cavell's opening autobiographical exercise ultimately delivers just such a set of conditions – conditions including that of arrogating the right to authorize his own existence by intercepting the conversation of his parents and translating their words by finding a version of perfect pitch. The way in which these findings are meant to enable critical as well as clinical insights is perhaps best exemplified in Cavell's

presentation of Austin's telling examples as the philosophical transfiguration of his father's story-telling skills and his mother's perfect pitch. This is intended not just to account for his own conversion to ordinary language philosophy, but also to elucidate the balance between male and female registers of language and thought that (his version of) ordinary language philosophy at once draws upon and advocates. The autobiographical frame of these three lectures accordingly embodies the implicit claim that the multifaceted nature of the material they contain, as well as that of the earlier work from which they are derived, manifest a unity that is of philosophical interest as well as personal significance. The book as a whole thus aims to make it as clear as possible that Cavell cultivates rather than represses the uniqueness of his tone of voice, precisely in order to test philosophically whether there are any limits to the commonness of humanity; and it challenges those of its readers who are repelled by that tone to test whether their repulsion is of anything more than clinical interest.

**Stephen Mulhall**

## Much ado about difference

Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*, New York and London, Routledge, 1993. xvii + 319 pp., £19.99 hb., 0 415 90486 2.

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. xiii + 285 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 01635 5 hb., 0 415 05406 0 pb.

One of the essays in Cornel West's miscellaneous collection *Keeping Faith* discusses the dilemma of the black intellectual in contemporary North American society, caught between the white bourgeois academy and the parochial discourses of African American intellectual life. It describes three models to be rejected – the bourgeois humanist, the Marxist and the postmodern – and a fourth, the 'insurgency model of the black intellectual as critical organic catalyst', which it advocates. This model recuperates elements of the discarded ones, and roots them in 'the specificity of African American life and history' (there is an abundant rhetoric of specificity in West's writing), to create an intellectual praxis which is 'particularist though not exclusivist – hence ... international in outlook and practice'. Slippages of this kind also abound. The catch-all vagueness of this favoured model matches West's own untheorized eclecticism in these reviews and essays of a decade or more. As a social commentator he is often sharp, but as a theorist he lacks rigour or system. There is certainly nothing in these pieces to justify intellectually the dismissal of the three models he sweeps aside to clear

the ground for what is little more than an idealized description of his own intellectual practice. Moreover, to put it bluntly, the book displays symptoms of the bourgeois type he dismisses – 'the intellectual as star, celebrity, commodity'. Tell-tale signs include the fluent but numbingly repetitive recycling of the same few ideas for almost any occasion, and the incessant listing of the names of intellectual confrères as a substitute for the specificity he rhetorically proclaims. There is no doubt that the subject to which he repeatedly returns – the alienation of contemporary black intellectuals from politics – is important and troubling. West's description of this condition is clear and pointed. But these essays take us no further.

From this side of the Atlantic the missing term in West's discourse is post-coloniality. This category, however contested, would offer West an escape from the essentialist implications of many of his arguments. It would, for example, enable him to bridge his insistence on African American cultural forms as the basis of his insurgency model, with his parenthetical concession that a black infrastructure for intellectual activity should

include persons of any colour as a prelude to the emergence of new cultural forms in a 'post-Western civilization'.

Homi Bhabha is one of the most sophisticated theorists of post-coloniality. One of the epigraphs to his *The Location of Culture* is from a Johnny Mercer song – 'Don't Mess with Mister In-be-tween'. This can also serve as a warning to readers. Bhabha is the Professor of In-be-tween. The key terms of his own discourse are marginality, hybridity, ambivalence, indeterminacy. Another of his epigraphs is from Heidegger: 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but ... that from which *something begins its presencing*.' For Bhabha, the epistemological limits of the ethnocentricity which characterizes Western cultures have, in these postmodern times, become 'the enunciative boundaries' of a multiplicity of dissonant and dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups, those with policed sexualities. It is here, from between the cracks in the pavement ('interstices') that our cherished concepts of homogeneous national cultures, consensual historical traditions, organic ethnic communities and so on are being undermined. This rests on a distinction increasingly important in Bhabha's recent essays between culture as epistemological object and enunciatory site. Attempting to understand culture as the latter is a 'liberatory discursive strategy', based on a recognition that 'emergent cultural identifications are articulated at the liminal edge of identity', within that arbitrary closure, that so-called 'unity', which Western cultures propound. This, in turn, is part of Bhabha's long-



term attempt to break down the rigid self/other distinction while avoiding the merely inverted polarities of a counter-politics of exclusion. There is a persisting commitment in all the essays which make up this book to 'erase the politics of binary opposition'.

Bhabha goes about his task with a bewildering mixture of sophistication and naivety. The complexity and ambition are undeniable. From within the field of colonial discourse studies he has continued to worry away at the central problems bequeathed by its founding text, Edward Said's *Orientalism*. And from within the related but distinct field of post-colonial theory, he engages with postmodernism and its problematic relation to radical politics. The naivety is political. Bhabha's wide-eyed and excited listing of transgressive discourses which unsettle the liberal ethic of tolerance, and the pluralist framework of multiculturalism, recalls Walter Benjamin's enchantment, in the 1930s, with the revolutionary potential of cinema and writing letters to the newspaper. Like Benjamin, Bhabha seriously underestimates the way in which such apparently transgressive discourses are sidelined or incorporated. Bhabha writes that although the 'great connective narratives of capitalism and class drive the engines of social reproduction', these cannot, in themselves, provide a frame for 'those modes of cultural identification and political affect that form around issues of sexuality, race, feminism, the lifeworld of refugees or migrants, or the deathly social destiny of AIDS'. If only capitalism and class were really so helpless. Bhabha looks out on a different world from the one I see, in which the insistence on homogeneous national cultures, and the racism and exclusivity which follow from this, are overwhelming, and the kinds of challenge mounted by the liberatory discourse Bhabha celebrates depressingly inadequate. The politics of cultural difference are altogether more urgent, and the position of the migrant far more desperate than this volume ever begins to recognize. For many people the position of 'in-between' is life-threatening, and their fragmented identities are the sign of damage rather than of discursive possibility. To say this is not to fall into the binarism of theory and politics which Bhabha deplores. It is rather to point to another example of the disturbing political blindness of much critical theory in this century.

What Bhabha does repeatedly is to set up a kind of Whiggism in which the ethnocentric certainties of the past are being marvellously dissolved by the indeterminacies of the present. He manages to do this because of the primacy he accords to discourse. The central Marxist proposition that social being determines consciousness is inverted. Bhabha's position is that we

are constituted by discourse. It follows therefore that challenges to dominant discourses can seem to have the power of a mobilized class or the Red Army. Bhabha, of course, would answer this absurd charge by emphasizing the dialectical nature of such relationships and their consequent indeterminacy. But this is to beg the question. Consciousness starts somewhere, and to deny the primacy of social being is to reproduce in different form

the orthodox liberal ideology against which Bhabha's project is directed. If the Enlightenment values upon which liberal ideology is based are rejected wholesale (in yet another counter-politics of binary oppositions), rather than seen as radically incomplete, then it is no wonder that postmodernism is left playing with itself, while diversity and difference are systematically being eliminated outside – and inside – the academy.

