

Philosophy for zombies?

Tim Crane, *The Mechanical Mind: A Philosophical Introduction to Minds, Machines and Mental Representation*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1995. xiv + 221 pp., £7.99 pb., 0 14 016857 5.

Frank Jackson and David Braddon Mitchell, *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996. 256 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 631 19167 4 hb., 0 631 19168 2 pb.

Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind*, Westview Press, Boulder CO and Oxford, 1996. xii + 258 pp., £43.95 hb., £13.50 pb., 0 8133 0777 9 hb., 0 8133 0776 7 pb.

Georges Rey, *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind: A Contentiously Classical Approach*, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge MA, 1997. xv + 301 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 631 19069 4 hb., 0 631 19071 6 pb.

Galen Strawson, *Mental Reality*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1994. xiv + 337 pp., £24.95 hb., £12.50 pb., 0 262 19352 3 hb., 0 262 69183 3 pb.

David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1996. ix + 414 pp., £18.99 hb., 0 19 510553 2.

Gregory McCulloch, *The Mind and Its World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995. xii + 227 pp., £37.50 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 09330 9 hb., 0 415 12205 8 pb.

Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1995. ix + 336 pp., £19.95 hb., 0 691 03642 X.

Philosophy of Mind is presently regarded as one of the most productive areas of contemporary analytic philosophy. A number of recent introductory works (here those by Jackson and Braddon Mitchell, Crane, Kim and Rey) give us a chance to reflect on the dominant paradigms in terms of which the subject is taught. These texts display a remarkable level of agreement on the framework they adopt for understanding mentality. They operate with a model of scientific realism in which our grasp of mental phenomena is dependent on understanding the role they play in causal accounts of behaviour. Psychological states are thought of as inner causes of behaviour, whose characteristics and lawlike interrelations are appropriate objects of scientific investigation. Psychological states are, in this sense, natural kinds. This picture, of mental states as inner causes, owes much to Descartes. But each book (except for Crane's, which sidesteps the issue) is at pains to reject a Cartesian dualism of substance, replacing it with a monism which adopts the Cartesian privileging of materialist science in characterizing the non-supernatural fabric of the world. They accept a form of supervenience thesis, seeing explanatory psychological states as determined by and dependent (in a noncausal way) on interior physical ones. This sets the agenda for the naturalizing accounts. How can

we accommodate the apparently distinctive character of our psychological phenomena within a physicalist science?

Given the failure of earlier theories identifying mental types with neurologically specified ones, the current orthodoxy is some form of functionalism. Here philosophers make use of what Fodor has termed 'the big idea': the comparison of mental functioning with the workings of a computer, characterized at the level not of its hardware, but of its programming. Psychological types, on this account, are individuated by their position in a network of causal interconnections, at a level of abstraction which allows for a multiplicity of physical realizations. Here there is some disagreement. Jackson and Braddon-Mitchell think that these individuating causal roles are implicitly grasped via our commonsense use of psychological terms, and therefore derivable from them. Crane and Rey are empirical functionalists for whom a mature psychology will yield the essential nature of our psychological kinds. Given the shared materialist standpoint, however, the assumption is made that such individuating roles can be characterized in ways that make no essential reference to mentalistic modes of description. For these causal roles must be ones which physical systems can intelligibly occupy.

There is also a coincidence of views on the challenges faced by this picture, though they get somewhat different emphases in each volume. Kim's work concentrates on the issue of mental causation. The contemporary orthodoxy is fuelled by a conception of psychological states as theoretical entities within a causal explanatory theory. But can the picture deliver a role to our psychology in which it makes a difference to what happens? The problem stems from the failure of classical reduction, which simply identified mental properties with those in some physical causal story. If that is no longer viable, and we accept the self-sufficiency of the causal sequences of physical science, how can we make room for the causal efficacy of the psychological? Kim settles for supervenient causation. The counterfactual dependencies which support our causal claims are a consequence of the supervenience relation between psychological properties and physical ones. The picture here is of physical properties providing sufficient conditions for the instantiation of higher-level psychological properties. These then become derivatively necessary for whatever their base properties are necessary for. In this way they inherit the form of a causal link on the back of the genuine causality operative at the physical level. Mental causation is not quite the real thing, but as good as most macro-explanations anyway.

Apart from an account of mental causation, the major preoccupation of these introductory texts is how to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of our mental life – more specifically, intentional and experiential content. Intentional content is given a great deal of attention, for it is here that the computer analogy seems most hopeful. The boldest hypothesis is some form of language of thought, where internal functional organization is seen as closely mapping the propositional structure of thought. Crane and Rey adopt this. Jackson and Braddon-Mitchell prefer a looser mapping relation. Whichever model is adopted, it has to confront the problem of externalism. It seems impossible to give an account of how such functional states bear the representational content they do without invoking relations to some external states of affairs as constitutive of their being intentional states. Here the examples are well-worn. Which natural kinds we are thinking about (water or tiger) depends on which ones we stand in a causal and social relation to. Moreover, our social practices regarding which objects we might refer to by a term such as 'sofa' can determine the content of our thoughts without being mediated by any internal changes. Yet if this is the case, intentional states do not supervene solely on the internal physical states causing bodily movement; and hence cannot

earn even the attenuated causal efficacy allowed in Kim's picture.

Most writers resolve this by adopting some form of narrow content which plays a causal explanatory role, although it becomes quite unclear how such content could be specified, and on what grounds it counts as intentional at all. What does seem clear is that the psychological states whose explanatory role is being accommodated are no longer those which feature in our everyday explanations of ourselves and others. Tim Crane takes a different line, in seeing our intentional descriptions as akin to numbers – abstract entities whose relations can map relations between concrete, inner states. Apart from the resultant indeterminacy attaching to content, such an account fails to explain why we can only invoke such entities when we stand in relation to certain states of affairs in our world.

Intentionality constitutes one major problem for the current orthodoxy. The other is represented by consciousness, at least those aspects of it which try to encompass experiential content and the issue of subjectivity. Here most of the introductions profess themselves baffled. Rey takes the heroic line of reducing phenomenal properties to intentional ones which he thinks he can handle, while admitting that 'it does seem incredible ... that merely the right programme for manipulating representations could eventuate in the richness of our conscious experience' (p. 310). Jackson and Braddon-Mitchell insist that the problem must be soluble within the paradigm, even if they don't know how. Crane hopes it will be. Kim gives the most acute expression to the dilemma:

If we are prepared to embrace reductionism, we can explain mental causation. However in the process of reducing mentality ... we may well lose the intrinsic, subjective character of our mentality – arguably the very thing that makes the mental mental. In what sense then have we saved 'mental' causation? But if we reject reductionism, we are not able to see how mental causation should be possible. But saving mentality while losing causality doesn't seem to amount to saving anything worth saving. For what good is the mind if it has no causal powers? Either way, we are in danger of losing mentality. That is the dilemma. (p. 237)

The situation does not seem to be helped by the move of two recent dissenters from the orthodoxy. Galen Strawson defends a Cartesianism in which mental phenomena, essentially experiential, are independent of nonmental phenomena, linked constitutively neither to objects in the world, nor to observable behaviour. But this seems to produce just the kind of epiphenomenalism which worries Kim, while leaving us with

both intentional and phenomenal content as brute and inexplicable features of the world. David Chalmers accepts that functionalist materialism can provide an account of cognitive capacities – those aspects of psychology which are linked in an explanatory way to behaviour. But he regards the phenomenal features of experience as logically independent of these. A zombie could (logically) behave just like me and lack such characteristics, although his words would not resonate with the same (private) meanings that mine might have. Chalmers thinks we will learn to live with the explanatory irrelevance that this assigns consciousness, if we also accept that such phenomena are ‘naturally’, as opposed to ‘logically’, supervenient on functional organization. If the structure of experiential data parallels such organization, then the apparent link between experience and behaviour is thereby saved.

