

Time for the future

Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, Verso, London, 1995. xv + 272 pp., £39.95 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 86091 482 8 hb., 0 86091 652 9 pb.

In the Preface to *The Politics of Time* Peter Osborne claims that it comprises two books: 'a book about the philosophy of time which grew out of a book about the culture of modernity' (p. x). The reason for this is that metaphysical questions about time and temporality inevitably confront anyone who inquires deeply enough into the concept of modernity. In the light of such questions, Osborne attempts to make explicit the metaphysical assumptions that underlie the cultural and political debate concerning modernity, modernism and postmodernism that dominated cultural studies and continental philosophy in the 1980s.

In so doing, Osborne is exploring an avenue of thinking opened up by the suggestive, if somewhat gestural, opening lecture of Jürgen Habermas's *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* on 'Modernity's Consciousness of Time'. Like Osborne, Habermas touches on Koselleck's account of the historical emergence of the concept of modernity, Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Gadamer's conservative reinterpretation of 'effective history'; and he discusses the philosophical significance of the time-consciousness of modernity in Hegel and in Walter Benjamin's critique of historicism. Habermas argues that modernity ceases to draw on the normative resources of the past and turns instead to the resources of the present. This concern with the present is constitutive of the project of modernity; and Hegel, preoccupied as he was with the formulation of a self-grounding conception of reason, is seen as the modern philosopher *par excellence*. As is well known, Habermas thinks that Hegel failed in his attempt, because in his mature work he conceives his philosophy in the metaphysical categories of subject and object, although his early work contains the lineaments of a philosophy of intersubjectivity that holds out the prospect of a more robust way of contributing to, if not completing, the project of modernity.

Despite his critique of Hegel's conception of subjectivity, Habermas allies himself with Hegel in two ways: he understands his own philosophy of intersubjectivity as a development of Hegel's early work; and he sees it

as a contribution to the same modern project of clarifying and mobilizing the normative resources of the present. The significance of this move becomes clear when one considers that the first-generation Frankfurt School critical theorists understood themselves to be part of a very different project. In its anxiety to break with the present, of which it had every reason to be deeply suspicious, Critical Theory aimed to draw on the normative resources of the future. The norms that would obtain in a future rational society underwrite its criticism of present injustice. This is explicit in Horkheimer's early work, and is implicit in most of Adorno and Benjamin's writing.

The Politics of Time addresses many of these same questions about the time-consciousness of modernity, in a more detailed and sustained argument which draws very different conclusions. These locate Osborne, despite his enthusiasm for Heidegger, Hegel, and phenomenological ontology, firmly in the tradition of first-generation Frankfurt School Critical Theory, for he attempts to establish a materialist and future-orientated conception of political practice. Given the sphere of interests that guides Osborne, one might have expected an extended polemical engagement with Habermas's essay; after all, his book contains polemics against just about every other recent or contemporary theorist of modernity, with the notable exceptions of Ricoeur, Heidegger and Benjamin, who are accorded lengthy exposition and attentive, nuanced critique. Although Osborne enrolls Habermas's support when venting his spleen against the conservative function of 'tradition' in Gadamer's hermeneutics, he does not seriously engage with the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Indeed, he dismisses Habermas as an 'orthodox Kantian' (p. 32).

One reason for this absence of an engagement with Habermas may be that, apart from the opening chapter, where Osborne has some very perceptive and illuminating things to say on the debate about modernity and postmodernity, the theme of modernity is pushed below the surface by the very weighty metaphysical

problem of time and time-consciousness. This is the other main difference between them. For Habermas talks about the time-consciousness of modernity, but not about time and time-consciousness as such, whereas Osborne wants to make use of the 'philosophical resources' (p. xiii) of the discourse about time and time-consciousness for the purposes of explaining the culture of modernity.

His overall argument goes something like this. Time has to be thought both subjectively, as tensed experience, and objectively, as infinite succession. Without the former, experience would fragment into an aggregate of unrelated now points; all acts, physical and mental, would be inconceivable. Without the latter, the relations of before and after could not be intersubjectively identified and real relations between events would not perdure through time. But subjective and objective time cannot be different times; they mutually support each other and must form part of one and the same time. So what is this totality of which subjective and objective time form part? Osborne's deceptively simple answer is 'social ontology'. Just as for Heidegger *Dasein* is a being whose Being is a question for it, modernity is a being whose Being is a question for it. Just as *Dasein*'s temporality is its being-towards-death, so the temporality of modernity is its being-towards-extinction. What this consciousness of finitude is supposed to do is awaken modernity to the radical openness of the future. This move allies Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* with Benjamin's concept of historical time. Benjamin used the concept of messianic redemption to dispose of what he called 'historicism', a Hegelian legacy that emphasized the continuity between past and present, thereby confining the radical openness of the future within the narrow horizon of present expectation. The twin threats of environmental catastrophe and human extinction have, on the one hand, brought out the social significance of Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* and, on the other, put secular flesh on the theological bones of Benjamin's apocalyptic theory of time. A politics of time is supposed to emerge once modernity realizes the dialectical connection between its abstract myth of infinite progress and the concrete lack of political and historical change. Thus modernity is driven back to a concern with everyday life as the locus of what Osborne calls 'the social production of possibility' (p. 198).

My reservations about *The Politics of Time* are of two kinds. The first concerns methodology and style. In one sense, it is a strength of the book that Osborne manages to compress so much material into

each chapter. He shows considerable insight and dexterity in bringing a formidable and diverse array of material under one theme. Each chapter consists in a self-contained medley of critical expositions of works of contemporary theory which expound or implicitly trade on a conception of time-consciousness. For the most part, I found his expositions lucid and informative in themselves. For example, in the final chapter he delivers a crisp cameo critique of the theoretical motivations for Heidegger's political accommodation. On certain important matters, however, his analysis is altogether too brief and superficial, particularly in the case of Kant's conception of time and history. I also felt that more explanation of the theories of Aristotle, Augustine and Husserl was needed, if only to get the philosophical problems into focus; and that filtering their views through the optic of (Osborne's reading of) Ricoeur's account of them in *Time and Narrative* only added to the confusion.



This problem of having to condense the exposition of very difficult theories stems from Osborne's chosen method of 'theory construction through appropriative critique' (p. xiii). Perhaps this is not the best way to approach such an intractable metaphysical problem; or perhaps his critical appropriations were not selective enough. Either way, he does not do justice to the complexity of the issues of time and time-consciousness. The constant introduction of new material and the lack of concrete examples makes it difficult to follow his argument. I am still not sure in what sense Osborne takes himself to be advancing a 'materialist' theory of time, despite his mention of the Marxist

account of the advent of standardized clock-time. On this point, a discussion of the well-known arguments for the ideality of time advanced by Kant or McTaggart would have helped to clarify his position.

This brings me to my second set of worries: the conception of political praxis advanced in *The Politics of Time*. For I think that Osborne's account of time risks bringing metaphysical confusion to the social and political questions he addresses. In conceptual terms Benjamin's notion of redemption is problematic enough. Can we make any real sense of the thought that a temporal relation can be constituted by a relation to something outside time? Certainly the threat of human extinction and environmental destruction make sense, but these are in no sense outside time. And, if that is so, the politics of time seems to be saddled with a notion of political and social change of mysterious theological origin.