**Rod Edmond**

## The future of the past

Malcolm Bowie, *Psychoanalysis and the Future of Theory*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1993. x + 162 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.90 pb., 0 631 18925 4 hb., 0 631 18926 2 pb.

Teresa Brennan, *History After Lacan*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. xv + 239 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 01116 7 hb., 0 415 01117 5 pb.

Millennial thinking takes many forms, amongst them a concern with theorising the future and making sense of the past. The tools for doing this are few: what is needed is something that can articulate the relentless unknowability of the future – its status as something constantly producing but never solid – yet give solace that it may be connected with what we already know, may not be totally alien to us. The two texts reviewed here, in differing ways, try to do precisely this, by turning to psychoanalysis. That is, they try to employ psychoanalysis as an object of scrutiny and as a tool for unravelling what may be on its way – they try to learn some lessons from the past to project forwards into the future.

Malcolm Bowie's elegant series of lectures is the more successful of the two enterprises, perhaps precisely because its lucidity and stylistic beauty make it compelling and enchanting reading. He takes us through a series of engagements with psychoanalysis, mostly Freud but with a Lacanian gloss and an explicit discussion of Lacan in the first lecture. These engagements range from an explicit discussion of the attitude of psychoanalysis to the future, to explorations of the way psychoanalysis and the artistic consciousness intermingle to offer some hope or grasp on imagination.



It is the imagination, in particular, that seems to offer a way forward for us as we approach the year 2000, uncertain about how to rescue some optimism from the fading landscape of destruction. There are very few certainties around, so imagining some 'elsewhere', some alternative patterns of being, is all we can do.

Bowie is most tuned in to the ironic pessimism to be found in Freud and Lacan, the way they reproduce in their writing a sense of the impossibility of ever knowing anything, of ever having meaning in one's grasp. In this way, the parallels between the future and the structures of the unconscious, and of knowledge, are irrefutable. Compare, for example, these two passages from Bowie's book. The first is a description of Lacan's viewpoint on the human subject of history:

For the subject, the present is not later than the past and not earlier than the future, because the present is the continual bringing into contact of past meanings that can be restructured but never shed and future meanings that can be restructured but never actualised.

The second quotation concerns the Freudian unconscious, which, as

the unappeasable spectre at every communicative feast, prevents meaning from reaching fullness, completion, closure, consummation. Meaning is to be had in psychoanalysis only intermittently, as a momentary purchase achieved upon a constant interplay of levels, systems, structures, registers, intensities and investments. Psychoanalysis is a theory of meaning not simply arrived at and grasped, but dawning and expiring, still out of sight and already on the wane.

The lyric beauty of this writing is itself a form of contact

with the past, a modernist sensibility at work evoking the doom-laden structures of our constant search for fulfilment and rest. These things cannot be, warns Bowie: psychoanalysis reveals the way the future-imagined-as-ideal is really a refusal to face up to the past, and it shows how the constant slipperiness of the unconscious calls into question any claim to mastery or knowledge of what one is or can become. In this latter perception, it should be noted, is revealed the shadow of Lacan.

Bowie points to an ambiguity in Freud's thinking on the unconscious, between a reductionist search for causes and a celebration of the endless transformative possibilities of unconscious functioning. This is related to a further complementary division, between the unconscious as a causal mechanism erupting from time to time into everyday perception and behaviour (an image of revolution), and a view of the unconscious as 'the underlying condition of all mental acts, operating uninterruptedly and without regard for the individual's declared goals'. Bowie presents this latter contrast in the context of an appraisal of the links between psychoanalysis and the music of, first, Mahler (eruption) and, second, Schoenberg (continuity). These two parallel contrasts can also be seen as alternative responses to the millennial consciousness: this something may come, the big unspeakable, to turn our world upside down; or that that something is already to be found inside us, and is endlessly playful, provocative, and transformative. The analytic tools offered by psychoanalysis to make sense of the various experiences which this way of thinking conjures up can be applied helpfully to art and to philosophy, as Bowie applies them. But their strongest feature is to offer us a way into imagining things anew, so that we can begin to face them in all their awful and exciting productivity.

The great strength of Bowie's little book is its demonstration of the fecundity and surprisingness which continue to reside in psychoanalytic thinking, achieved in no small part by the way psychoanalysis is used non-reductively to create a closer engagement with artistic experience. It is hard to be as positive about Teresa Brennan's book, which is portentous and laboured. But then her subject matter is the grand scheme of the social and the economic, and it is perhaps appropriate to be grimmer and more complex when faced with these things. In a way, Brennan addresses the difficulty of her book in a brief preface devoted to the difficulty of writing in the 'propositional mode' – putting forward something new – as opposed to recasting the views and perceptions of others. Holding onto a new thought – *concentrating* for long enough – has become more and more problematic as what Brennan terms 'the ego's era' has

developed, so it is perhaps not surprising that a mostly 'propositional' book should be hard to read. Whether this is the entire explanation for its difficulty, I am not sure, but this is at least a viable interpretation of what that difficulty might express.

Brennan's main proposition, her 'Thesis 1', is of the existence of a 'foundational fantasy':

The subject is founded by a hallucinatory fantasy in which it conceives itself as the locus of active agency and the environment as passive; its subjectivity is secured by a projection onto the environment, apparently beginning with the mother, which makes her into an object which the subject in fantasy controls.

This fantasy is quintessentially a Western one, linked with the imperialistic imperative of Western technology which it predicates, but upon which it feeds. It is illusory for all the reasons which Derrida has adduced, and operates subjectively through the projective processes adumbrated mainly by Melanie Klein in the context of an account of the infant's relationship to the mother's body. In turn, Lacan's theory of the ego and its objectifying characteristics makes it clear how the subjective phantasmatic arena of control of the other can be translated into a historical process of territorial advancement and metaphorical and real enslavement of others – fixing the other in a constrained space as a way of dominating and living out the foundational fantasy that the subject is the centre of all things.

What prevents this account from being limited to another deconstructive examination of the false premisses upon which the Western subject is produced is Brennan's idea (her Thesis 4, in fact) that there is really a 'foundation before the subjective foundation' – but that this is social and political in form. A good deal of her book is devoted to following this up by exploring the interchanges between political economy and subjectivity, as well as teasing out the political consequences of the foundational fantasy's development. As Brennan notes, her political economy is 'speculative', but then the importance of imagining something different is where we began.