However, the failure of functionalist materialism to address issues of subjectivity does not seem adequately rectified by viewing experiences as simply brute extras hanging around the world in addition to fundamental physical properties. Moreover, such a suggestion does not help the current paradigm surmount the difficulties it has encompassing the rich, embodied and world-involving intentionality which marks our understanding of ourselves and others. The philosopher whose arguments are gaining no attention here is Wittgenstein, whose work challenges the coherence of such brute phenomenal contents as much as the mechanistic picture they were intended to correct.

In his Epilogue Tim Crane suggests that the biggest challenge to the mechanical view of the mind comes from the phenomenology: the way the mind appears to subjects (which is not adequately captured by an assertion of belief in qualia). The contemporary author whose work Crane refers to here is Greg McCulloch. McCulloch’s own book, *Is the Mind in the Head*, draws on such phenomenology to defend an ‘in-the-world-Wittgensteinianism’, which is also indebted to both Heidegger and Sartre. According to his account, we find ourselves intentionally embodied in a world experienced as salient to us, located among other intentionally embodied subjects. What is distinctive about McCulloch’s work is that he uses both Wittgenstein and the existential writers to provide us with the requisite conceptual framework to avoid the dilemmas of the contemporary paradigm, particularly that posed by externalism.

One of the problems with the paradigm, exemplified in the texts discussed above, is that it rejected Cartesian dualism only by rejecting immaterial substance, and was left with a conceptual apparatus which simply



reflected the other side of the Cartesian opposition: a body and world whose privileged articulation was given by scientific discourse. Attention to the phenomenology, in McCulloch’s view, directs us to a system of classification of intentional bodies, constitutively interdependent with an intentionally characterized world. On this account, to grasp what is involved in having psychological states is to grasp how the world presents itself to subjects, from whose perspective the world is experienced as salient, apt for certain kinds of response. These are not thought of as movements of a physical body, but as intentional transformations of an environment. Such a system of classification is neither answerable to, nor less fundamental than, that provided by physical science. Moreover, in a move shared with McDowell (see the review of *Mind and World* in *RP* 78), McCulloch points out that the world thus characterized is one which provides normative considerations for action, yielding a mode of understanding of the activities of ourselves and others distinct from that of mechanical law. This

mode of understanding is one in which, by adopting the perspective of the subject/agent experiencing the world and deciding how to act, we come to grasp the appropriateness of the act performed. Philosophy of Mind is philosophy of subjects of experience who are interdependently, intentionally embodied agents. Its perspectival and normative classificatory schema militates against an account of psychological terms as they are construed by scientific realists – namely, as theoretical placeholders in a causal explanatory theory whose privileged articulation will be physical science. This defence of the *sui generis* position of our mental descriptions is opposed to a naturalism which insists on reduction of genuine features of the world to those derivable from a scientific ontology. Given its indebtedness to Wittgenstein, however, it employs a naturalism of its own. The possibility of employing the intentional scheme of classification depends on a communality of response which makes such shared patterns of classification possible.

Within contemporary philosophy of mind McCulloch and McDowell's attempts to resolve the dilemmas posed by rich intentional content and the nature of subjectivity, by shifting to a conceptual apparatus informed by Wittgensteinian and existential sources, is a marginal one. The centrepiece confrontations are between functionalist materialists, forced to reduce or eliminate such aspects of mind, and qualia freaks. There is much more to be said, however. McCulloch's account is sketchy and only gestures at what is involved in having a point of view on the world. It pays insufficient attention to the role of normativity. It is also not clear that we can be content simply to recognize that there are distinct classificatory schemas in terms of which we make sense of ourselves and our world. McCulloch sees his account of folk psychology as compatible with a scientific psychology of a functionalist-materialist kind. But we need to consider whether these alternative schemas are in any way mutually constraining. This issue tends to become focused around causality. Our normative and perspectival explanations seem to have causal implications, regarding both our intentional acts and the bodily movements they involve. 'If I had not regarded my behaviour as inappropriate, I would not be phoning to apologize.' And it is from such conditionals, of course, that the contemporary paradigm took its starting point, attempting to supply a unifying account of causal relations which now looks vastly overambitious.

The attack on the scientific realist's view of the mind found in the work of McCulloch and McDowell

is reinforced by social-constructionist accounts of our mental characteristics. In Charles Taylor's terms, we are 'self-interpreting animals', and our mental states are constituted out of such self-understandings. These are mediated by social context, yielding a social constructionism about at least some aspects of the mental. In *Engenderings* (1993) Naomi Scheman gives the example of the role of consciousness-raising groups in the discovery by certain women of their feelings of anger about their situation. Here it is not that there were prior determinate feelings which were discovered to be anger. The conceptualization facilitated by the groups made it possible for this to be the emotion experienced. Such social-constructionist accounts are, of course, reinforcing the externalism which is already shattering the scientific realist paradigm from within. Moreover, they are incompatible with the kind of metaphysics required by that paradigm: a determinate reality carved up into mental kinds whose essential characteristics await our discovery.

Ian Hacking, in *Reinventing the Soul*, provides a social-constructionist analysis of multiple personality disorder. This disorder is recognized by psychologists and psychotherapists, and increasingly by their patients. 'In 1972 multiple personality had seemed a mere curiosity, less than a dozen cases ... reported in fifty years ... in 1992 there were hundreds of multiples in treatment in every sizable town in North America.... What has happened?' (p. 8). A certain kind of account sees the discovery of a unified psychological disorder with a common aetiology, usually child abuse (also treated as a unitary phenomenon). Hacking instead suggests that cultural discourses have come to constitute the phenomena, yielding the framework of understanding used by therapists and sufferers in their articulations of their intentional acts. Such social constructionism is at odds with the approach of scientific realists, but also appears to stand in some tension with the competing kinds of naturalism found in the Wittgensteinian picture, which rests on the naturalness of certain responses in anchoring our intentional patterns of conceptualization. Similarly, attention to the phenomenology of our psychological states has concentrated on apparently universal experiences of intentional embodiment, making such patterns of conceptualization possible. However, the tension between these approaches, both oppositional to the mainstream, seems less than fatal. For a Wittgensteinian, it is not only natural responses, but shared forms of life which make agreement in judgement possible; and this seems to leave room for a variety of judgements of the kind that social constructionism requires.