A more pressing problem can be raised apropos an exquisitely apposite typing error in the discussion of Heidegger and Benjamin on "averageness" (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) (*sic*) – a word which, if it existed, would mean 'thoroughly Schmitt-like'. Osborne emphasizes the 'uncanny convergence between Benjamin and Heidegger's views on historical time' (p. 175), and acknowledges the problem with their (and Schmitt's) 'decisionistic' conception of practice. The charge of 'decisionism' can be understood as the objection that the notion of an authentic mode of existence, resoluteness in the face of one's finitude, cannot supply any determinate theoretical constraints on action that could serve in place of moral principles. Since almost any action could, in the right circumstances, count as authentic, Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics invites ethical catastrophe. Osborne argues convincingly that Heidegger's decisionism alone does not underwrite his political capitulation to authority. The fault lies with his epochal view of 'repetition', which understands the future as the 'return to a new beginning', in the shape of the destiny of a people. Thus, argues Osborne, Heidegger fails to understand the future as 'radical openness' and thinks of it, instead, as the inauguration of a forgotten past. The real political danger of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Osborne claims provocatively, is that it is not decisionistic enough (p. 174). More decisionism, not less! Osborne answers the problem by denying that there is one. Surely the problem is and always was, not that decisionism leads Heidegger to a naive identification with political authority, but that decisionism permits such a course of action, because it is ethically indifferent. This 'ethical indifference' is common to Schmitt, Heidegger and

Benjamin, who, despite manifest differences, agree on this: that praxis consists in a radically contingent break with all present concerns. Whatever their political allegiances, there is a remarkable similarity between Benjamin's messianic motif of 'pulling the emergency cord' of history and Schmitt's invocation of the 'state of emergency'; and it ought to be politically disquieting.

Osborne's position is ambivalent. At times he appears to want to condemn any constraint on the radical openness of the future as reactionary or conservative. This view is mistaken. Normative critical theory, like moral philosophy, must be oriented towards the future. But it must also be action-guiding to some extent. It must be able, from the standpoint of the present, to rule out certain practices and actions in the future. At others, Osborne acknowledges that there is a problem with the practical indeterminacy of Benjamin's revolutionary conception of politics, and argues that it can be solved by repositioning a politics of time within the 'everyday'. The solution lies in the dialectical thought that the break with present concerns is immanent to those concerns; the rupture with everyday experience is inscribed within it. Actually, Osborne is arguing that this 'surreal' texture of the everyday is the solution to the problem of 'repetition'. It remains unclear to me that 'the mystery of the everyday' even addresses the problem of the ethical indifference of a decisionistic praxis.

Finally, there is Osborne's conclusion that a materialist theory of culture needs an awareness of 'the social production of possibility'. This claim can be understood as a challenge to a thought that runs like a red thread through the political thought of Arendt, Adorno and Habermas: that we think political possibilities as socially *produced* is not the solution to the absence of political praxis; it is part of the problem. For political possibilities are largely possibilities of doing and acting differently, of different social practices, and these cannot be 'made' or 'produced' like things. The extent to which we think they can only reflects the extent to which intersubjective relations have been reified under modern conditions. Osborne's readiness to break with lines of thought now familiar on the reconstructed 'Left' is admirable in itself, and quite in keeping with his own theory. He is nothing if not controversial. To my mind, however, the reasons that cast a shadow over the utopian content of the model of production are not defeated by the ecstatic vision of the everyday with which *The Politics of Time* concludes.

Gordon Finlayson

A good man fallen among individualists

Michael Rosen, *On Voluntary Servitude: False Consciousness and the Theory of Ideology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996. xi + 289 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 7456 0595 8 hb., 0 7456 1596 1 pb.

'What has to be explained is not the fact that the man who is hungry steals or the fact that the man who is exploited strikes, but why the majority of those who are hungry *don't* steal and why the majority of those who are exploited *don't* strike.' These words of Wilhelm Reich define, according to Michael Rosen, the question that the theory of ideology seeks to address. In its most developed form, within Marxism, this theory answers Reich's question through the concept of what Adorno calls 'necessary false consciousness'. The best-known version of this concept is probably Marx's declaration in *The German Ideology* that 'the ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas': by means of this ideological domination the exploited are persuaded to accept their exploitation as just.

Rosen pursues a double strategy in this long-awaited book. On the one hand, he traces the historical development of the concept of false consciousness, from its origins in the Enlightenment (*De la servitude volontaire*, by Montaigne's friend La Boétie, thus, despite providing Rosen with his title, forms part of ideology's prehistory), to its latest development by the Frankfurt School. On the other hand, he undertakes a work of conceptual clarification and, above all, of philosophical critique. *Of Voluntary Servitude*, its opening sentence declares, is 'written against' the theory of ideology. It seems intended to allow Rosen more generally to settle accounts with Marxism, and thereby to help establish how 'egalitarian values' and 'projects of human emancipation, perhaps ... even socialist ones', can survive it.

Anyone familiar with Rosen's brilliant *The Hegelian Dialectic and its Criticism* (1982) will know that he brings to this challenging undertaking both tremendous historical erudition and great philosophical rigour. These are displayed most successfully in the chapters where he outlines the historical emergence of the 'two background beliefs' which, he argues, 'provide the core of Marx's answer to Reich's question: the belief that societies are self-maintaining entities, and the belief that, in the case of *prima facie* illegitimate societies, the way in which they do this is by means of false consciousness on the part of those who live in them.' Rosen's discussions of Hume, Rousseau, Smith and Hegel are outstanding, as is his sensitive and illuminating treatment of Benjamin towards the end of the book.

Nevertheless, perhaps because of the enormous scope of the project, Rosen is unable to avoid a degree of unevenness in his accounts of individual thinkers. For example, Adam Smith is not the only member of the Scottish historical school to offer a theory of 'the connection between economic life, political institutions, customs and ideas', as John Millar's *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* bears witness. Again, it won't do to criticize Habermas and Foucault for a parallel error they commit in their writings of the 1960s, while ignoring the way in which each later modified his theory in part to take account of the fault identified by Rosen.

Omissions of this kind do not affect Rosen's overall argument. But his surprisingly inaccurate discussion of Darwin does relate to his central preoccupations. He follows G.A. Cohen in drawing parallels between explanations in evolutionary biology and functional explanations in social theory. There is nothing wrong with this in principle. Rosen, however, tends towards a Lamarckian interpretation of Darwin, attributing to him, *inter alia*, the beliefs that a species has welfare-furthering characteristics 'precisely *because* they further its welfare', and that 'there exists a mechanism – natural selection – which ensures that over time, species come to acquire characteristics which further their welfare.'

Now, of course, precisely what the theory of natural selection does *not* explain is the acquisition and inheritance of characteristics by organisms: relative to the theory, variations are random, not in the sense that they are uncaused, but that, as Elliott Sober puts it, they 'do not occur *because* they would be beneficial'. What Darwin predicts is that where a variation occurs which enhances an organism's fitness – that is, its chances of survival and reproduction – and is passed on to its descendants, the latter tend to increase in number relative to other populations. While Darwin thus distinguishes between the causes of fitness-enhancing variations and their role in natural selection, it was Lamarck who argued that evolution consisted in organisms acquiring and passing on adaptations because of their beneficial effects, a goal-oriented process – in Lamarck, writes François Jacob, 'adaptive intention always *precedes* realization' – reflecting the 'plan' at work in nature to achieve ever greater perfection of biological structure.



This slide into a teleological conception of evolution is related to Rosen's ascription to Marx of the 'background belief' that, as Cohen puts it, treats 'societies or economic units as self-maintaining and self-advancing'. This belief, which invites us to conceive society as an end-in-itself and therefore to explain its features teleologically, in terms of their contribution to the process of social reproduction, is, Rosen believes, central to Marx's theory of ideology. Indeed, he claims that Marx lacks anything amounting to a properly articulated *theory* of ideology. Instead, we are confronted with a series of 'models' usually governed by a metaphor that substitutes for the specification of a mechanism.

Thus *The German Ideology* offers, in addition to the 'interests model' (the idea that capitalist society is kept going by means of bourgeois ideological domination), the 'reflection model', according to which ideology, like a *camera obscura*, gives an accurate, but inverted, depiction of social reality. Marx's later, more 'scientific' writings also contain the 'correspondence model', best represented by Cohen's attempt to show that the ideologico-political superstructure is functionally explained by its tendency to reproduce the economic base; and the 'essence and appearance model' implied by the theory of commodity fetishism, according to which the operations of the market lead participants to perceive the capitalist mode of production in a systematically misleading way.

Rosen briskly disposes of each of these models in turn. The interests model treats the working class as a passive object of manipulation. The metaphors informing the reflection and essence and appearance models dis-integrate on closer inspection. The correspondence model presupposes the idea, already encountered, of 'society as a self-maintaining system'. This concept,

however, in turn depends on an analogy between persons and societies. But while we intuitively treat individual human beings as coherent and autonomous entities, 'we do not have a commonly agreed "folk sociology" to match the "folk psychology" by which we explain people's everyday beliefs and actions.'