In some respects, the most engaging and human parts of Brennan's propositional account are its implicit appeal for more connection between people, and the way she makes the subject/object boundary evaporate by incorporating all of nature into her thinking on exploitation. There is a political programme to be found here; it takes some effort to unearth it, but no one said that the next millennium will be easy.

**Stephen Frosh**

# Not all said and done

Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1994. xii + 324 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 631 14673 3 hb., 0 631 19181 X pb.

This fascinating and finely wrought study works in a variety of ways to achieve multiple ends. It is a most timely political intervention on Beauvoir's behalf, affording a judicious review of her critical reception that acts as a powerful plea to feminism to reconsider currently suppressed or marginalised aspects of her utopian aspiration. It offers an ambitious and thought-provoking psychoanalysis of its subject, in which the evidence of the 'real' life and of both its official and fictional versions are neatly counterposed. But it is also the most contextualised portrait of Beauvoir produced to date, firstly because it so fully situates her career in the social and intellectual history of her time, and secondly because it is the first full-length appraisal of her contribution to be conducted in the light of the feminist critique of philosophy to which she herself pointed the way.

Here we are offered a moving, if often disturbing, account of Beauvoir's bid for personal coherence in a culture profoundly opposed in its modes of thinking and desiring to the idea that a woman could conjointly be both intellectually and sexually compelling (and needing). It is all the more poignant because we cannot but be retrospectively aware of how far Beauvoir's own struggles with this patriarchal schizophrenia have helped to relieve us today of some of its more absurd and cruel constraints on subjective integration. Whatever the weaknesses of her analysis of the female condition, and however distressed, even repelled, we may be by some of her personal responses to that condition, if women in the West today are no longer confronted by the frustrations of her dilemma to anything like the same degree, we owe it in large measure to Beauvoir's resolute assertion – in her life as in her work – of the equal rights of women unthinkingly to be both thinking and sexual subjects.

But this is also a portrait of a figure who is caught in the patriarchal trap she helps to spring: who intellectually subscribes to many of the conceptions of gender difference by which she is emotionally circumscribed, and who continues to write the text of philosophical sexism which for the first time she begins to make legible. Moi reveals to us a Beauvoir of whom we might say that she could not see what she had seen, could not view her own life history as in many ways repeating the story of philosophy's dominance and masculinity even as she delivers such a telling challenge to the supposed

universalism of its narrative. Thus, although she opens the dialogue between feminism and philosophy, in being deprived of the benefit of its subsequent discussions, she remains in an important sense product and victim of a too little troubled patriarchal conscience.

One way, in fact, of viewing Moi's book is as a continuous engagement at a number of abstract and formal levels with the essential problem of which Angela Carter's question might be said to be the irreverent metaphor. 'Why is a nice girl like Simone wasting her time sucking up to a boring old fart like J-P?' Her work opens with an extended perusal of why it is that Beauvoir so readily embraces Sartre's demolition of her argument in the famous encounter in the Luxembourg Gardens, yields 'philosophy' up to him in the selfsame process in



which she gains him as a lover, and settles for her 'secondary' status in regard to him. For, as Moi ably shows, in terms of her own achievements at that point Beauvoir had no objective reason to place herself below him. Nor is it clear, Moi suggests, that we should view her subsequent writing as any the less astute than Sartre's, reliant though it obviously is upon his prior production of its existentialist framework. Juxtaposing the description in *L'Invitée* of Françoise's 'seduction' of Gerbert to Sartre's illustration of the woman's 'bad faith' in the café 'flirtation' scene in *Being and Nothingness*, Moi makes out a good case for viewing Beauvoir in her fiction as having more to say about 'freedom' and 'authenticity' than her philandering partner ever dreamt of in his philosophy. And when she turns in some of the

most substantial chapters of her book to the argument of *The Second Sex*, it is to reveal something of the same conundrum of Beauvoir's willing subordination of herself/the 'feminine' to Sartre/'philosophy' in the form of its central paradoxes: that the greatest anti-patriarchal text reads like the work of a dutiful daughter bent on pleasing her father; that its perceptive account of femininity functions as a foil to what amounts to little more than mindless admiration of masculinity; and that it is hampered throughout by its imitation of Sartrean categories which it had perforce, albeit almost unconsciously, to rework and correct as a condition of their serving in the task she had embarked upon.

Yet it would be mistaken to imply that Moi is staging some competition for intellectual honours between Sartre and Beauvoir, with a view to transferring the crown to the latter. Her interest is not in feminist point-scoring, but in revealing the extent to which Beauvoir's relations with Sartre were emblematic of her relationship to the 'master' discipline of philosophy, and of her idealisation of masculinity. The central aim of her study is to explore the sources in Beauvoir herself of these dispositions, while at the same time unravelling some of their more paradoxical features by relating these to the social and sexual asymmetries of her positioning. Under the first aspect, she offers a psychoanalysis of Beauvoir as formed in reaction to her mother, whose overly appropriative and suffocating presence in her childhood she in a sense 'kills' off as a condition of finding her voice as a writer, but whose internalised presence within herself remains a continuous threat to her stability throughout her life: a siren call to abandonment, self-abjection and engulfment within the most passive and shameful forms of 'feminine' dependency. Under the second, she explores in detail the differential conditions to which she was subject – in upbringing, in education, in the reception of her work – by virtue of being a member of the 'second' sex in an intellectual climate tailored to the 'first'.

In a work as complex as this, there are bound to be points of detail one will want to contest. To mention but one: while Moi deals brilliantly with the sexism of Sartre's illustration of 'bad faith', she is surely mistaken in presenting him as attempting to prove the possibility of lying to the self, rather than the reverse. What seemed lacking here was proper recognition of the extent to which the account of 'bad faith' is offered as a challenge to the Freudian picture of the psyche as that of a subject who, impossibly but necessarily, must be capable of lying to the self. This smaller point connects to some larger methodological questions about the compatibility of psychoanalytic and existentialist approaches to the 'making' of the person, and to the interpretation and

promotion of a feminist politics. But if Moi's book does not directly discuss this 'question of method' and its implications for personal agency and political freedom, it constantly and most illuminatingly confronts us with their tensions in a biography which is triumphantly dialectical and marvellously readable.

**Kate Soper**

## Backwards and forwards

Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. x + 211 pp., £37.50 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 10346 0 hb., 0 415 10347 9 pb.

It makes a change to read a book on Schelling in English. Mind you, it makes a change to read a book on Schelling, which only goes to bear out Andrew Bowie's diagnosis: the relative neglect of Schelling's work is due to its being widely seen as the arcane and idiosyncratic product of a less notable contemporary of Hegel. Indeed, think of almost any book on Hegel, and Schelling figures as an early influence, until the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is discussed, whereupon Hegel's younger coadjutor is summarily demonstrated to have shot the absolute from a pistol or to have drowned the concept in the night in which all cows are black. Perhaps it is poetic justice then, that, in a book on Schelling, Hegel should be allotted only a brief appearance in Chapter Six.