What Hacking has done in his work is provide us with an archaeology of the emergence of multiple personality disorder as a psychological kind, which pays attention to the conceptual resources of the culture, the practices accepted as constituting proof and disproof, the power relations between those involved in the construction of theory, and in society at large. Out of this complex set of factors the 'facts' emerge, and what is to count as 'nature' becomes established. The philosophical import of such work is to make evident the contingency and locatedness of narratives presented as uncovering the natural order of the world.

What would be instructive would be a similar archaeology of the emergence of the computer model of the mind. Information-processing models have become dominant in biology and other areas of science, as well as in psychology and philosophy of mind. Their predominance here owes much to sources of money from funding organizations, and the emergence of an information technology culture, as well as to their philosophical salience. To recognize the contingency of the model is not to judge its productivity. It should, however, make us sceptical about any claims to have discovered the essential nature of the mind.

Kathleen Lennon

Sense and non-sense

John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1996. xii + 316 pp., £27.50 hb., 0 19 509846 3.

Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995. xi + 320 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 19 823517 8.

Although rather different in tone, these two books are sufficiently similar to place them within the same genre of Nietzsche scholarship. Each pursues the project of rendering Nietzsche comprehensible according to the tenets of traditional philosophy, and argues that he does indeed belong within its fold since, if his ideas are radical, their radicalism does not lie in overturning the tradition as some of his followers and critics have alleged. Integral to this shared project is also a broadly similar strategy: one that is presented as reconstructive – that is, filling in gaps and smoothing out hiatuses in Nietzsche's often inconsistent and fragmentary prose; inferring, deducing and juxtaposing, so as to elicit premisses and propose a degree of systematic thinking which is sometimes acknowledged as blatantly constructive. This is explicitly opposed to a deconstructive approach, which can be decoded as an attack on Derrida and on more postmodern renditions generally. In essence, the aim is to show that, like mainstream philosophers, Nietzsche did subscribe to some ontology which supported his notions of truth and value, and which was summarized as will to power. Richardson pursues this task by applying a rigorously analytical approach, while Poellner is more inclined to fill in the history of those ideas that help explain Nietzsche's fidelities and polemics.

This foray by more mainstream philosophers is surely to be welcomed, as one route whereby analytical and continental approaches might find fertile grounds for dialogue. However, there must be some concern lest, in rendering Nietzsche clear and academically respectable, such work will translate him into an alien language that sacrifices what was most interesting and distinctive in his writing. Peter Poellner disarmingly confesses that Nietzsche would probably have perceived his qualms as mere technicalities peripheral to his grander ambitions. But since both authors are determined to rescue Nietzsche from charges of irrationalism, they have little patience with his gestures towards the nonrational.

On this score I feel more apprehensive about Richardson's study, which is undoubtedly erudite and sometimes illuminating, but whose self-confessedly 'conservative' approach leaves us with a rather boring Nietzsche, so that one ends by wondering what all the fuss was about. Perhaps following the death of God, we might now discover the death of Nietzsche, murdered at the hands of analytic philosophy in its own will to truth, which propels its ambition of clarifying any alterity that eludes it. For there is little room for aphorism, poetry or irony in this account. Richardson's typical strategy is to enumerate a number of feasible interpretations of an idea and then pains-



takingly eliminate or explore each in turn. This has the somewhat irritating result that lengthy sections of argument are subsequently abandoned on the basis of their faulty premisses. For example, the apparent ontology/perspectivism contradiction is provisionally resolved by ascribing transcendental truth to will to power, and perspectivism to the empirical domain it opens up. The book proceeds on this assumption until page 263, when it is finally reconciled in a more innovative way by recasting the sense of correspondence that Richardson sees as central to notions of truth. He claims that Nietzsche did have a (new kind of) metaphysical system, although this 'power ontology' was experimental rather than *a priori*, and left deliberately implicit. In trying to reconcile this with perspectivism, he suggests that what we find is actually a temporal ontology of perspectives, where every drive pursues its own end in a more or less active manner (hence the basic value system of active/reactive), and being is becoming.

In the final, and most interesting, chapter Richardson then concludes that Nietzsche pinned his hopes on releasing the will to truth, whose genealogy he had traced, into a 'healthy independence' (as opposed to its formerly overly ascetic, reactive and nihilistic orientations). By this, Richardson means the exercising of will to power in an agonistic (and essentially discursive) relation with others. He has no qualms in describing this process as dialectical, and in fact his Nietzsche often sounds all too Hegelian, with progress and enrichment explained in terms of synthesis, and will to power resembling determinate negation. Because there is no overall teleology, however, Nietzsche is credited with an open dialectic and Richardson leaves

us with that rather postmodern politics of diversity which has become fashionable in many recent reconstructions of Nietzsche's work. The point here, he emphasizes, is not to overwhelm one's enemies or simply amass perspectives, but to engage in a 'constructive project of understanding': a 'dialectical intent' of building some more integral view out of conflict, which the individual also attempts by speaking in a variety of minority tongues interwoven with the self's own dominant will to power. Although Richardson pays lip service to the unconscious nature of the will, the heroes of this process are presented as spiritualized, ascetic philosophers and the whole process either surreptitiously sustains its players as rational, intentional agents, or their capacity to know via the 'drives' subjectivities' requires far more consideration. In any case, the perspective of Life – the sensual, Dionysian,

noncognitive – does not seem to have much role here. Whilst I am sympathetic towards Richardson's conclusion that truth *qua* correspondence comes to mean an emulation of reality's structure, rather than a rendition of it as objectively true, the Nietzsche who emerges seems dubiously rationalistic, and his *Übermensch* would apparently be in their element practising discursive democracy and communicative action, provided they eliminated the goal of consensus. The more apocalyptic, de(con)structive, critical and nihilistic aspects of Nietzsche's thinking are all but phased out.

Peter Poellner pays homage to these dimensions of Nietzsche's work, while rejecting postmodern claims that they entail a stylistic self-subversion which places him outside of mainstream philosophical discourse. His aim in resituating Nietzsche there is to show how, using relatively common standards of philosophical argumentation, he engaged in a critique of the tradition and, in particular, attacked the priority it accords truth. On the other hand, Poellner agrees with Richardson that this in turn entailed Nietzsche's own belief in certain epistemological and metaphysical hypotheses. Despite their revolving around a reality presented as chaotic and in flux, Nietzsche's phenomenal world must still, Poellner insists, obey certain rules of logic, while in its psychological sense he suggests that will to power seems often to operate as an efficient cause with which we have an intuitive familiarity.