Many of Rosen's criticisms of Marx's models are well taken. But it is not clear that they inflict fatal damage on the theory of ideology. The interests model has more life to it than he suggests, provided we stop regarding the exploited as simply the passive recipients of ruling-class ideas and treat social consciousness

as the outcome of an active struggle between the classes. Gramsci's notion of 'contradictory consciousness', a composite – indeed compromise – formation containing beliefs corresponding to the interests of divergent classes, is particularly suggestive in this context. Taking this line would mean dropping what is sometimes called the 'dominant ideology thesis', expressed in Marx's assertion that 'the ideas of the ruling class are ... the ruling ideas.' Yet, although Rosen is careful to dissociate the concept of 'necessary false consciousness' from that of a 'dominant ideology', and indeed to deny that it requires that false consciousness be 'the sole means' whereby unjust societies are reproduced, he gives no consideration to this possible strategy.

The reason for this failure lies, I think, in the emphasis he lays on Marx's 'background belief' in society as a self-maintaining system. Rosen argues that both the existence of this assumption, and the extent to which even the later Marx remains dependent on Hegel, are shown by the way in which 'the *Grundrisse* presents an account of capitalist production as a self-unfolding process with capital as its subject', an account also implicit in *Capital*. Now the presence of strongly Hegelian motifs in the *Grundrisse* is familiar enough. Both Edward Thompson and some of the Althusserians he smote in *The Poverty of Theory* drew attention to them. Much of the work of the German 'capital-logic' school was vitiated by the tendency to take up the hints offered by the *Grundrisse*, and treat capital as a secularized version of the Absolute Idea, necessarily actualizing itself through its contingent empirical manifestations.

Rosen, however, ignores the series of systematic conceptual recastings which Marx undertook in the decade 1857–67, during which he wrote first

the *Grundrisse*, then the 1861–63 *Manuscript*, and finally *Capital* itself. Perhaps the best discussion of the general direction these changes took is provided by Jacques Bidet in *Que faire du 'Capital'?* (1985). He notes that in *Capital* Marx lays far greater stress than in his earlier economic writings on ‘structures’ – empirically identifiable mechanisms arising from class relations and from inter-capitalist competition – to explain the global ‘tendencies’ of the system, where previously he had been prone either to deduce these tendencies directly from the abstract concept of ‘capital’, or to derive them ‘dialectically’ through some piece of word-play. Consequently, *Capital* does not rely on the idea of capital as a self-maintaining system to anything like the extent that Rosen claims it does.

He does not notice these changes perhaps because he seems to share the belief of analytical Marxists (or ex-Marxists) like Jon Elster that the only alternative to treating social structures as the unintended consequences of individual actions is to hypostasize society as a Hegelian macro-subject. But this is plainly false. While rejecting the functionalist conception of society as a self-maintaining system, several contemporary theorists have sought to conceptualize social structures as, in Anthony Giddens’s formulation, ‘the unacknowledged conditions and the unanticipated consequences’ of human action. Such a position, though incompatible with methodological individualism, is consistent with different substantive social theories, ranging from Giddens’s neo-Weberian sociology, through Roy Bhaskar’s *marxisant* ‘Critical Realism’, to Erik Olin Wright’s and my own variously orthodox Marxisms.

Rosen’s failure to consider this line of thought may reflect the malign influence of Elsterian rational-choice theory. This influence is certainly evident in his alternative to the theory of ideology. ‘Compliance without false consciousness’ occurs in unjust societies thanks to the free-rider problem. In other words, the exploited do not rise up against their oppressors, not because they believe their exploitation is just, but because it is instrumentally rational for each to let others incur the risks involved in revolt, since any individual’s participation will make no difference to the outcome.

This ‘answer’ to Reich’s question, outlined in a couple of pages, is, to say the least, feeble. It does not begin to explain recent mass revolts – for example, the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79, the Polish strikes of August 1980, and the South African township insurrections of 1984–86 – all of which developed spontaneously, in times when the costs of rebellion were still very high. Like Elster, Rosen stresses the vanguard role played by minorities of ‘non-instrumentally moti-

vated agents’ (East European dissidents in the 1970s and 1980s, for example), but, in thus highlighting the limited role of instrumental rationality in explaining collective action, he unintentionally draws attention to what a clumsy tool rational-choice theory is.

Maybe the root of the problem lies in Rosen’s earlier book on Hegel. There he argues that the dialectical method necessarily leads, *pace* Engels, to mystifying and idealist consequences. It seems to be the drive to exorcize social theory of any taint of Hegelian idealism that has thrust Rosen into Elster’s arms. Lenin called Bernard Shaw ‘a good man fallen among Fabians’. Well, *Of Voluntary Servitude* is the work of a good man fallen among methodological individualists. Their influence ensures that, for all its undoubted strengths and incidental pleasures, the book’s overall argument must be accounted a failure.

Alex Callinicos

Freud against Wittgenstein

Jacques Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*, trans. Carol Cosman, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1995. xx + 143 pp., £22.50 hb., £9.95 pb., 0 691 03425 7 hb., 0 691 02904 0 pb.

Donald Levy, *Freud Among the Philosophers: The Psychoanalytic Unconscious and its Philosophical Critics*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT and London, 1996. 189 pp., £18.50 hb., 0 300 06632 5.

As Jacques Bouveresse informs us, Wittgenstein’s brief and scattered remarks on psychoanalysis do not add up to a ‘thorough and systematic critique’ (p. 3). Wittgenstein’s attitude to psychoanalysis seems ambiguous; he calls himself a ‘disciple of Freud’ (*ibid.*), and yet psychoanalysis is a ‘dangerous and foul practice’ (p. xix). His ambivalence reflects a profound pessimism about the role of science in our culture. Tellingly, Bouveresse reports that Wittgenstein ‘hesitated over whether the real problem was with psychoanalysis itself or rather how it was used ... in an age like ours’ (*ibid.*). Wittgenstein is a harsh critic of the pretensions of psychoanalysis to scientific status; and this may lead us to think that he should be aligned with those philosophers of science, like Karl Popper and Adolf Grünbaum, who have been equally scathing about Freud’s scientific shortcomings. But as both Bouveresse and Donald Levy stress, this would be a

mistake. Wittgenstein wishes to resist the scientific approach to understanding human beings which he thinks psychoanalysis exemplifies.

He has two main objections to psychoanalysis. First, that Freud elevated the characteristic sin of philosophical theorizing – the tendency to think that understanding something means deriving some essence from a typical or central case upon which a general theory can be erected – into a scientific principle. Second, that the kinds of theories Freud provides only *appear* to be scientific. What they actually do is redescribe the phenomena of mental life in a way that makes sense to us and which we find attractive and convincing, notwithstanding Freud's contention that we resist the repellent nature of psychoanalytic truths. Indeed, for Wittgenstein, the fact that such ideas repel explains their peculiar 'charm': we feel such things must have great significance.

Psychoanalysis thus provides a *mythology*, which can impose a pattern on our lives and give significance to what is otherwise meaningless. It tells a story to which we respond: *Yes – it must be like that*. This is quite different from explanation in a real science, which provides objective evidence for testable causal hypotheses, the bases for genuine predictions. None of this is present in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a persuasive enterprise, both in the wider world and on the couch. Freud's readers are seduced by the sense-making charm of his constructions; while the patient on the couch assents to the truth of interpretations – assent being the main criterion of their truth for the psychoanalyst, Wittgenstein thinks – because of the analyst's powers of suggestion.