Bowie's book is not a monograph on Schelling, nor is it about Schelling's undoubted influence on the post-Hegelian generation, from Feuerbach and Marx through to Kierkegaard and Bakunin. (Indeed, the author does not even mention the Bakunin connection, as if to keep Schelling's anarcho-existentialism well under wraps, along with his theology.) It is an introduction to Schelling's work and its actuality, maintaining both that he is (or should be) central to our understanding of European philosophy, not just in the immediate Hegelian aftermath but right up to the present day, and that his thought has accrued a new relevance, in the light of contemporary 'post-metaphysical' thinking in the analytic and Continental traditions.

What Bowie does, with considerable tenacity, is to wade more or less chronologically through the whole gamut of Schelling's work, pointing out the thematic continuity. This is quite a feat, since Schelling was an infant prodigy, who lived nearly as long as Goethe, and was notoriously impatient with his own projects, which

were legion. Nonetheless, the crucial difference with Hegel is present, now implicitly, now explicitly, in all of Schelling's work. The difference consists in a single problem. Is reflection a self-grounding self-relation, one which, as Hegel contends, can be made intelligible from its own resources; or is, as Schelling insists, reflection always insufficient unto itself and in need of a prior, pre-reflective (hence also un- or pre-conscious) ground. Clearly Bowie sides with Schelling and he cites an impressive array of authorities, from Sartre to Davidson, to add weight to his claims. But whilst Bowie, in tune with Manfred Frank's thesis in *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein* (1975), is persuasive on this issue, I doubt whether the position against which he is arguing has such wide currency nowadays, even amongst Hegelians.

To take three different contemporary thinkers working in the Hegelian tradition – Habermas (who, Bowie claims, has a Hegelian solution to the reflection problem), Theunissen and Pippin – it is precisely because they reject Hegel's error in trying to ground absolute spirit in the reflexive act of a monadic self-consciousness that they have developed their reconstructions of Hegel, as a philosopher of intersubjectivity, of communicative freedom, and of transcendental idealism respectively. Although Bowie's book is intended to be expository rather than critical, it seems to me that his claim about the hitherto unrecognised centrality of Schelling's thought in modern European philosophy must stand the test, not just of a critical confrontation with Hegel's logic of reflection, but with the traditions of philosophy (especially transcendental philosophy) which have arisen from the legacy of Hegel's Kant critique. Bowie only gestures at a critique of Habermas in the final pages and seems to regard Kant's epistemology (like Hegel and Schelling did) as crude transcendent realism.

The actuality of Schelling's thought turns out to be something of a poisoned chalice. Bowie convincingly shows that Schelling was more acutely aware than any of his generation of the danger of reducing the 'otherness' of nature to the 'identity' of spirit or mind. Yet in his anxiety to distance Schelling from post-Heideggerian critics of 'metaphysics' and subjectivity on the one hand, and from an all too Hegelian modern philosophy of reflection on the other, Bowie puts Schelling in an invidious position. What the latter gains in terms of centrality and significance to the tradition of modern European philosophy, he forfeits in (paralipomenic) actuality and vice versa. Responding to this difficulty, Bowie turns to the sturdy work of Donald Davidson and Hilary Putnam in order to show how Schelling's theory of reflection anticipates elements of a 'post-metaphysical' philosophy of language but does not yet

amount to the post-rationality of Rorty or Derrida. Thus one of the author's central claims – that Schelling's thought has acquired a new relevance – comes to rest upon the analogy between contemporary post-empiricism and Schellingian idealism. I am unconvinced that the analogy can bear the burden. For Schelling's proto-existentialist notion that there must be a pre-reflective and, by extension, pre-propositional grasp of existence *εξ αρχης* is a far stronger monistic claim than Davidson's fragile marriage between mental anomalism and the identity of physical and mental events. More work has to be done to make good the contention that the difference between the two positions is one of degree not quality.

The success of *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* rests on Bowie's ability to render bewilderingly complex Schellingian formulations in plain English and to sketch out arguments in terms which will be familiar to someone with a knowledge of contemporary thought but no expertise in German Idealism. It succeeds as an introduction to Schelling. I am not convinced that it succeeds as an introduction to modern European philosophy in the way in which the author intends. Sometimes, Bowie claims, we have to go back to go forwards, by which he means back to Schelling. Somehow one fears the phrase 'back to the pre-reflective familiarity with oneself' is not going to catch on amongst post-metaphysical philosophers. I hope I'm wrong.

**Gordon Finlayson**

## Dangerous philosophies

Dan W. Brock, *Life and Death: Philosophical Essays in Biomedical Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. xi + 435 pp., £40.00 hb., £13.95 pb., 0 521 41785 6 hb., 0 521 42833 5 pb.

Anne Maclean, *The Elimination of Morality: Reflections on Utilitarianism and Bioethics*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. x + 219 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 01081 0 hb., 0 415 09538 7 pb.

These are two very different books on the same subject. Brock's text would be valuable for any course in medical ethics, containing as it does a collection of challenging essays on a range of problems. Maclean's book, however, is about the very idea of medical ethics, and the plausibility of philosophy departments offering courses to health-care professionals.

Philosophers, argues Maclean, cannot teach moral expertise, because there is no such thing. She does not deny that there can be rational answers to moral dilemmas, but does deny that for any moral question there will be one right answer that can best be revealed through philosophy. To the extent that any medical ethics course claims to teach moral expertise, it is a fraud. Philosophers nevertheless have a valuable role. Philosophy's task is to offer a critique of medical ideology, a scientific reductionism that reduces people to machines for whom the only relevant need is efficient functioning. Philosophy should contribute to the ethical recovery of medical science, and this process should be the principal objective of health-care ethics. Courses that offer moral 'expertise' are a positive danger, in that they will re-enforce the power of the medical elite, giving them another 'expertise' they can use to silence ordinary people.

Brock sees the danger too. Commenting on his experience serving on the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine, he argues that there is a serious conflict between the goals of philosophical activity and public policy-making. The goal of scholarship is the discovery of truth – scholars follow arguments wherever they lead, without regard for the consequences. The impotence of academics means they need not be morally concerned with the social consequences of their work: philosophers can propose policies that would be greeted with public outrage, safe in the knowledge that the public will rarely come across their work. Philosophers who move into the policy-making domain, however, must take more care. Brock saw his role on the commission as persuasion and even manipulation of the commissioners, to ensure they arrived at the least-worst policy, even where that meant presenting only half of an argument in case the policy-makers misinterpreted the whole.

Philosophers teaching health-care professionals face the same danger. Maclean makes the point that it is one thing to say to other philosophers that the lives of infants are at our disposal, but another to say it to people responsible for the care of infants. It seems that philosophers who teach medical ethics perform a challenging and dangerous task.