In exploring the 'apparent metaphysics' of will to power, Poellner takes us on an informative excursus through some of the founding concepts of philosophy disputed by Nietzsche, weighing Nietzsche's (often

plausible) scepticism against Hume's, while purging it of anti-essentialism; evaluating his premisses against traditional notions of causality, substance and force. The last allows him to confront some recent claims that Nietzsche's ontology is to be explained in cosmic terms and thereby to consider will to power in terms of Newtonian physics, whose language Nietzsche sometimes deployed in this context. From this perspective, Nietzschean metaphysics appears to involve an ontology of interacting quanta of force characterized by relational properties. In many ways, this makes will to power quite compatible with the Deleuzian interpretation so influential for postmodern readings. But Poellner unpacks Nietzsche's doubt that Newtonian forces actually explained anything, while taking us on a detour through Boscovich's anti-mechanist reduction of matter to centres and fields of force, which supposedly exerted considerable influence on Nietzsche's dynamist hypothesis alongside Berkeley and Schopenhauer's contentions that force as such tells us nothing qualitative about reality. This leads into a lengthy discussion of scepticism and metaphysical realism, where Poellner rehearses Nietzsche's objections to any subject-independent, essential reality existing in itself, and elicits the relationship between the desire for metaphysical truth, religious asceticism and resentment postulated by Nietzsche. He concludes that sceptical arguments were in fact no more than tools Nietzsche wielded against the ascetic ideal. He also classifies Nietzsche as an 'evolutionary epistemologist' here, suggesting that he believed arguments about the utility of our beliefs to species preservation undermined claims to any higher veracity. Poellner believes this argument fails because of certain realist assumptions it must make, and at this stage he registers concern over what, since Habermas, has been viewed as a performative contradiction in Nietzsche: his failure to ground, or to acknowledge the grounds of, his anti-metaphysical claims. (This was precisely what Richardson was trying to finesse dialectically, in his discussion of ontology versus perspectivism.)

In the latter part of the book, Poellner introduces the psychological domain, which is where he believes that Nietzsche comes closest to advancing truth claims in asserting that agents strive for power. Like Richardson, Poellner offers no crude notion of the self here, recognizing that this striving is primarily unconscious and concerns the drives. Unlike him, he explores this idea in more depth by comparing Nietzsche with Freud. But this is one of the weaker parts of his analysis, perhaps because he seems unsympathetic to the whole notion of an unconscious. Poellner concludes

that the whole conception is nonsensical and lacking in evidence unless, as he argues he did, Nietzsche believed that we can know these drives and passions introspectively. This experience of efficacy is then presented by Poellner both as the closest Nietzsche comes to a satisfactory explanation of reality in terms of a causal force, and as the hypothesis on which a metaphysics of will to power rests. In so far as he persisted in espousing anti-metaphysical and anti-essentialist views, he was confused. Poellner concludes that anti-rationalism can only ultimately usher us into a domain of meaninglessness: one that he, like Richardson, is convinced Nietzsche did not intend to enter, and one that neither author seems to think philosophy should mess with.

Diana Coole

Superseding Althusser

Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge, New York and London, 1997. x + 185 pp., £12.99 pb., 0 415 91588 0.

Almost thirty years later, one still remembers the exhilaration felt on first reading Althusser's essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses': the critical force of Marxism shone again in pristine splendour, as it applied to a new field – one of direct concern to the professional life of intellectuals and the daily life of everybody. Of course, the glory has faded, even if the twin concepts of interpellation and ISAs are still with us. The reason is that the theory, which was given in embryonic form, has never been really developed. It seemed to contain the elements of a Marxist philosophy of language (provided neither by a few cryptic hints from the founding fathers, nor by the dogmatic pronouncements of the pseudo-Stalin), one that would take in the new developments of linguistics and the theory of the signifier. It was already adumbrated in Althusser's earlier work, where ideology is said to operate linguistically, through punning (see the exploiter's or imperialist's consistent punning on the word 'freedom'); and led us to expect an analysis of the linguistic process of subjectivation through interpellation. The essay had, after all, a subtitle: 'Notes towards an Investigation'. But the rest never came, and the recent publication of the remainder of

the manuscript (*Sur la reproduction*, 1995) provides no comfort.

Yet the rest has now come, from the other side of the Atlantic, which, considering that Althusser is now out of fashion (except for the journey into madness that the *Autobiography* is usually taken to be), is both a surprise and a joy. I felt the same exhilaration as I read Judith Butler's book as I did thirty years ago. She has not only reconstructed the theory from Althusser's intuitions; she has taken it further. With the immediate consequence that her subtitle is apt, that one reads a book where political thought has found its critical edge again, where a form of Marxism has found renewed performativity, in a context where woolly consensual liberalism and narrow reactive political correctness seem to dominate.

Butler's political agenda is, it is true, if not foreign to me, at least distant. The coming out of homosexuals in the military is not *à l'ordre du jour* in France, where the urgent political issue is the electoral rise of the National Front, and the struggle against racism and xenophobia fostered by retrograde immigration laws. But there is at least an intersection (the chapter 'Burning Words' concerns racist speech acts), and I deeply sympathize with Butler's political stance – not so much because I find myself on the same side, as because the critical edge of theory allows her to avoid, and to criticize, the two opposite dangers of well-meaning but misguided left militancy: the legalism that believes we can successfully use the judicial apparatus against the dominant ideology (she gives a brilliant rhetorical-cum-political analysis of judgments by the Supreme Court on 'protected speech'); and that the domination of the dominant ideology is so inescapable that we might as well resign ourselves to it (the hate speech that aggresses and derogates the subject, she claims, to some extent fixes her identity, but does not leave her entirely powerless).

There is no mystery about the source of this political strength: Butler operates a *retour à Althusser*, which, like his own return to Marx, both preserves and supersedes. The supersession occurs in the course of her discussion of the relevant French theory (Foucault, Bourdieu, Derrida's 'Signature Event Context'), excursions into psychoanalysis, and, more importantly to my mind, a critical analysis of Austinian pragmatics. In this last field what she does amounts to a breakthrough. She goes beyond Derrida's critique of Austin's intentionalism in terms of *différance* and citationality: she gives us a political – an Althusserian – version of pragmatics, a theory of subjection through interpellation.

In a pastiche of Althusser's own method of exposition, I shall give an idea of her theory by extracting six theses from the book.

Thesis One: Subjection is a discursive process. This thesis is by no means new, but Butler's discussion gives it an interesting twist: it allows her to define agency as beginning when sovereignty wanes. The subject as agent is no longer sovereign, but constituted as actor by a linguistic field of enabling constraints.

Thesis Two: Interpellation is linguistic. This was at best implicit in Althusser. Taken literally, it suggests not only that language acts like a material force – this, after all, is the definition of performativity: instances will readily be found in insults and hate speech, and in the ritual of naming – but that interpellation may be grammaticalized through specialized pragmatic markers, a possibility that Butler herself doesn't envisage. What she does envisage is the material nature of linguistic force: emanating from the body in the form of the voice (here subjection is no longer abstractly discursive, as in Althusser) and acting on the body. The speech act is a bodily act.

Thesis Three: Interpellation depends on a characteristic of natural languages, which Austinian pragmatics first indicated clearly, without drawing all the consequences: the disjunction between intention and meaning. Not saying what one means, not doing what one says, not doing what one meant are facts of life in the human subject's relationship to her language and her action, and they open up the possibility of political action, of resistance to interpellation, of linguistic struggle.

Thesis Four spells out the first consequence of this disjunction: There is a specific temporality of the speech act. Speech acts are constrained neither by a specific speaker, nor by their original context: they are caught in a chain of resignification. The effect of the hate word is not irreversible; nor is its force necessarily what the speaker assumes. More generally the text's meaning is recontextualized in the new situation of utterance (Derrida's concepts of iterability and citationality are of use here).