Levy tackles Wittgenstein's criticisms as part of a wider project: clarifying the notion of the unconscious in Freud through removal of misunderstandings perpetuated by previous commentators. Thus he analyses the positions of a number of critics besides Wittgenstein, chief among them being William James, Alasdair MacIntyre and Grünbaum. The closest of these in spirit to Wittgenstein is William James, who attacked the idea of the unconscious before Freud. James seeks to resist the reduction of consciousness to non-conscious mental 'atoms' ('mind-dust', in his phrase). Levy is able to show that the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious is not reductive in this way. MacIntyre and Grünbaum, on the other hand, offer full-blown positivist critiques of psychoanalysis. Either the unconscious is an unobservable and non-explanatory metaphysical construct (MacIntyre); or psychoanalysis is unable to test its hypotheses according to strict inductivist standards 'on the couch'

(Grünbaum). In either case, psychoanalysis fails to furnish a scientific justification of its claims. Levy shows that these complaints, in common with those of Wittgenstein, do not present an adequate picture of the Freudian unconscious; they misunderstand that Freud's unconscious cannot be separated from the phenomena of transference and resistance – phenomena which can only be properly characterized within Freud's general theory of the mind and its development, and which can only be observed in the free associations of the patient in the analytic setting.

Bouveresse sets out to give a unified exposition of Wittgenstein's comments on psychoanalysis, and in so doing he too extends the discussion to encompass the views of others. Both books could serve as introductions to issues in the philosophy of psychoanalysis; neither presumes detailed specialist knowledge on the part of the reader. So it appears that we have here two similar treatments of the same subject matter. But the methods and results, the whole style of thinking, of each writer differ greatly.

Levy makes a number of important new contributions to the debate around these topics, which significantly advance the argument. In contrast, Bouveresse remains within the orbit of Wittgenstein's thought. He is content to endorse Wittgenstein's positions *in toto* and to recruit arguments from a motley array of recent hostile critics of psychoanalysis to bolster them. But psychoanalysis is currently receiving a lot of favourable attention from analytical philosophers (the tradition to which Bouveresse and Levy both belong, Bouveresse having made a reputation over the years as that rarest of philosophical animals, an 'analytical Frenchman'). This work, associated in particular with Marcia Cavell, Donald Davidson, Sebastian Gardner, Jim Hopkins, Jonathan Lear, Thomas Nagel and Richard Wollheim, sees psychoanalysis as an extension of the kind of explanation of motive and action employed in everyday 'common-sense' psychology. Explanation by ascription of beliefs and desires in common-sense psychology is supplemented and extended in psychoanalysis by invoking mental states with different, more primitive features, which it was Freud's achievement to have discovered.

Levy's book is potentially continuous with this development. Indeed, he provides in passing what is in effect a summary of it (p. 92). Bouveresse, though obviously aware of such ideas, gives them no part to play. This is regrettable for two reasons, one of them deeply ironic. First, the common-sense extension view stakes out a middle ground between (everyday) explanation by reasons and (scientific) explanation by

causes, which Wittgenstein thinks are confused in Freud. Bouveresse grants, following Davidson, that reasons can be causes, but denies that this helps psychoanalysis, which pretends that it has a scientific route to causal explanation. But this does not admit the possibility, now generally acknowledged, that there can be motivating mental causes which are not reasons, and that citing such motives in explaining behaviour is a properly psychological form of causal explanation, as Freud always said it was.

The irony lies in the fact that one of the main precursors of the common-sense extension view is Wittgenstein. The basis of ascription of mental states in common-sense psychology is *interpretation*: the conditions which make interpretation possible – the grounding of interpreter and interpretee in a shared world which is logically prior to the subject's identification of her inner states – being first described by Wittgenstein. Bouveresse's book thus has important limitations.

Adequate discussion of Levy's arguments exceeds the scope of this review. In particular, however, I would single out his treatment of Grünbaum. Levy articulates a generally held and just appreciation of Grünbaum in saying that he has written 'by far the most important philosophical rejection of the scientific credibility of Freud's work ever to appear' (p. 129). All the more significant for psychoanalysis, then, if Grünbaum's critique can be overthrown. Levy offers a definitive refutation. This and the whole book deserve the widest and most careful attention.

David Snelling

Internally real

Linda Martín Alcoff, *Real Knowing, New Versions of the Coherence Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY and London, 1996. x + 240 pp., £25.50 hb., 0 8014 3047 X.

Alcoff's *Real Knowing* is an attempt to span the so-called continental and Anglo-American philosophical divide. Her explicit aim is to present an epistemological theory which can both provide the grounds for a normative, evaluative theory of knowledge and explain the interconnections between knowledge, power and desire. As part of this project, Alcoff attempts to demonstrate how a coherentist epistemology can answer problems of justification, without reducing truth to justification. This can be done, she argues, by retaining but revising realist commitments.

When we try to understand what someone says, we presume that what they say makes sense; and this idea of 'making sense' is the key to Alcoff's argument. First, we assume that the speaker can and will attempt to provide a coherent account of his or her own experience. Second, we presume that the experience itself provides material which can sustain a coherent account. Third, we will consider new information justified to the extent that it coheres with, or increases the coherence of, the general picture. If we eschew naive realism, or consider experience to be already an effect of an interpretative scheme; and if we believe that we, in the attempt to understand, are also interpreters – then it appears that we are caught in an uneasy position. But it is at this point that Alcoff's attempt to bridge analytic and continental traditions is at its strongest. She argues that Foucault's idea of a discursive practice can be employed to understand that both speaker or text, and reader or interpreter, are part of the same tradition, that there is an internal or conceptual dependence between terms such as truth, justification and belief, but that truth is still irreducible to justification. Within the Foucauldian account, a statement is held to be true, or a unit of knowledge, when it fits, or coheres with, other units or statements which are all formed in a regular manner by a discursive practice.

Thus Alcoff can explore a concept of realism which is, in a sense, contextual. We can accept both that claims to know something are actually *about* something (experience), and also that the experience is produced or organized through the discursive practice – as are our ways of presenting, representing or analysing that experience. Coherence works as a theory of justification because the discourses constitute the objects of which we speak in a regular manner, and criteria for truth and falsity are ways of reasoning internal to each conceptual scheme. Given that we can talk about a discursive field, we can also talk about subjugated and dominant knowledges and their differential relations to power. Because there is no overarching scheme or framework, we can argue that truth is irreducibly plural. Taking on the problem of 'aboutness' – the irreducibility of truth to justification – Alcoff draws from Putnam a version of internal realism which can support a non-reductive account of a mind-independent world. First, 'the world' underdetermines theoretical descriptions, so that there can be a plurality of theoretical schemes. Second, although experience determines the truth-value of statements, experience is itself part of an interpretative scheme. Lastly, truth-value is dependent

on the fit between experience (as interpretation) and theoretical description.

The concluding chapter is an argument for the idea of plural truths and a rejection of the claim that this results in an absolute relativism. The argument runs like this: truth-claims concern the fit between experience and theoretical description; different schemes will have different truth variables; disagreement between schemes does not prove incommensurability; therefore conflicts can be resolved (at a local level). The most productive, true, theoretical description will be one which aims for adequacy: a coherent and comprehensive account of the constellation of elements that make up experience.

The argument in *Real Knowing* is basically of the transcendental deductive kind: given x , p must be true (as the condition of x), where x is understanding rather than knowledge or belief, and p the principles of coherence and discursive formations. Aside from general problems with arguments which take this form, there is a further problem concerning internal realism. To take an example suggested by Alcoff, both Marxism and neo-classical economic theories are comprehensive, but incommensurable, schemes for analysing economic behaviour. The difficulty, as I see it, is that within either scheme beliefs will be considered true or false depending on whether or not they maximize coherence and thereby explain experience. Alcoff's suggestion appears to be that the falsity of one scheme will be figured in terms of its inadequacy. This figuring will take place at a local level, and will be based on a lived dissonance between experience and theoretical description. Although internal realism is supposed to accommodate the idea that 'the real' constrains our theoretical descriptions or analyses, we need a harder, or more detailed, empirical theory to make sense of the concept 'inadequacy'. Following on from this, a more thorough assessment of the differences between subjugated and dominant knowledges would have been useful, as this distinction is used to bypass difficulties associated with theories of false belief, false consciousness and ideology.