However, Maclean's book is predominantly a critique of the main position in medical ethics, which she terms 'bioethics', especially its approach to the question of the value of life. This position holds that the most valuable lives belong to persons, because only persons are beings capable of desiring to continue their existence. In practice, persons are beings with rational self-consciousness. Anything that lacks this capacity cannot

be morally wronged by being killed.

This has serious implications for infants and people in persistent vegetative states (PVS), as they do not count as persons according to this approach. Brock argues that the severely demented are also not persons and therefore have no claim to resources needed to sustain life. The severely demented lack personhood because they have lost the capacity to see themselves as self-conscious individuals persisting through time. They therefore cannot have the desire to continue living, and cannot be morally wronged by being killed.

This is not to say that the severely demented have no rights to medical care – they have the right to measures that treat them with dignity, out of respect for the person they once were. But here Brock gets himself into difficulties. The original claim was that only rational self-conscious beings have valuable lives that merit moral respect, but Brock allows that the *former* possession of rational self-consciousness is morally significant too. This also applies to the dead. Brock observes that the bodies of the dead must be treated with dignity respecting the persons, and the persons' wishes, whose bodies they once were. Now Brock has brought in respect for the *wishes* of the ex-person – but if the dead can have interests based upon the wishes of the person they once were, then so can the severely demented and PVS patients.

If a person expressly wished that they should not have treatment withdrawn if they become severely demented or in a persistent vegetative state, this is a morally good reason not to withdraw treatment. If they expressly wished that they be actively killed if they were to lapse into such a state, this is a morally good reason to kill them. That is not to say that the wishes of the patient are morally binding, but they must carry some moral weight, especially if we value autonomy.

Maclean insists that all human beings have equal value, but this does not commit us to saying that euthanasia or infanticide are always wrong: the decision to end treatment for, or to kill, another human being must be based upon moral respect for that being.

According to the bioethical approach, we resolve moral dilemmas by showing that they are not dilemmas at all. We can switch off the life-support machine of a PVS patient because their continuing life has no moral significance. But switching of the life-support machine remains a tragedy for the human being involved and for those closest to them. It is this blindness to moral tragedy that Maclean finds most disturbing about the bioethical approach.

This is perhaps her most important message. At a time when the cost of medical care is under political scrutiny,

it is important to stress that problems in health care are *moral* issues, not merely issues of efficiency. If the bioethical approach has the effect of making moral dilemmas *disappear*, then Maclean is right that it is not merely philosophically muddled, but also dangerous.

Phillip Cole

## Dying properly

Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, translated by Thomas Dutoit, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993. x + 87 pp., £25.00 hb., £9.95 pb., 0 8047 2233 1 hb., 0 8047 2252 8 pb.

This is the text of Derrida's paper to a conference on '*Le Passage des Frontières*' held in 1992. At least three types of border limits are explored: cultural borders, disciplinary borders, and conceptual borders in general. The reader is treated to some of Derrida's most ingenious manoeuvrings as these types are gathered together. The issue through which Derrida works his web is the question of the humanity/animality distinction as it pertains to Heidegger's analysis of the death of the entity that 'we', the questioners, are: the death of the entity that Heidegger calls *Dasein*.

Through a reconsideration of a variety of 'discourses on death', from Seneca to modern anthropology, Derrida argues that the major traits of Heidegger's analysis are prefigured in traditional ways of thinking. With a welcome lack of pathos, Derrida describes this tradition as one captivated by the idea that humanity has lost sight of the truth about death: 'death is no longer what it used to be.' Our culture of death is vulgar (and who can deny that?). We are not, it seems, dying properly.

Derrida's interrogation of this broad tradition takes its point of departure from an examination of Heidegger's *absolute* exclusion of a 'proper death' to animality. According to Heidegger, while *Dasein* may fail to live up to its potential to be towards its own death authentically, animals can *never* properly die at all. Animality has its own kind of end, namely, perishing; but to perish is, for Heidegger, not to die, still less to die properly. Against Heidegger, Derrida aims to undermine the security and rigour of this distinction and to attest to the unremarkable truth 'that animals also *die*'.

In order to see what is at stake in such an apparently insignificant acknowledgement we need to consider one of the other *frontières* explored in *Aporias*: the kind of borderline that characterizes conceptual limits. From his earliest writings Derrida has sought to challenge the ancient and humanist assumption that 'when no unity of

meaning is even promised to it, one is outside language. And consequently outside humanity' (*Margins of Philosophy*). *Aporias* shows why the Heideggerian desire to draw an absolute and uncrossable limit between the concepts of 'humanity' and 'animality' by reference to the death-relation remains within the compass of this metaphysical humanism.

Heidegger's exclusion of animality from the realm of the mortal is practised at the margins of a text, the central aim of which is to isolate and clarify an authentic relation to death which can or should be properly 'our own' alone. Derrida's reading aims to identify within the Heideggerian clarification of this relation the transgression of the marginal exclusion – and to show that the supposed isolation of an authentic relation to death *depends* on such transgression. This is carried out through an examination of the Heideggerian thought that 'death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*.'

Derrida notes that what is ultimately in question with this impossibility is *Dasein*'s potential for access to the world *as* world. According to Heidegger, *Dasein*, and *Dasein* alone, has access to the world in the mode of 'something *as* something'. That is, *Dasein*, uniquely, has access to the identificatory border limits of phenomena 'as such'. And death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of such access.

In the course of a sometimes head-spinning elucidation of this impossibility, Derrida uncovers a problem that threatens the 'ruination' of Heidegger's account of the 'as such' of *Dasein*'s openness in general: 'If the impossibility of the "as such" is indeed the impossibility of the "as such"', then, Derrida insists, 'it is also what cannot appear *as such*.'

The importance of this observation should not be underestimated. According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is distinguished from every other entity in having access to worldly phenomena 'as such'. This mark of distinction is supposedly *founded* on *Dasein*'s unique potential for access to the possibility of its own death *as* death. The problem is, however, that this possibility is in the form of an essential *non-access* to death as such. And this is precisely what was held to be the characteristic lack of all living things '*outside*' of *Dasein*. Thus, even while it aims to secure the distinction, Heidegger's own account winds up showing that one cannot sustain 'an absolutely pure and rigorously uncrossable limit' between humanity and animality.

Heidegger absolutely excludes animality from attaining a proper relation to death. Yet the logic of his own analysis only serves to show that exactly the same is true of human *Dasein*. Consequently, the attempt to

establish the propriety of an authentic/inauthentic distinction 'within' *Dasein* cannot be justified: it is founded on an illegitimately delimited conception of the entity that 'we' are as something more and better than a living thing.

Derrida does not deny that there are 'innumerable structural differences' between the human and non-human. However, his proposal for an alternative to Heidegger's humanist idealization does suggest an important continuity. In contrast to the traditional fixation with the circumstances of one's own death, Derrida aims to do justice to the familiar fact that a living thing, human or not, has its primary experience of death not in relation to itself but in relation to another: 'the death of the other thus becomes again "first", always first.' This does not imply that 'my death' means nothing. Rather, it implies that the meaning of 'my death' is internally related not to some impossible experience of my own death or of a beyond of 'my life', but, for example, to *mourning*.