Thesis Five: The consequence of this consequence is that there is no need for resignation, for passive acceptance of the position one is interpellated into. Speech acts do not merely reflect dominant relations of power; they can be turned back against their temporary authors – there are such things as insurrectionary speech acts.

Thesis Six: There is a third consequence of the meaning disjunction, for which Butler uses the old rhetorical term of metalepsis (revamped by Genette in

Figures III and Lyotard in *The Differend*, it denotes a narrative circularity whereby the worlds of the narrator and the narratee intersect). Since a performative is always caught in an originless chain, is only cited by its present author (this is reminiscent of Lyotard's 'serial arrangement of narrative'), the subject who cites it is temporarily produced as the belated and fictional origin of the speech act. This thesis is, I think, essential to a developed theory of interpellation: interpellated subjects are fictions, actants in the sense of Greimas, occupiers of discursive places in the sense of Flahault (see *La parole intermédiaire*). The scene of interpellation is a stage where roles are acted (out).

Taken together, these six theses constitute what Althusser failed to deliver: a fully fledged theory of

linguistic interpellation. If we add the developments on melancholy and guilt as the psychological correlates of interpellation in Butler's recent book, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford University Press, 1997), the result is impressive. One could find a few opportunities for critical nitpicking: the excursions into psychoanalysis I find less convincing than the rest; and I do not read Austin as opposing illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (rather, any speech act has illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect). A Derridean would object to Butler's overestimation of the voice *vis-à-vis* writing or the text. A follower of Leclaire would insist on the inscription of interpellation on the body. All this is negligible: *Excitable Speech* is a great book.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

Reading resistance

John Anner, ed., *Beyond Identity Politics: Emerging Social Justice Movements in Communities of Color*, South End Press, Boston MA, 1996. xi + 187 pp., \$14.00 pb., 0 89608 533 3.

Since the 1950s the United States has not only exported its great power international policies; a series of home-grown radical social movements have also had a global impact. Civil rights, black power, women's and gay liberation are among the best known. But there have also been creative forms of community politics, innumerable networks, and new forms of action such as the environmental rights campaigns against toxic dumping. It is one of the paradoxes of recent North American history that the culture which has found most difficulty in producing any generalized socialist opposition at the conventional political level has been so ingenious within the social context.

These forms of resistance were labelled 'new social movements' during the 1980s and, in Britain as well as the USA, frequently contrasted to the supposedly moribund class politics of the old Left. In fact, of course, these movements were not all new and often included working-class participants. Civil Rights, for example, had an influence on trade-union mobilization in health; and many of the early women's liberation groups in the USA supported trade-union women as they did in Britain. Sixties' and seventies' activists argued that the social composition of class was not homogenous, not that it was irrelevant. This was virtually obliterated from memory in the right-wing era of the Reagan/Bush and Thatcher/Major years. When workers' organizations were reeling, some left intellectuals were too quick to write off the injuries

of class as *passé*. Indeed, from the late eighties even the phrase 'social movements', with its intimations of action, became theoretically unfashionable; increasingly, the term 'identity' came to be used.

The concept of 'identity' had two undoubted advantages. It contested a universalism which denied social and cultural difference; and it encompassed the subjective perception of oppression – the individual could be seen situating him- or herself within a specific social predicament. The down side was that it has proved to be a term which inclines to static abstraction. Competing 'identities' jostle for space on the page and resources from the state. Yet, as John Anner observes in his introduction to *Beyond Identity Politics*, 'the premise ... that all members of the group have more in common than the members have with anyone outside the group' remains a partial truth. In practice, too, the subjectivist affirmation of identity has had uneven consequences; it obscured material differences among those grouped together as sharing a particular identity. Anner notes that one result of social movements was to be that 'some members of the group are clearly doing a lot better than others'. Identity politics has thus challenged an exclusionary version of universalism, but generated its own contradictions. When asserted as an absolute, it leads to a dead end as surely as a fundamentalist version of class politics that denies race, ethnicity and gender.

We are emerging from an era when, in the USA and Britain, the critique of social inequality was pushed to

the margins. Anner comments that the peculiar silence about popular movements in the States in recent years reflects prevailing fashions among intellectuals, rather than the cessation of struggles by the disinherited. Desperation has indeed produced innovative forms of resistance in developing countries, as well as the richer parts of the world, which await analysis.

Against the oversimplified and static notion of 'identity', John Anner advocates Amílcar Cabral's 'return to the source'. He comments that 'change starts at the bottom'. The first and most basic step is to chronicle what has been taking place. This collection sets out to put the record straight by recounting what is frequently overlooked. The focus is on social justice movements among communities of colour in the USA.

Beyond Identity Politics indicates how the practical need to transcend separate identities has led to the development of grassroots coalitions between African Americans, Latino and Asian working-class people. For example, since 1986 Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) on Providence, Rhode Island has mobilized over eight hundred low-income families in communities of colour, and created a multiracial organization – primarily of women – which has campaigned successfully for a playground, a supermarket and other facilities in poor areas. In opposition to the right-wing attack on gays in the state schools, People About Changing Education (PACE) resisted scapegoating in Black, Latino and mixed communities in 1994. Several worker-oriented immigrant organizations have come into being from the 1980s: La Mujer Obrera in El Paso, Texas; Asian Immigrant Workers in Oakland, California; and Korean Immigrant Worker Advocates, which was set up after the Los Angeles rebellion in 1992. The initial impetus for KIWA was to force employers to share relief funds with workers, but it went on to promote understanding between Koreans and other communities of colour. Thus in 1995 they became involved in a struggle in a restaurant where Korean Americans were employed mainly in waiting at tables and the Latinos were cooking and washing dishes. One practical success did more for real trust than countless symbolic gestures.

Over a decade of pressure from such immigrant advocacy groups, in which women have played a vital role, has led to trade unions becoming more open to organizing drives which reach out beyond the workplace to the community. For instance, the Asian Women Advocates' struggle to secure wages and fair treatment for a group of twelve Asian immigrant women in the garment industry led to a massive

campaign against Jessica McClintock's powerful teenage fashion empire. They used education, direct action, publicity and a successful boycott after the firm contracted by McClintock vanished in 1991, leaving unpaid wage debts to the workers in the San Francisco Bay area. During the 1990s the West Coast has seen a wave of immigrant-based militancy among Mexican building workers, janitors, and electronics assembly workers. Such disputes have led beyond the specific communities involved. For example, women workers in the canning industry at Watsonville, California and the Levi Strauss plant in San Antonio, Texas travelled around the country to gain support for their strikes for better conditions and against redundancy.

The acts of resistance and organization recorded in *Beyond Identity Politics* demonstrate how combinations have proved possible in practice which would appear doomed in theoretical papers on 'identity'. As often happens, real life has outstripped dislocated theorizing. This vindicates Anner's return to the source. But he stresses that association is not automatic and notes that one well-tried, but recently neglected, bond between diverse 'identities' has been shared political ideals about the need to find a common cause. Another factor worth mentioning is the combination of a range of tactics. A feature of many of the coalitions described in *Beyond Identity Politics* is that they have combined direct action with making injustice visible to a wider public, in the time-honoured American manner of the muck-rakers.