On the whole, *Real Knowing* is an impressive, astute and clear guide through difficult and complicated arguments from both traditions. Alcoff manages to demonstrate the commensurability of concerns, interests and questions which run through philosophers as diverse as Gadamer, Davidson, Blackburn, Quine, Putnam and Foucault. It is unlikely that the arguments for internal realism will convince many purist Anglo-American philosophers. Similarly, some postmodernists may find the form of argument ques-

tion-begging and this might lead them to describe the drive to maximize coherence – for Alcoff, the drive to resolve conflict – as yet another example of the authoritarian drive to truth. Luckily, however, few of us are so 'pure'. By gleaning the best from feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theories, Alcoff manages to present a coherent account of justification and truth, without reducing one to the other, and offers an insight into the grounds of real knowing directed towards future practice.

Gill Howie

Unworldly models

Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996. x + 592 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 19 827532 3.

This is a large, ambitious and very rewarding book. It supplies a comprehensive survey of the central political ideologies of the past two centuries: liberalism, conservatism and socialism. Feminism and green ideology are briefly discussed at the end of the study. At the same time Freeden defends a particular approach to the study of ideology which is exemplified in the survey. He takes his stance in opposition to two other approaches. One is that which represents ideologies as organized doctrines of little or no intellectual merit, to be understood solely in causal or functional terms. The other is the approach of political philosophy which evaluates any theory in pure and abstracted terms of truth or rightness. On both approaches an ideology's conceptual character is simply neglected, as irrelevant or absent.

Freeden sees ideologies as 'particular patterned clusters and configurations of political concepts'. Each ideology has a shape which is given by the relationships between what Freeden terms 'core', 'adjacent' and 'peripheral' concepts. Within the core of liberalism, for instance, is the concept of liberty; the concept is 'decontested' – that is, given a clear single meaning. Adjacent and peripheral concepts are further from the core, but it is central to Freeden's approach that the relationship between an ideology's concepts is not simply 'logical', but also cultural and historical. Thus, concepts at the edge of an ideology are not simply those at the furthest intellectual remove from its core but also those that define an ideology's engagement

with the world of politics – particular policy proposals, for instance. Each ideology has its own ‘specific morphology’ in which the main political concepts – liberty, equality, democracy, and so on – assume their place. Freeden offers the metaphors of a map or road grid within which a given number of towns are situated, and of a room within which a common pool of furniture is placed. On his approach the political theorist can engage with and understand the distinctively ideological structure of political ideas, without adopting the stance of the political philosopher who constructs unworldly

pre-scriptive models out of such ideas.

The approach is immensely illuminating. One not only sees the ideational architecture of each ideology; one can also recognize what one might call the higher-order features of each architectural style, the intellectual temperament of an ideology. Thus, liberalism displays a self-critical spirit which encourages flexibility in the arrangements of its conceptual furniture. Conservatism, on the other



hand, organizes its concepts in response to its perceived ideological opponents. It is a ‘mirror-image’ ideology of reactive self-awareness. Socialism, finally, is an ideology structured as a critique of the present which projects an imagined, but yet to be actualized, future.

There are minor cavils. It might have been interesting to see nationalism treated as an ideology in its own right. It might have been more worthwhile to extend the treatment of feminism in its ideological function of deconstructing the existing political language, than to pair it with the very young and incomplete ‘green’ ideology. However, it is in relation to political philosophy that Freeden’s work is most revealing. Freeden identifies a dominant Anglo-American political philosophy which is mainly liberal in its allegiances. Not only is such philosophy charged with being insensitive to its own ideological character; it is blind to the history and morphology of the particular ideology – liberalism – of which it is the latest

instalment. Freeden’s target here is the American East Coast Rawlsianism which has launched a thousand doctorates. Freeden’s approach allows him to make telling points. For instance, philosophical liberalism is famously subject to a communitarian critique for its neglect of community. Yet strong conceptions of community and the common good did, as Freeden claims, have a solid pedigree in the American liberal tradition. That trail has gone cold as the philosophical variant of American liberalism has cut itself off from its own ideological history. In consequence, philosophical liberalism has also denied itself the political potential and usage a richer American liberal ideology might possess.

The relationship between an ideology and political philosophy also broaches one very crucial issue. In concentrating on the structure or syntax of an ideology, Freeden is careful to bracket the question of its truth. At one point (p. 310) he is explicit that since the book deals with ideologies, not political philosophies, his interest lies not in the ‘rightness’ of one approach but in how that approach relates to existing ideological systems. Political philosophies which forget that they are ideologies thereby jettison their politics – that is, a grounding in ‘adjustable social practices’. However, there is a converse problem. As Freeden says, ideologies are not only power structures that manipulate human actions, but also ‘ideational systems that enable us to choose to become what we want to become’ (p. 553). Ideologies which forget that they are political philosophies may thereby sacrifice their claim on us to change the world in a certain prescribed way. It seems too simple to suggest, as Freeden does on his last page, that the evaluative investigation of ideologies can readily be ‘superimposed’ on the book’s findings. Any system of political thought must combine an adequate reflexivity about its historical, cultural and political conditions of possibility with a warranted normativity – that is, a compelling claim upon us to realize its ideas. Doing that is an immensely complex task. The outstanding merit of Freeden’s work is that he has shown what political philosophy presently lacks, and has done so by demonstrating that ideologies should not be dismissed as merely the ‘poor cousins’ of philosophies. Both political theory and political philosophy have a great deal to learn from this book.

David Archard

Engels in his own right

Christopher J. Arthur, ed., *Engels Today: A Centenary Appreciation*, Macmillan and St Martin's Press, London and New York, 1996. xiv + 214 pp., £40.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 333 63324 5 hb., 0 333 66531 7 pb.

This centenary collection usefully steers between two extreme responses to Engels's role in the development of Marxism, neither attributing all errors and crudities in the official doctrine to his baneful influence, nor merely portraying him as playing second fiddle to Marx. However, its main focus is not an attempt definitively to settle Engels's relationship to Marx, but rather a review of what in Engels's works still occasions debate. This includes his views on class struggle and 'scientific socialism', philosophical naturalism, feminist issues, and political economy. While there is some unevenness in the collection, it succeeds in its aim of showing that Engels had views which warrant critical discussion.

Terrell Carver and Andrew Collier discuss Engels's views on the politics of class struggle, arguing that he should be seen as a democrat. Terrell Carver notes that Engels could only enter into an uneasy alliance with other supporters of secular democratization in Europe. He suggests a parallel between the struggles of 1848, in which Marx and Engels participated, and popular revolts against Communist rule in Eastern Europe, claiming that both were crucially inspired by a demand for constitutional government, which, for all its limitations, 'implies power sharing with citizens [and] respect for them and their views' (p. 23). I doubt this. Hayek's constitutionalism, for example, seems rather to imply suspicion of citizens and their views. Constitutionalism as such can be seen as a device to restrict appropriation of wealth through political power. It has democratic overtones when directed against feudal lords, but not as a safeguard against redistribution of wealth by popular majorities.

Andrew Collier absolves Engels of responsibility for subsequent retreats among social-democratic parties from social revolution to reform and, finally, to mere management of capitalism. Collier asks whether socialist revolution is indeed necessary or possible given its prerequisites, and then proceeds to show what Engels contributes to this question. According to Collier, Engels makes 'two main tendential predictions: that the proletariat will grow as a proportion of the population; and that military technology will shift the balance of forces in the state's favour'. He also makes 'three main constraint predictions: that socialism cannot be brought about without a revolution, that revolution cannot be made without the organized

support of a large majority, and that revolution cannot be made against the military' (p. 40). Collier finds that these predictions are supported by historical evidence, but criticizes Engels (and Marx) for failing to appreciate that revolutions are 'always exceptional' (p. 42). His summary (pp. 43–4) stresses Engels's 'exemplary realism', thus leading into the issue of philosophical naturalism.