As should be clear, this approach does not achieve a 'solution' to the 'problem' of 'my death', or indeed of 'dying properly' in general. Rather, it aims to teach that any such calculable solutions are *a priori* ruled out. Living on with borderlines is, in general, irreducibly *aporetical*: one 'simply' *cannot know* where to go. But an *irreducible* aporia is not simply an aporia: 'if one must endure the aporia ... [then] the aporia can never be simply endured *as such*.' In each case, the aporia calls for new decisions, and hence new ethico-political responsibilities. In the 'place' of the aporia, such is the limit and law of all calculability. Such is life.

**Simon Glendinning**

## Ignoble lies

Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993. xii + 475 pp., £22.50 hb., 0 300 05675 3.

The central claim of Lampert's prolix work is that a new history of philosophy can be written on the basis of the following three principles extrapolated from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'the greatest thoughts are the greatest events'; 'genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators'; and 'the difference between exoteric and esoteric [was] formerly known to philosophers'. Guided by these seemingly arbitrary criteria, Lampert proceeds to chart his so-called 'Nietzschean' history of philosophy, tracing a tendentious trajectory from Plato to Nietzsche via Bacon and Descartes.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the book's

historiographical bias and the specificity of Lampert's typology, Plato emerges as the prototypical 'Nietzschean' philosopher and Nietzsche as a typical 'Platonic' philosopher. The 'Nietzschean' philosopher is distinguishable by the nature of his deeds: the prudent dissemination of legislative ideas which will determine the course of cultural history; and the 'Platonic' philosopher by the nature of that which, according to Lampert, lies at 'the very core of Platonic philosophy' and impels him to action – philology and philanthropy. These two types of 'genuine philosophers' are clearly not mutually exclusive, but neither are they as cosily interchangeable as Lampert would have us believe.

Lampert defines philology and philanthropy as love of *logos* or reason and love of humankind, but his idiosyncratic application of these concepts testifies to the oversimplification of this etymology. According to Lampert, the Platonic philosopher is driven by a love of humanity, and the Nietzschean philosopher by a love of what is highest in humanity; both are motivated by a love of *logos*. Lampert then appears to conflate the two, arguing that 'the genuine philosopher acts out of a philanthropy that is a love of the highest in humanity, a love of reason or the *logos*.' But if the latter characterization is plausibly applicable in the case of Plato, it is wholly inapplicable in the case of Nietzsche, whose philological transvaluation of reason in philosophy as the 'noble lie' *par excellence* lends further support to the Heideggerian reading of Nietzsche as an *inverted* Platonist. Indeed, had Lampert interrogated Nietzsche's esotericism with the same rigour that he applies to the works of Bacon and Descartes, he would have discovered that his philological challenge, far from subverting Heidegger's reading (which is clearly Lampert's intention), in fact works in its favour.

Lampert does not, of course, overlook the fact that *logos* combines in its meaning both speech and reason. On the contrary, his critical approach to Bacon and Descartes exemplifies the philological art of distinguishing between esoteric and exoteric forms of speech or, to put it another way, of discerning the noble lies of philosophers, first practised by Plato. It is from the dual perspective of *this* type of Platonic philology, and the type of Platonic philanthropy that does not necessarily entail a love of what is highest in humanity, that Bacon and Descartes appear as exemplary Platonic philosophers. Focusing on Bacon's two unfinished works, *New Atlantis* and *An Advertisement Touching on Holy War*, and Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, Lampert convincingly demonstrates how both thinkers adopted the Platonic art of writing and, somewhat less convincingly, how Baconian and Cartesian natural

science – given their joint aim to free philosophy from the grip of religion and to produce material well-being through the mastery of nature – constitute a direct response to Plato's injunction to 'go down' out of love of humanity.

The final and most substantial part of Lampert's book is a defence of Nietzsche's vaunted claim to 'know the road [and to] have found the exit out of whole millennia of labyrinth' (*The Antichrist* §1). 'The road', we are told, is at once Platonic (in Lampert's narrow sense of the word) and anti-Platonic (in the more general sense): philology and philanthropy compel Nietzsche to expose the noble but nihilistic lies underpinning Western civilization, and to found a new 'tragic' society on the quicksand of ungodly truths. But for all Lampert's talk of affirmation and transcendence, Nietzsche's 'truth' – 'eternal recurrence' and the 'innocence of becoming' – was one that Nietzsche himself lacked the courage to affirm and that alone prohibited him from successfully transcending his age. Tragic insight might well be 'the exit' out of one form of nihilism, but it is just as surely the gateway into another, far more dangerous, form of nihilism. Even Nietzsche, *especially* Nietzsche, was unable to relinquish his dependence upon the necessary, if now ignoble, lie. *Incipit Zarathustra* ...

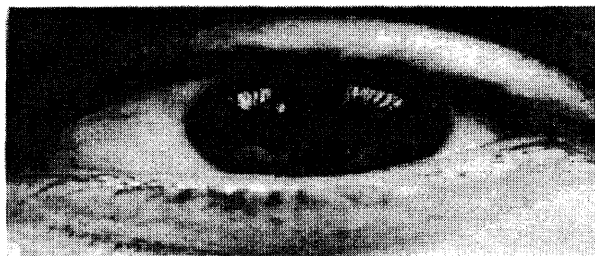
**Francesca Cauchi**

## In the labyrinth of the left

Jean-François Lyotard, *Political Writings*, translated by Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman, Foreword by Bill Readings, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993. xxvi + 352 pp., £38.00 hb., £13.95 pb., 1 85728 128 4 hb., 1 85728 129 2 pb.

The texts collected here cover a period of thirty years or more and deal with topics ranging from the Algerian war of independence to the student politics of the 1970s and the more recent controversies surrounding the 'Heidegger affair'. Many of the themes are familiar to any reader of Lyotard and some of these essays are little more than footnotes to longer works such as *The Differend* or *Heidegger and 'The Jews'*. Although it concentrates less on the political material, Andrew Benjamin's *Lyotard Reader* is probably a better introduction for the non-specialist.

Politically, Lyotard is marked mainly by his long-term membership of Socialisme ou Barbarie, an offshoot of the Fourth International founded by Castoriadis in



1949, and by his association with the Situationist International. The distinctive contribution of Socialisme ou Barbarie was the category of 'bureaucracy' or 'bureaucratization', originally developed as a critique of the Soviet Union, but easily rendered so elastic as to be applicable to everything from the emergent Algerian state to the French university system. The latter is certainly bureaucratic and the Algerian state has never been noted for being user-friendly, but one does wonder about the utility of a global category that takes so little account of specific differences.