At a time of theoretical silence, simply to record is of undoubted significance. Anner is right to argue that if we are to conceive a new New Left, we need to understand how ways through have been found in practice. For when it comes to resistance, the tree of life is always greener than the theorizing of activity. The problem with such chronicling, however, is that we are presented with a series of anecdotes. The question remains: how can the coalitions described in *Beyond Identity Politics* cohere and contest power? I felt hopeful when I began the book and frustrated when I put it down, because the threads remained dangling. It would have been better for readers to have heard more on how to connect. The collection demonstrates the urgent need to continue the process of finding egalitarian ways of going beyond our particularities, and to devise new organizing ideas based on experience. It also reveals how the current dearth of theorizing rooted in human action weakens the possibilities of effective resistance.

Sheila Rowbotham

Cry freedom

Karen Vintges, *Philosophy as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir*, trans. Anne Lavelle, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996. xii + 202 pp., £33.50 hb., £16.50 pb., 0 253 33059 9 hb., 0 253 21070 4 pb.

The case of Simone de Beauvoir is an odd one. Although she is still widely read in France, where her books have always sold well, she is rarely studied there. She is certainly no member of the current philosophical pantheon, and her version of feminism has, for better or worse, been eclipsed by that of Cixous and Kristeva. A glance at Vintges's bibliography indicates that the best recent studies have been by non-French readers such as Toril Moi (whose *Making of an Intellectual Woman* was reviewed by Kate Soper in *RP* 72). The most substantial biography is by the American Deirdre Bair; Vintges herself is Dutch. Whilst this looks like a classic case of the prophet in her own land, it may also reflect a general unease over just how to deal with de Beauvoir (and Sartre). Although this is beyond the scope of Vintges's study, the post-structuralist consciousness appears to be unhappy about the extent to which a forgotten existentialism may prefigure its concerns. In the 1950s and 1960s, Lacan, for instance, railed against ego-psychology as an American perversion that reduced psychoanalysis to social engineering, but conveniently forgot that de Beauvoir criticizes it in similar terms in her *America Day by Day* (1947).

De Beauvoir is also troublesome in that she represents something of a test case for those who doubt the relevance of biography, or who continue to proclaim or even celebrate the death of the author. Few studies of her work escape the temptation to revert to her autobiographical writings; few escape what Vintges, alluding to Foucault, terms the will to know more about her, and particularly about her sexual-emotional life. As more diaries and letters come to light, we learn more – and our will to know intensifies. The idealized picture of the emblematic intellectual woman, who combined a necessary relationship with Sartre with contingent relationships with others, proves to be contrived and carefully censored. What seemed to be an autobiography in the confessional mode begins to look more like a creative and selective construction of a written self. A confused picture emerges of multiple entanglements in which Sartre was clearly condemned to a greater freedom than his supposed equal. We still want to know more – was she really a lesbian? – even

though it is surely odd to ask an existentialist what she *really* was.

The massive presence of the multi-volume autobiography dominates our readings of de Beauvoir. For Bair, the life is more important, and more interesting, than the work. The same has never been said of Sartre. Tellingly, Vintges reports that when Bair took part in a panel discussion with Sartre's biographer Annie Cohen-Solal, the questions addressed to Bair dealt with de Beauvoir's life; those addressed to Cohen-Solal focused exclusively on Sartre's work. Women philosophers are, it would seem, still confined to the privacy and supposed intimacy of autobiography. Despite their importance and beauty – few people forget their first reading of *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* – the autobiographical writings can pose an obstacle to reading de Beauvoir as a philosopher. The other obstacle is of course Sartre. When, in that famous scene in the Luxembourg Gardens, de Beauvoir listened as he demolished her homemade system and then defined herself as 'second only to Sartre', she appears to accept a minor role. And yet 'second *only* to Sartre' implies a definite sense of her own worth and superiority over other philosophers. For too long, she has simply been *la grande sartheuse*.

It is increasingly obvious that de Beauvoir cannot be viewed simply as 'second to Sartre', and must be read in her own right. As Vintges argues so clearly, *The*



Second Sex does mobilize the antagonistic Self–Other structure common to both Sartrean existentialism and French Hegelianism, but it genders that structure by employing a methodology which cannot be derived from Sartre in any simple manner. The concentration on social and historical determinants, and the economic argument that paid work is a precondition for ontological freedom, represent a major departure from the pure phenomenology of *Being and Nothingness*. Far from being the disembodied consciousness described by Sartre, de Beauvoir's Other becomes a very corporeal woman, or a psycho-physiological subject constructed as Other by a masculinized discourse that denies her access to true Subjecthood. Consciousness becomes corporeal physicality in a way that recalls Merleau-Ponty rather than the early Sartre. Women are not born, as de Beauvoir puts it so famously; they are the products of a process of becoming the Other or the Second Sex. Her study of becoming a woman is also a cry for liberation from all the myths of the eternal feminine.

The Second Sex draws on an immense range of sources, from personal lived experience to Lévi-Strauss's analysis of kinship systems and Lacan's psychoanalysis. The result can look like an empirical 'piling up of examples', as Anne Whitmarsh once put it. But Vintges puts a convincing case for seeing de Beauvoir's methodology as embodying a true phenomenology of 'woman in situation'. In that sense, it may come closer to realizing the project for a synthetic anthropology outlined in the first issues of *Les Temps Modernes* than anything by Sartre himself. Vintges also challenges the view, which has become almost *de rigueur* in some feminist circles, that de Beauvoir promotes a male or negative view of the female body as all holes and slime. The seemingly negative portrayals of pregnancy and motherhood are to be read as descriptions of a negatively defined situation in which women are denied control over their bodies. De Beauvoir's belief that some form of socialism will transform women's estate now looks touchingly naive, but *The Second Sex* is still a book that can change lives.

It is over the question of the emotions that de Beauvoir really departs from Sartrean orthodoxy. For Sartre, the experience of emotion is a flight away from lucidity into a magical mode of thought, or even a form of bad faith. For de Beauvoir, emotional exchange and particularly sexual love allow the Other to be apprehended as subjectivity. Rather than being the passive object of the gaze, the body of the other becomes a consciousness existing. The encounter with

the Other now becomes the site and vehicle of a release from the prison of the self.

Vintges's elegant solution to the works–life dilemma is to take up Foucault's suggestion that life and works can merge into a whole if they are viewed as aspects of an aesthetic of existence, a kind of aesthetic-ethical project. Beauvoir's life, her meticulous organization of time, and her writings merge into one. Genre distinctions between philosophy and the novel fade as a more general project emerges. The final Foucault has more in common with Sartre and de Beauvoir than either he or his more devoted followers would care to admit. When Vintges describes de Beauvoir as arguing in *Towards an Ethics of Ambiguity* and related shorter texts that 'willing oneself free' means the constant creation of the self as an individual identity, styling and developing daily behaviour in all its aspects, with the aim of concretely contributing to the quality of the life of the other, she reveals an unexpected similarity with Foucault's 'care of the self'.