Various aspects of this topic are covered by John O'Neil, Ted Benton and Sean Sayers. Ted Benton considers what can be learned from Engels about the prospects of a realignment of red and green politics. He claims that Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* demonstrates a link between the class position of the English working class and the poor health and environment it suffered, and thus can be seen as a foundational text for an ecological socialism. Sean Sayers, meanwhile, argues that Engels's non-reductive materialism is the viable alternative to idealism and physicalism (equating this with the mechanistic materialism that Engels rejects). For Sayers, as for Davidson, this position asserts that all 'material things are physical in nature', yet denies that 'all material phenomena are fully describable or explicable in terms of physics' (p. 159). However, Sayers rejects Davidson's 'anomalous monism' because it gives a 'non-realist account of the mental standpoint' (p. 161). This charge might stick for the mental, since on Davidson's account what counts as a correct mental description or explanation is partly determined by a presumption that others mostly believe and think rationally as we do (the 'Principle of Charity'). But the charge may not hold for other areas, such as biology; or even for the view that the mental is 'anomalous', if that is simply a consequence of denying determinism.

The collection is balanced by some serious criticisms of Engels's views. While applauding Engels's vision of how men and women might live, Lisa Vogel argues that he fails to integrate his various sources into a coherent theory of the oppression of women. She suggests a need to go beyond socialist feminism to a critique of Marxism. If, however, historical materialism can be interpreted sufficiently broadly to contain approaches such as Christine Delphy's, it may be that feminism needs only to reject timid, conventional Marxisms. Chris Arthur argues that gratitude for

Engels's contribution to *Capital* should be tempered by recognition of the muddles involved in his concept of 'simple commodity production' and his attribution of a 'logico-historical' method to Marx. Arthur's claim that theory need not recapitulate history is well taken. He also shows that value can be a fully developed social relation of production only under capitalism. His further assertion that categories such as 'value' cannot apply to pre-capitalist commodity exchange relies, less plausibly, on claiming that labour time has a 'necessary' influence only on capitalist exchange.

Engels Today provides useful food for thought now that the work of Marx and Engels is no longer, as a matter of course, engulfed in ideological fall-out from the collapse of Communism.

Ian Hunt

Whose last words?

Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Lévy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews*, trans. Adrian Van Den Hoven, with an introduction by Ronald Aronson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1996. 135 pp., £15.95 hb., 0 226 47630 8.

'It's other people who are my old age. An old man never feels like an old man', protests the seventy-five-year-old Sartre. The recall of the famous 'Hell is other people' is one of the few flashes of the old brilliance to be found in these interviews, first published in the weekly *Nouvel Observateur* only weeks before Sartre's death in April 1980. His interlocutor is his young secretary Benny Lévy, the rabbinical reincarnation of the Maoist chief formerly known as Pierre Victor.

The interviews immediately provoked controversy and were given a hostile reception by the Sartre 'family'. Simone de Beauvoir, in particular, was vitriolic, accusing Lévy of 'abducting' and manipulating an old man who no longer had the intellectual strength to defend himself. In his very informative, but perhaps over-generous, introduction Aronson argues that, in Beauvoir's view, respecting the new direction that Sartre appears to be taking here would imply disrespect for the Sartre she had known in his prime. He then asks why Sartre should not be able to change in yet another direction. The question is legitimate, as is the reminder that the image of Sartre which emerges from Beauvoir's autobiographical writings is a highly contrived and controlled one. To claim that *Hope Now* is one of the few occasions on which

Sartre can be seen actually working with someone else and being contested is more dubious; Lévy's questions are often aggressive and he tries too hard to keep his own hands clean. The criticisms of Sartre's fellow-travelling would, for instance, be much more palatable if they were accompanied by a self-critical reflection on Lévy's starring role in the tragi-comedy of French Maoism. Some of the retractions prompted by Lévy's questions are startling. Sartre is now critical of his notorious endorsement of the use of a cleansing violence in his Preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. Whilst it is true that the piece has not aged well, it is hard not to see Sartre's admission that he found it 'unpleasant' to be against his own country as a surrender to the collective amnesia surrounding the horrors of the Algerian War. It is heartbreakingly sad to see Sartre retreating from his honourable position of old.

The central issue addressed in these interviews is that of constructing new foundations for the Left after the eclipse of Marxism. Sartre and Lévy explore the possibility of a new ethics of fraternity and look forward to a future in which each person will be a human being, and in which collectivities will be equally human. Parties will give way to mass movements with definite and specific goals. At times the discussion is alarmingly abstract and divorced from political realities. The rise of Mitterrand's Socialist Party and the electoral victory of 1981 may well have resulted in new disappointments, but it is perverse to see them as signalling the demise of political parties.

The references to an ethics of fraternity would simply be a banal coda to Sartre's political evolution, were it not for the discussion of messianism, and particularly Jewish messianism, in the final interview. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, which, it now transpires, was written without any recourse to documentation or research, Sartre claimed that the Jew would finally discover that he is 'a man' and not merely a creation of the anti-Semite. Sartre argues that the Jewish vision of the end of the world as resulting in the appearance of a new world, and in the emergence of an ethical existence in which men live for one another, is an essential ingredient in any revolutionary politics.

The reappearance of religious themes, and of positive references to monotheism, are commonplaces of French political thought from the so-called New Philosophers onwards. Yet it is still surprising to find Sartre subscribing to such ideas. If the comments made by Lévy in his Afterword are a faithful reflection of Sartre's thinking, the old atheist was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah – the reign of man and

of the universal. Was Sartre being overinfluenced by a dialogue with someone who went so rapidly from what he now calls 'militant stupidity' to religious Judaism? Is this the authentic voice of the dying Sartre? Beauvoir claimed that Lévy brought pressure to bear on the blind Sartre, who finally gave in from exhaustion and agreed to his secretary's arguments. If that is true, Lévy appears not to have changed; Foucault is likewise reliably reported, in the very different context of a discussion of 'people's justice', as having surrendered to the unrelenting arguments of the then Pierre Victor ... out of exhaustion, to make him happy, to shut him up. Despite Aronson's attempts to argue that these interviews represent a new departure for Sartre, some doubt must remain as to their authenticity. Just whose last words these are is far from certain.

David Macey

Rhetorical rotundities

Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995. xviii + 264 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 521 49889 9.

The title of Rosen's trenchant critique of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* refers to 'the role of rhetoric in the revolutionary movement known as the Enlightenment'. Rhetoric, we are told, is the means by which dangerous philosophical truths are hidden behind noble lies, and Nietzsche, as the subtlest of rhetoricians, is cast as the most dangerous revolutionary of them all. Having stripped away the smiling rhetoric of rational progress, Nietzsche dared to expose not merely the latent grimace of scepticism and materialism, but the far deeper terror of the certainty of chaos and 'the eternal return of the same'. Finding himself face to face with the horror of nihilism, he too felt constrained to fashion a revivifying rhetorical mask. Anthropomorphizing force into will and flux into freedom, he sought to conceal chaos behind creativity, notwithstanding the rigid determinism of an eternal return which spurns the rhetorical rotundities it illegitimately spawns.

The focal point of Rosen's book is Zarathustra's 'double rhetoric': a dual invocation of subjective freedom and absolute necessity which juxtaposes exoteric exaltation and esoteric despair. Indeed, it is the tenacity of Rosen's hold on the equivocal character of Zarathustra's discourse – its 'incoherent synthesis'

of creative overcoming and *amor fati*, free will and determinism – that constitutes the principal strength of his inquiry. Rosen shows how the nihilism required for the destructive preliminary stage of Zarathustra's revolutionary ideology necessarily precludes the all-important creative stage. He further shows how the correlatively dual role of will to power, as ever-shifting ground of fragmented subjectivity on the one hand, and defining act of integrated subjectivity on the other, is inherently 'self'-defeating. As Rosen astutely concludes, Nietzsche's attempt to derive individual significance from chaos is like trying 'to pull a rabbit out of an empty hat'. The failure of Zarathustra's teaching is thus seen to lie in a double rhetoric which flourishes and founders on its internal contradictions. While the destructive determinist instinct in Zarathustra's doctrine of the eternal return flourishes in hearts hard enough for nihilism, the creative flourish of the vulgarized doctrine luxuriates in swampy hearts yearning for salvation. In the former, wisdom confines life; in the latter, art refines wisdom and thereby reanimates life. In both, the 'lived wisdom' which Rosen locates at the core of Zarathustra's prophetic mission falters on the common disjunction between theory and practice.