Some curious contradictions emerge from Lyotard's peregrinations. The writer who supports the leftist students in Nanterre, intent upon destroying the 'system', also denounces Lacan's heavy-handed (and technically illegal) interventions at the University of Vincennes, on the very traditional grounds that they represent an abuse of power and an unwarranted intrusion into academic affairs. The philosopher who is so reluctant to 'be' an intellectual and to speak in the name of a universal subject bemoans the fact that it is so rare for anyone to receive a salary in exchange for a discourse termed 'philosophy'. Such contradictions – and it would be easy to find similar examples in the work of Foucault – no doubt reflect real institutional and political dilemmas. At a more banal level, they also appear to signal a reluctance to come to terms with the truism that most French philosophers are, in fact, employees of the state.

Many of the shorter and directly interventionist pieces in this collection require much more editorial annotation and contextualization than they receive: a reader without a fairly detailed knowledge of the labyrinth of left and far-left politics will soon get lost. As it is, they are of considerable documentary interest to the cultural-intellectual historian, but cannot really be seen as major contributions to any philosophical debate.

The most substantial section – published in book form in French – concerns the Algerian struggle for independence. Lyotard's stance – an honourable one – is one of critical support for the Front de Libération Nationale combined with the inevitable Cassandra-like warnings about the danger of bureaucratization and the emergence of a new exploiting class. His insistence that this was the *Algerians'* war allows him to avoid the vicarious identification with the nationalism of others

that characterized so much of the Third Worldist discourse of the 1960s. The absence of any significant discussion of Islam, on the other hand, suggests a certain inability or reluctance to come to terms with the specific otherness of Algerian nationalism.

Lyotard has been badly served by his translators. One has become accustomed to the odd translation standards and practices adopted in the field of postmodernism: *différend* is a fairly normal term in French and most readers can trace the semantics of Lyotard's playful use of a synonym for 'controversy' or 'difference of opinion'. Most English-speakers are going to have much more trouble with the imported *differend*. Other problems here are distinctly pre-modern and should have been avoided, as in the transmutation of the proletariat's labour-power into its 'labour force'. De Gaulle's tour of Algeria in March 1960 becomes 'the round of stay-at-homes' (*le tour des popotes*). *Popote* is a slang term for an army mess, and De Gaulle was trying to win the support of his increasingly rebellious officers in a series of informal mess-room discussions. Had the French army really consisted of 'stay-at-homes', Algeria's road to independence might have been a lot easier and less bloody.

**David Macey**

## The elusive phallus

Stephen Frosh, *Sexual Difference: Masculinity and Psychoanalysis*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. viii + 153 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 06843 6 hb., 0 415 06844 4 pb.

'Desiring to understand Lacan is like wanting to have the phallus', Frosh believes. This would certainly explain why he keeps returning to the exposition of Lacan's ideas, despite his irritation at the enigmatic writing of this man he also sees as both 'trickster and fraud'. Frosh's own particular treadmill, trying both to display and to dislodge phallic mastery, takes his readers, one more time, through the teasing – and for some now tiresome – rhetoric of Lacanian 'certainties': the penis is, and is not, aligned with the phallus; the phallus is, and is not, a masculine symbol. So we move forward (or don't) towards understanding the novel dynamics of Lacan's conventional male order: where man must search to have what he cannot have, and woman must pretend to be what she cannot be – the forever elusive phallus.

Frosh guides us, with heightened levels of clarity and critical edge, through territory he has covered fairly

thoroughly in his previous books, *The Politics of Psychoanalysis* (1987) and *Psychology and Psychoanalysis* (1989), comparing the 'maternalism' of Klein with a more extensive coverage of, and attachment to, the 'paternalism' of Lacan. It is a paternalism, we must hasten to add, which has next to nothing to do with any notion of 'fathering' (unlike Kleinian maternalism). The difference this time is that Frosh chooses to weave into his text more of his own personal experience as a man and a therapist, handling marital rifts and treating cases of male sexual violence and child abuse.

The predominantly Lacanian framing of his reflection, however, throws up a rather uncreative tension between the concrete interpersonal dynamics of the clinic and the grandiose claims of the Lacanian Symbolic. This tension feeds into the author's repeated self-lacerations: 'If I try to make a space for my masculinity in my work, particularly in my therapeutic work, I risk reproducing oppositions that bolster conventional divisions and assumptions rather than 'deconstructing' them and creating a more fluid space in which masculinity and femininity can merge.' Maybe, maybe not.

This book is an important addition to the growing work of men reflecting critically upon 'masculinity', with the aim of helping to remove its troubling connections with violence, dominance and sexual abuse. Frosh struggles, manfully, to subvert the categories of sexual difference, calling upon the rhythmic and fragmenting semiotic functioning of the Kristevian Imaginary for assistance. But the task overwhelms him. Trudging limply to his finale, spurred along just a little by the post-Lacanian voices of women which assert themselves as potential 'sowers of disorder', Frosh laments that his own imagination fails him. The possibility of admitting female power and agency seem forever crushed by the overweening pretensions of phallic masculinity: 'I have now almost completed writing a book on sexual difference, yet still cannot find any words for transgressing gender categories which are not themselves full to overflowing with those categories, which are not, once again, firmly rooted in the masculine.'

Before closing, he wonders whether his 'use of complex theories of the kind described in this book' may not be part of the problem. And this takes us all full circle right back to where we started from. I suspect Frosh is right to fear that unless he can find a way to reject the Lacanian certainty that to be a subject is, and only is, to pretend to possess the phallus, he must fail in his goal of finding a route beyond notions of male dominance and female submission; and fail, certainly, to find a route that might satisfy himself.

**Lynne Segal**

**Michael Keith and Steve Pile, eds, *Place and the Politics of Identity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993.**

**viii + 235 pp., £11.99 pb., 0 415 09008 3 hb., 0 415 09009 1 pb.**

The editors have put together a lively and stimulating collection of a dozen essays by radical geographers which goes a long way toward justifying their claim that all spatialities are political because they are the expression of asymmetrical relations of power. The volume contains a healthy mix of the empirical and the theoretical. I have to admit, however, that I was disappointed by the lack of engagement with the philosophical tradition. Only one of the contributors – Sue Golding, in a wonderfully adventurous and perverted essay, ‘Quantum Philosophy, Impossible Geographies and a few small points about life, liberty and the pursuit of sex (all in the name of democracy)’ – mentions figures such as Bachelard and Heidegger. The collection clearly demonstrates that radical geographers have a vital contribution to make to illuminating the new cultural politics, where the focus is on how a decentred ‘identity’ is forged and questions about place and space are foregrounded.