Accessible, attractively written (and very well translated), Vintges's study is a convincing defence of de Beauvoir against some of the more common criticisms. It also has the virtue of unsettling some orthodoxies, such as the common belief that the existentialism of de Beauvoir and Sartre belongs to the realm of a philosophical pre-history.

David Macey

Conservatism revolts

Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1997. xii + 120 pp., £35.00 hb., £9.99 pb., 0 335 19488 5 hb., 0 335 19487 7 pb.

Fascism is written from a very unusual position in that it displays a considerable interest in fascist ideology, while adopting a broadly Marxist approach to its subject. Generally, those such as Zeev Sternhell, A. James Gregor and, more recently, Roger Griffin, who have shown the greatest intellectual interest in fascist thought, and often placed its origins in the pre-1914 period, as does Neocleous, have had little time for a Marxist analysis – indeed, Gregor and Sternhell have seen fascism as primarily a Marxist heresy. Conversely, the majority of Marxist writers on fascism have been relatively dismissive of its ideological pretensions and regarded it as a counter-revolutionary response to either the Russian Revolution (and consequent militancy by West European socialists and Communists)

or the economic crises of the 1920s and early 1930s, or some combination of the two.

Neocleous makes it clear from the outset that he is not writing a history of fascism, or constructing a political science typology of fascist movements and regimes. Despite his institutional location in a Department of Government, he regards himself as a philosopher, stating that 'Europe's path to fascism in the sphere of philosophy ... is central to my concern' (p.ix). He is likewise adamant that the study of fascism is as relevant to the present as to the past, arguing that to see 'fascism as a historical phenomenon that ended in 1945 or thereabouts ... encourages a dangerous forgetting: failing to see that fascism is a feature of modernity it fails to see fascism has not died' (p. xi). His philosophical approach lends him a certain originality when grappling with issues which have long divided historians and political scientists, such as whether fascism is linked to modernization and whether fascism is revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. He argues with considerable cogency that fascism is a form of 'Reactionary Modernism' and claims that 'we can describe fascism as the culmination of the *conservative revolutionary* tradition' (p. 57).

Neocleous's theory of fascism is a somewhat eclectic one. Given the crude explanations that have been offered in the past (and the disastrous political effects of some of the Comintern's banalities), this is not necessarily a defect. Emphasis on the centrality of war to fascist theory and practice, and on fascism as an extreme form of nationalism, blends very successfully with his Marxist stress on fascism as an anti-working-class movement which serves the interests of capital. However, the rather belated attempt to integrate Griffin's contention that 'palingenetic ultranationalism' is the core of fascism with the arguments developed over the first four chapters seems a little strained, since Griffin's coherent and original theory of generic fascism actually poses more of a challenge to Marxists than the line of argument developed by Gregor and, in a more sophisticated and less apologetic form, Sternhell. Similarly, the discussion of fascist ideas about ecology and sexuality in Chapter 5, while quite interesting in itself, seems more of an appendix than a logical outgrowth of the arguments developed earlier about fascism's relations with capitalism and modernity.

The notion of a continuing fascist danger is timely in view of the willingness of many on the Left to dismiss the threats posed by the Italian Alleanza Nazionale, French Front National, and Austrian FPÖ – an attitude perhaps best exemplified by Perry Ander-

son's exchange with Rossanna Rossanda in the Italian newspaper *Il Manifesto* during which he suggested she was afraid of 'ghosts'. Neocleous is very astute in his assessment of the role of both revisionism and post-modernism in the process of forgetting, and his brief allusion to Carl Schmitt, much more fully developed in a recent article in this journal (*RP* 79), is particularly pertinent given the enthusiasm for Schmitt's ideas shown by the erstwhile New Leftists of *Telos* in recent times.

Having no previous acquaintance with Neocleous's work, I found his relationship to the Marxist tradition slightly puzzling. He frequently quotes or summarizes Marx himself when expounding the general lines of development of capitalist society; and he often draws on the insights of authors belonging to, or not too far removed from, the Frankfurt School (Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Neumann, Reich) on issues related to fascism. Yet he almost totally ignores the writings of those Marxist political activists most deeply involved in the struggle against fascism in the interwar period. Gramsci is cited only once (in relation to Sorel), and neither Tasca and Togliatti in the Italian case, nor Trotsky and Thalheimer in the German case, receive any discussion at all. This may account for what any historian, let alone a Marxist one, is bound to see as a very significant gap: the failure to discuss the role of the petty bourgeoisie in relation to fascism. Since Neocleous makes it clear that his 'concern in what follows is not with "big business and the rise of Hitler and Mussolini" ... nor ... with the so-called logic of monopoly capitalism' (p. 43), we are left with very little sense of what class forces enabled the fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini to gain power. The increased oppression of the working class and the advantages of the regimes to capitalists may form part of a Marxist account of fascism. But they do not explain why it succeeded in taking power in 1922 and 1933, and not on other occasions.

Despite my enjoyment of this stimulating and provocative work, I remained unconvinced by its attempt to minimize the differences on the question of racial anti-Semitism between Mussolini's Fascism and Hitler's Nazism. Neocleous's overwhelming concentration on the German and Italian cases often leads him to pass over other European fascisms. My argument is not Goldhagen's, since any examination of fascism in France, Romania or Hungary, let alone Croatia, suggests that it is not German Nazism which is unique in its racial anti-Semitism, but Italian fascism that is unique in its relative lack of it. This observation is not intended to uncouple Mussolini from Hitler, deny the

validity of the concept of generic fascism, whitewash the Italian Fascist Regime of 1922–43, or substantiate Fini's misleading account of the MSI's tradition, which in reality was one of total identification with the RSI (Italian Social Republic) of 1943–45. It is merely to point out that the Italian fascists not only protected Italian Jews from the Final Solution until 1943 but tried to obstruct the Nazis, Vichyites and Ustashi from implementing such policies in Italian-occupied southeast France, Tunisia and Istria between 1940 and 1943. A Marxist analysis of fascism that fails to provide an accurate account of the Final Solution risks discrediting Marxist historiography itself, as the case of Arno Mayer's *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*, whose tendentious theories are further undermined by every new archival discovery, makes only too clear.

Tobias Abse

A dangerous American pastime

Simon LeVay, *Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1996. x + 364 pp., £16.95 hb., 0 262 12199 9.

Simon LeVay, a neurobiologist and former faculty member of the Salk Institute, gained fame and some would even say notoriety for a paper he published in *Science* in 1991. There he claimed to have found evidence that the 'development of sexual orientation, at least in men, is closely tied in with the prenatal sexual differentiation of the brain' (p. 143). Even though the scientific debate about a biological cause of homosexuality forms an important part of the book, it is not the central issue LeVay discusses. He has adapted Magnus Hirschfeld's idea that homosexuals constitute a third sex, possessing traits of both sexes.