What Rosen fails to mention, however, is that the split between theory and praxis is in no greater evidence than in the person of Zarathustra himself; nowhere is the pathos of personal failure more affecting, especially if one sees in Zarathustra partial projections of his author. One must of course be mindful of the boundary between work and author, blurred though it is by the fluctuations of chaotic 'subjectivity'. But while Nietzsche's hermeneutic tool of 'backward inference' from the work to the author would reject any *simple* identity between Nietzsche and Zarathustra, it would consider equally untenable Rosen's representation of Zarathustra as 'the expression of Nietzsche's loneliness purged of its purely subjective or personal elements'. To portray a tragic and psychologically complex figure, a *man* torn apart by violent inner conflict, as 'the highest and purest aspect of Nietzsche's spirit', is to rob Nietzsche's most cherished (and to my mind, most personal) work of its clumsily masked confessional content. Rosen's sanitized spiritualization of Zarathustra diminishes not only the latter's all-too-human weaknesses, which bar his way to self-overcoming, but the *specific* allegorical significance, persistently overlooked by Nietzsche scholars, of the *kindred* spirits (the 'higher men' of Part IV), who strew the path of his inner journey. It is surprising indeed that a critic who places so much emphasis on the spiritual perceives neither the clear

connection between the spirit of Romantic pessimism (personified by Schopenhauer) and the soothsayer, nor that between the spirit of Romantic art (personified by Wagner) and the sorcerer. Consequently, Rosen's reading of Part IV of *Zarathustra* is by far the weakest section of the book.

Even more surprising, however, is Rosen's failure to connect the subtlety of Zarathustra's double rhetoric with the forked tongue of his cunning serpent. For if, as Rosen claims, 'serpents are a metaphorical expression of ... the wisdom of deceit and poisonous attack', and Zarathustra's serpent is a metaphor for cunning intelligence, then the latter's intrinsic relation to Zarathustra's rhetorical duplicity is self-evident. Furthermore, Rosen's claim that, 'as personifications of natural force (including the human spirit), [Zarathustra's] animals do not represent [his] personal subjectivity' is seriously undermined by Zarathustra's prior claim that the spirit is a tool and toy of the body. Once again, Rosen's hermeneutic bent towards the abstract and the spiritual deprives Zarathustra of his quintessentially human characteristics.

These reservations aside, Rosen's *The Mask of Enlightenment* is the most penetrating interpretation of *Zarathustra* to have appeared in recent years.

Francesca Cauchi

Sacred facts

Robyn Ferrell, *Passion in Theory: Conceptions of Freud and Lacan*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996. viii + 118 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 09019 9 hb., 0 415 09020 2 pb.

In Robyn Ferrell's account of psychoanalysis, Freud was a committed empiricist who evolved a theory that challenges the premisses of the empirical sciences. Briefly, her argument runs as follows: as early as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), when his theorizing starts to become recognizably psychoanalytic, Freud offers two hypotheses: the first, that the primary mental item is not the sense-perception but the hallucination; the second, that the wish, originating in the body, is more basic than the thought. The consequence is to disturb the assumption 'that the objective view is a valid – or even a possible – intersubjective reference' (p. 29). The real can no longer be equated with the external objective world that is taken as a yardstick by the sciences. It is not so much that scientific empiricism

– the reference to neuro-physiology, chemistry and so on – is disqualified; it is rather that the foundational objectivity apparently guaranteed by the reference to the external world is put into question.

The question which Freud goes on to raise in respect of any theory – and that includes not only empiricism but also his own metapsychology – is whether it can avoid projecting unconscious desires, in the shape of its concepts, back onto the material it is using the concepts to organize. On this view, theory would always be an elaborated kind of secondary revision (to use the term applied to the narrative that the dreamer imposes on the elements of his/her dream), informed by interior psychic structures. This does not mean that we cannot make legitimate distinctions between hypotheses. (In Freud's example of geology, it is plausible to assume that the core of the earth is molten rock; it is not plausible to assume that it is strawberry jam.) It does, however, entail that theory is never completely free of unconscious desire. Science and reason cannot be neutral, in the sense of disconnected from their source in unconscious, desiring psychical reality – which means, ultimately, their source in the body.

It is not until the very last pages of the book that we discover where the argument is heading. When science claims, implicitly or explicitly, that it has access to the most 'real' kind of reality, what we are witnessing, in Ferrell's view, is the religion of our times. Science itself 'is a species of theology ... the description of fact is the sacred writing of the contemporary world, and that world worships where things are taken literally' (p. 98). On this interpretation, '*facts are expressive of contemporary desire*' (ibid.). So real is the ontology produced by science, Ferrell writes, that we do not see that this reality is a theological one. The desire that empiricism embodies is for the objective real to be unrelated to our desire, whereas for psychoanalysis, without desire there would be no connection with the world at all. Love is 'an epistemological relation' (p. 99) (which is why transference is not just a phenomenon of clinical work, but a key concept in psychoanalytic theory). For empirical science, the subjectivity of the observer has to be neutralized, 'fixed', in order to establish the validity of the scientific observation. That is all well and good, says Ferrell, provided we remember that the neutralization of the subject-pole itself corresponds to a desire. The same problem arises, of course, in psychoanalysis when it aspires to be scientific. The recurring clash between the essential mobility and destabilizing power of the id and the need for both epistemological stability and

therapy is often thought to be exemplified in Lacan's eventful career and contradictory heritage.

It makes sense to see Ferrell's short study as belonging in many respects to the genre of the philosophical essay: offering a series of reflections which are often pithy and epigrammatic in expression. Its rhetorical qualities are simultaneously seductive (the pleasure of seeing complex ideas condensed so satisfactorily); demanding (in the effort required to consider whether the condensation is accurate, or whether one needs to question further); and an obstacle (the condensation is a barrier at those points where one is not in a position to do the unpacking). Its account of Freud is remarkable in its conciseness and pertinence, although I imagine the book will leave the sceptics unconvinced and believers confirmed in their views. But part of Ferrell's point is that we cannot be literally dispassionate about *any* of our theories: neutrality is not an option.

Margaret Whitford

Ulster defence mechanism

John David Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict: The Structuration of Politics in Northern Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. x + 230 pp., £30.00 hb., 0521 55052 1.

Under capitalism, says the *Communist Manifesto*, 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away.' Not, apparently, in Northern Ireland; nor in those numerous other countries where the so-called 'ethnic revival' increasingly dominates political life. How are we 'to comprehend the persistence and regeneration of ideologies of ethnicity' (p. 6)? This is the question Cash sets out to answer. The difficulties we have in answering it are, he believes, due to defective theories of ideology. This he sets out to remedy in the first part of the book. In the second he puts his own theory to work in explaining the ideological formations of one particular ethnic group: Ulster Unionists.

Cash defines ideology as 'a dynamic and relatively autonomous system of signification, communication and subjection which operates by constructing a social and political order and subjecting individual human beings to cathected positions within this order' (p. 70). His objection to existing theories of ideology

is that they are either too sociological, and therefore unable to treat it as operating autonomously through the activity of individuals; or too psychological, and hence disabled from appreciating its role in structuring intersubjective relations. Cash seeks to overcome this duality through an appeal to Giddens's theory of structuration, whereby the structure of social systems is both the medium of individual action and the effect of it. The structuration of ideology is, Cash claims, governed by unconscious rules which should, so he questionably infers, be specified in psychoanalytic terms. Thus the Kleinian paranoid-schizoid position gives rise, as a defence mechanism, to dehumanizing or persecutory ideological formations; the depressive position to an ambivalent one which, unlike the former sorts, is able to treat its objects as whole people with good and bad aspects, so that 'the capacity for reality testing, *vis à vis* the prior positions, is greatly enhanced' (p. 88).

Cash combines this psychodynamic account with aspects of Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory to devise rules governing the structuration of identities and relations in Northern Ireland. He discerns four modes of ideological reasoning: two corporate ones which constitute persons by their ethno-religious category, the instrumental through shared objectives and the affiliative through allegiance; and two liberal ones, the conventional and the post-conventional, which constitute them as citizens and as human beings respectively. The suitability of the corporate modes to the dehumanising or persecutory positions, and of the liberal to the ambivalent one, is evident. Terms like 'Protestant' and 'Roman Catholic' thus have a different significance, depending on whether the corporate or liberal modes are employed, and incorporate either exclusivist or inclusivist constructions of the social world. This is the basis of Cash's 'depth hermeneutic of Unionist ideology' (p. 111).