It is not surprising to find many of them preoccupied with the issue of postmodernity and its classic formulation by Fredric Jameson, in which the category of space is privileged. Jameson has argued that, in contrast to the period of high modernism,

contemporary lifestyles and cultural experiences are dominated by categories of space rather than those of time. For me, Jameson’s argument is deeply misleading. Its influence on the theoretical paradigm adopted by many of the contributors results in a narrowness of approach and concern. The editors speak of a ‘spatial vogue’ gripping social scientists in recent years. This privileging of space over time strikes me, however, as both premature and parochial. I would argue that the ongoing and intensifying revolution in everyday life includes a revolution in science and culture in general, in which the only way to map cognitively (to use Jameson’s vocabulary) the radical transformations is with constructed, and deconstructible, notions of space *and* time.

The recognition within contemporary physics – i.e. ‘post-quantum mechanics’ – that there are no stable, permanent ‘rules’ is as much historically determined by the acceleration of ‘world-history’ (perhaps ‘global history’ would be a better term), as is the evident erosion of stability and certainty in our ethical and political life. Fundamental to the new entropic physics is the rediscovery of time. The *Stimmung* of contemporary physics closely matches

the mood of the burgeoning new ‘postmodern’ politics which is increasing colonizing everybody’s political imagination and reality. In both, the emphasis is on complexity, ambiguity, diversity, plurality, insecurity, instability, etc. The radical French geographer Paul Virilio (who is surprisingly never mentioned in any of the essays in this collection) has spoken of our experience of everyday life as being governed by a new technological ‘space–time’, a ‘pure computer time’, in which the ‘instantaneity of ubiquity’ produces a ‘speed distance’ that obliterates the notion of physical dimension. It is awareness of this penetration of space by speed–time which is affecting all our lives in the most profound ways imaginable, and which clearly has far-reaching implications for political thought and action, that is missing from this collection. Only one essay, written by Doreen Massey, attempts to register the impact of the new paradigm in physics and appreciates the indissolubility of space and time, but even this fails properly to get to grips with the awesome questions which need to be confronted.

**Keith Ansell-Pearson**

**Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.**

**xxii + 175 pp., £17.95 hb., 0 195 08178 1.**

Virtual reality is the computer simulation of reality, not only the reality of the actual physical world but of any imagined worlds as well. As such it raises (and will continue to raise, as the technology behind it develops) numerous questions: metaphysical, ethical and social. However, the title of Michael Heim’s book is misleading. It might plausibly be regarded as a primer on the history of the technology and thinking behind virtual reality, or as an

introductory account of its social and intellectual consequences, or simply as a broad introduction to the idea of virtual reality itself: it is not, unfortunately, a treatment of the metaphysics of virtual reality.

Heim lives in Long Beach, California, and is described as a ‘freelance philosophy professor’. He is leisurely, engaging, enthusiastic, and generally free from the worst excesses of the frothy West Coast idiom. There

are one or two lapses, though; for example, he suggests that acupuncture and yogic healing might help us reorient ourselves ‘when we are trapped in our minds and cybersystems’ and that ‘software architects shape the datascape into endless mazes of light attracting us like moths to a flame’. Overall, however, this lightness of style prevents him from ever venturing deeply enough into his subject to offer a penetrating or illuminating analysis.

Amongst the perennial obsessions in Western philosophy has been that of the not-quite reality which is yet indistinguishable from the 'real thing'. This notion recurs in Descartes' sceptical doubt and in idealism since Leibniz and Berkeley, and the attention that has been paid it constitutes a rich resource for any commentator on the metaphysics of virtual reality. But Heim fails to exploit it; idealism is mentioned only in passing and, though other aspects of Leibnizian metaphysics are brought into the discussion at greater length, this is only in order to conjure up a perplexing and complicated metaphor from Leibnizian monadology, in which Heim asserts that monads have 'terminals', 'never meet face to face', and 'run different software'.

As metaphysics, this book is bound to disappoint. As an introduction for the neophyte to virtual reality and related areas in modern information technology, and to their human, social and intellectual history and impact, on the other hand, it is considerably more successful. Heim has a facility for grasping salient points from what is a vast and bewildering tidal wave of facts and issues, and presenting them clearly and succinctly. He is even better at conveying an idea of the various (often new and strange) experiences which characterize the foray into such developments as hypertext and other new user interfaces, and human interaction through electronic media such as the Internet. Finally, at his best, he successfully and vividly conveys his own excitement and enthusiasm.

As a friendly introduction to the idea of virtual reality, this book is an accomplished and informative primer, though once or twice marred by the intrusion of disconnected and confusing flights into metaphysics. Considered as a deeper philosophical commentary, however, its shortcomings are serious, and as a genuine metaphysical treatment, fatal.

**Daniele Procida**

## Engels' Centenary

Friedrich Engels died on 5 August 1895. The forthcoming centenary offers us the occasion to commemorate this great socialist. An International Engels Symposium is being organized in Wuppertal, Engels's birthplace, for 9–13 October. About thirty scholars have already indicated that they will participate. The organizer is Prof. Theodor Bergmann, Im Asemwald 26, 6215, Stuttgart 70 599, Germany. *Actuel Marx* is organizing a big conference in Paris, called 'Marxism after 100 Years', for the last week in September. No doubt other events are being planned elsewhere. I myself am editing a collection of papers addressing live issues in Engels's thought, to appear at the end of the year published by Macmillan (authors include Benton, Collier, O'Neill, Vogel, Sayers, Arthur and Carver).

The last thing Engels achieved before his death was to bring out the third volume of *Capital*. The centenary of this event was marked last December by a conference at the University of Bergamo, bringing together scholars from all over Europe and the Americas. It was superbly organized by Riccardo Bellofiore of the Economics Department there. He will be editing a two-volume selection of papers from the conference, entitled *Marxian Economics: A Centenary Appraisal*, also to be published by Macmillan. Among those included will be important contributions by Ganssmann (Berlin); Finelli and Bellofiore (Italy), Faccarello (France), Reuten (Holland), Levine (USA), Shaikh (USA), Mohun (London), Schefold (Frankfurt), de Brunhoff (France), Duménil (France), Kurz (Austria), Foley (USA), and Meacci (Italy).

**Chris Arthur**

## Diane Neumaier's Museum Studies

The images throughout pages 6–27 and on the cover of this issue were selected from Diane Neumaier's *Museum Studies* (1991) – a sequence of 160 black and white photographs taken in over two dozen American institutions which simulates a tour through an imaginary American museum. In the original project, which is planned to appear as a book, the photographs are grouped together under 22 separate headings.

The photographs used above are taken from the following sections of the work:

cover	The Photography of Art: Capturing the Experience
p. 6	Ready to be Collected
p. 9	The (Heterosexual) Couple
p. 12	Ready to be Collected
p. 20	Master Narratives and the Grand Tour
p. 27	The Photography of Art: Capturing the Experience

Diane Neumaier is professor of photography at Mason Gross School of Arts, Rutgers University, New Jersey and editor of *ReFramings: New American Feminist Photographies*, forthcoming from Temple University Press, Philadelphia. We are grateful to her for permission to reproduce her photographs here.