Cash rejects both pluralist explanations in terms of the continuity of ethnic identities, and modernization accounts which sharply contrast the rational pursuit of group interest with irrational ethnic regressions. Instead, he emphasizes the fluctuations in Unionist ideology, attempts at inclusivist policies towards Nationalists alternating with exclusivist reactions to political crises. Through analysis of speeches by Unionist politicians he identifies the changes from liberal ambivalence to corporate dehumanization or persecutory anxiety and back again.

If the strength of Cash's theory of ideology is to be judged by its power to explain Unionist politics, then it cannot be judged a complete success. His somewhat

one-dimensional account does not take us far beyond recording the readily observable affective reactions of Unionists to political events. Although he dwells on the paradox of a Loyalism which defies British authority and asserts a right of self-government, his scheme fails to elucidate what Britishness means to Unionists. Nor does his downplaying of their Protestantism as just a potentially exclusionary label help capture their complex identity. But it is his reluctance to look outside his confining *pathological* framework that is finally unsatisfying: Nationalists are described as exclusivist when, for them, 'the enemy was trying to continue with its regime of oppression and discrimination' (p. 154). But it was, wasn't it?

This last criticism survives, even if we grant that it would be unfair to judge Cash by his failure to shed light on a situation whose explanation is nearly as intractable as its resolution. There is a good deal of independent interest here, including useful discussions of Althusser and Habermas on ideology. Its application is at least a serious attempt to get beyond the usual journalistic banalities.

Paul Gilbert

Suspicion and faith

Alan How, *The Habermas–Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social: Back to Bedrock*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1995. xi + 251 pp., £37.50 hb., 1 85628 179 5.

It is a pleasure to find a book where one disagrees, sometimes profoundly, with the author, but which one still feels able to praise. This is an excellent text. It is written clearly and – an all too rare phenomenon – with the reader and his or her sensibilities in mind, rather than as a display designed for the satisfaction of the author. It does what it sets out to do, no more and no less, and bears the stamp of a good teacher and a careful thinker. I can see myself referring students to it for some time to come and I am sure that I will be referring myself to it as well. It is the best account of the Habermas–Gadamer debate that I have found.

The author announces his prejudice for Gadamer at the beginning and tries to show that in the debate between the two, Habermas is guilty of the greater misinterpretation. In the process of demonstrating this, he does us the service of succinct summaries

of the origins of the dispute in the Adorno–Popper controversies, and of the main themes of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. He offers the best account of the concept of 'application' available, and a useful account of the differences between Gadamer and Peter Winch. When faced with teasing out the Habermas–Gadamer debate myself, I react as I might if I were asked to separate two gridlocked Sumo wrestlers. How himself deals with it as a contest over four rounds, carefully describing the punches and scoring the points, arguing that Gadamer's hermeneutics is capable of producing critiques of ideology, that the emphasis on tradition does not entail obedience to authority, and so on. Yet I find I am not convinced by these arguments.

In his introduction, How calls on a distinction made by Ricoeur between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of faith, which seems to me to be a very clear way of distinguishing between the contestants; and towards the end he recognizes the possibility – perhaps the necessity – of being able to move from one to the other. But he also wishes to defend Gadamer's conception of language – the basis of faith – in a way that leaves me uneasy. Language becomes the source of sociality, which is fair enough, but also the way the world discloses itself to us, and this is too close to a theological conception to be accepted uncritically: 'In the beginning was the word ... and the word was God.' I am not sure that How's defence of it is actually compatible with his more even-handed assessments. Everything – and perhaps especially the subjective and the individual – is absorbed into such a conception which, in a strange paradox given Gadamer's intentions, produces in theory a form of totalitarianism where there is no room for critique. Language can be many things – a link with Being, an instrument, a reflection, a self-revelation and a persuasion. But it can also be an enemy, something which strips us of our intuition, and with which we must struggle.

There is one sentence in which How opposes the two thinkers in a typically succinct way: 'Gadamer's most basic attitude orients him towards seeing the connectedness between things, finding complicity even between oppositions. Habermas' attitude actively heightens dualisms, for example setting off reason in direct opposition to tradition' (p. 166). Yet these are precisely the moments of dialectical thought – the separation and contradiction and the bringing together. If we seek only connectedness, we move towards mysticism, and there is no development, nothing new emerges; if we seek only contradiction, we move towards fragmentation. We need to hold on to faith

and suspicion *at the same time* and move between the two, giving each one priority in turn. Perhaps the most important thing about this book is that it stimulates thinking about these issues in an accessible way.

Ian Craib

Unengaged

Véronique M. Fóti, ed., *Merleau-Ponty: Difference, Materiality, Painting*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands NJ, 1996. 201 pp., \$55.00 hb., 0 391 03904 0.

The editor introduces these twelve essays by suggesting that the need for exposition of Merleau-Ponty's work has now passed, and that what is required is a dialogue with him in the context of recent post-phenomenological and post-structuralist philosophies. For members of the Merleau-Ponty circle, from one of whose conferences these papers are loosely derived, this is probably true; and they have indeed taken the injunction against exegesis to heart. It is possible to imagine some intriguing debate surfacing during their meeting, but as a collected volume the book does not work well because there is no real engagement with Merleau-Ponty's texts, or any sense of the overall project on which these writings bear, or of how they relate to subsequent developments in continental philosophy. The task of the editor should surely have been to provide some such overview and contextualization, but instead Véronique Fóti's introduction merely offers a brief summary of each article. She does, however, divide the contributions according to what she sees as the three main issues to be confronted: difference, materiality and painting.

Fóti registers surprise that among these Merleau-Ponty scholars, the question of materiality seemed to incite the most interest, and the essays in this section do offer some suggestive explorations of matter vis-à-vis Merleau-Ponty's ontological category of the flesh. Here materiality loses its inertia and opacity to appear as inexhaustible rather than impenetrable; as a field of forces and a style of existing, rather than Cartesian extension or Kantian spatiality. Olkowski's reading of Merleau-Ponty through Bergson is especially provocative in this regard. Somewhat confusingly, the editor also concludes that difference is the 'focal problematic' of these scholars. However, this part of the collection is the least satisfying. It is never made clear by any of the writers in what sense they are using difference, and it often seems to amount to no more than a skimpy

comparison between Merleau-Ponty and some other thinker (such as Nietzsche or Derrida). Froman's final remarks on similarities between flesh and *différance*, for example, are interesting but the issue is touched on much too sketchily.

The final category, on painting, seems a rather less obvious priority, but reflects Fóti's own interests. Intriguingly, she notes that the conference was held in conjunction with an exhibition of post-Abstract Expressionist art and in her own piece she relates the works on display to Merleau-Ponty's own writing on painting, noting that it offers probably the most sensitive yet audacious discussion of this topic to come out of contemporary continental philosophy. In many ways I found this to be the best piece in the collection, since it combines a real engagement with Merleau-Ponty's work in this area with some innovative ways of applying, extending and criticizing it.



Situating his interest – primarily in Cézanne – within broader French concerns with vision and his own ontological inquiries into the appearing of the visible as a phenomenology of perception, Fóti finds a tension in Merleau-Ponty's work between 'perceptual origin' and 'pure' or 'differential' nascency, or as she also puts it, between 'foundational unity' and 'ungrounded creative differentiation'. It is in the latter – predominant in *The Visible and the Invisible*, which returns us to the generativity of the flesh with its 'play of energies in irresolvable tension' – that she finds the possibility for an oblique extension to, and theoretical resource for, the abstract painting of which Merleau-Ponty was himself quite dismissive. Given the rather difficult yet superficial treatments most of these pieces offer, it would nevertheless be preferable for readers to return to the original texts, whose elegant prose is too often merely parodied here in strings of metaphors without any real guiding purpose.

Diana Coole