Queer Science is an extremely well-written attempt to justify aetiological sexual orientation research against its critics. Some authors have suggested that the century-old history of the abuse of the results of sexual orientation research indicates that gay people have much to lose should a biological cause be found. For this reason the German sex research societies have called for a moratorium on such research. LeVay,

like other sexual orientation researchers (e.g. Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland in *The Science of Desire*), basically tries to justify his own work against these critics.

LeVay's political motivation for trying to show that homosexuality is biological is not exactly new. Nineteenth-century champions of what would today be considered in Anglo-Saxon contexts as 'gay rights' provided similar lines of argument. The German lawyer Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs argued that homosexuals should not be punished, because they do not choose to develop desires for people of the same sex. Hence they should not be held responsible for living homosexual lifestyles. Legislation directed against homosexuality would actually require homosexuals to 'live a life against their nature'. The ethically interesting question is, of course, whether the argument of innateness and/or choice actually matters. After all, this excuse for being homosexual is not really needed should one conclude that there isn't anything wrong with being gay in the first place.

LeVay speaks and reads reasonably good German. This is important in the context of his attempts to use the Nazi experience to justify genetic research on sexual orientation. He claims that the Nazis were far more supportive of psychological research on sexual orientation than they were of genetic research. This argument is employed to suggest that genetic research isn't really that problematic. The problem with this argument is that it is ahistorical. LeVay can consider himself lucky that most of his English-speaking reviewers are unable to check his German references, because it would have emerged that in Nazi Germany research to eradicate homosexuality was conducted with high-level scientific support in genetics, as well as in psychology and psychiatry. Contrary to LeVay's assertions, there was no political preference for the aetiological origin. What mattered was the eradication of homosexuality and not the political correctness of its cause.

LeVay has a clear idea as to the role of science in attempts to achieve what he considers to be 'gay rights'. He hopes that science will deliver sufficient information to bring about a situation where gays and lesbians in the USA will be 'recognized as a protected class, and laws permitting discrimination against them will be overthrown' (p. 251). This thinking is a consequence of the adaption of Hirschfeld's construction of homosexuals as a third sex. LeVay realizes, however, that science is unable to deliver

an answer to normative questions such as whether homosexuality is 'normal' or 'natural', and whether in a moral sense it ought to be (p. 295). Nevertheless, he devotes a full chapter (10) to discussing the issue of naturalness, which he interprets in good scientific fashion as the occurrence of same-sex activities in non-human nature. He seems to have missed the point that religious arguments to the effect that homosexuality is unnatural are based on a normative account of what human nature *ought* to be like. In a way LeVay is conducting a Quixotic crusade here: one which he cannot win by demonstrating that seagulls, and even some monkeys, do it every now and then.

In any case, LeVay's basic argument is that scientific research may help gay people to become acknowledged by society as a distinct sex. This might help to reduce societal homophobia. Indeed, LeVay offers anecdotal evidence that this may actually be the case in some segments of the US population. The problem with this book, as for much US gay activism, is that it ignores the likely impact of such research outside the USA. Singapore medical journals are already discussing whether a 'prenatal test for homosexuality should be used in the absence of treatment'. The Chinese Classification of Mental Disorder still lists homosexuality as a mental illness, and gay people are subjected regularly to 'therapies' such as electric shocks, hormone injections and the like. Like other American researchers and gay activists, LeVay displays no concern (either in this book or in his other publications) about the impact of such research in non-Western cultures where homosexuality is interpreted in a quite different manner. Amniocentesis and ultrasound as means to detect the biological sex of fetuses have resulted in what can best be described as female foeticide in India and elsewhere. We have little reason to assume that the results of aetiological sexual orientation research will not be used in a discriminatory manner in homophobic societies where gays and lesbians do not have the standing to demonstrate against such abuse. *Queer Science* is another sad example of the myopic insularity of the debates within gay/lesbian scholarship in the USA.

Udo Schüklenk

To infinity and beyond

Colin Davis, *Levinas: An Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996. viii + 168 pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 1262 8 hb., 0 7456 1263 6 pb.

Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, edited by Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996. xx + 201 pp., £29.50 hb., £12.50 pb., 0 253 33078 5 hb., 0 253 21079 8 pb.

With the publication of these two books, readers looking for an introduction to the thought of Emmanuel Levinas are presented with two very different but complementary propositions: a small, well-chosen selection from the primary texts themselves; or a well-written and very readable commentary contextualizing and explicating the main themes of Levinas's oeuvre. *Levinas: An Introduction* is a sensible and mostly uncontentious study of Levinas which ought to be easily accessible to an undergraduate audience. Davis begins with an explanation of Levinas's relation to the (German) phenomenological tradition, usefully setting out the salient points from Husserl and Heidegger in particular, without presupposing any great knowledge



of them. Dwelling on all of the major texts and many of the lesser-known essays, Davis then leads the reader through Levinas's often obscure and difficult work without oversimplifying, generously referring to the secondary literature upon which he has sometimes drawn.

Davis's main thematic emphasis tends to fall on the questions of method and style, questions perhaps indistinguishable in Levinas's later work especially. In trying to explain, rather than defend, the difficulty of Levinas's writing, Davis convincingly shows that it 'is essential to the paradoxical attempt to think outside the philosophical history to which [Levinas] also knows he belongs'. The impossible task of Levinas's work is to think that which escapes thematizing thought; that which is called, amongst other things, the Other. This very impossibility is itself thematized, from the early 1960s, as the problematic of the 'saying' and the 'said'. But stylistically and/or methodologically, Davis suggests, Levinas's writing always bears witness to this paradox. Perversely, it is in the potential failure of Levinas's text adequately to thematize its subject according to the demands of logic that its only possibility of success resides; the method/style *is* the philosophy.

Such an approach has the virtue of avoiding, and cautioning others to avoid, the imposition onto Levinas of a yardstick which it is the whole purpose of the philosophy to refuse. It also, of course, courts various dangers, such as the tendency to inoculate against any possible criticism and to excuse any stylistic excess. Here, though, Davis is not overly partisan, pointing out, for example, that Levinas's later work does become increasingly repetitive and prolix. Neither does he fall into the trap of letting Levinas's philosophical sophistication blind him to the obvious problems surrounding the prominent figure of 'the feminine' in *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and elsewhere. If there is a criticism to be made, it is that by the third of Davis's five chapters, dealing with the last major work *Otherwise Than Being* (1974), the stress on method/style has all but taken over. The actual content of *Otherwise Than Being* seems to be reduced to a philosophy of self-reflection, when it is precisely the self-reflective 'return to the Same' that is the target of Levinas's reproach.

In any discussion of Levinas the question of Judaism must arise. It was Levinas's avowed intention to counteract the overly 'Greek' nature of Western philosophy with the insights or wisdom of a Judaic tradition, or to translate this wisdom into the 'Greek' idiom of philosophy. But Levinas also maintained that his religious writings were distinct from his philosophical works. If Davis's chapter on religion is the least successful, it is not because the Jewish influence can be denied, but because it is possible to take Levinas's remarks

on the distinction between the philosophical and the religious writings seriously *without* denying it.

The selection of texts in *Basic Philosophical Writings* bears this out. The volume contains ten essays from 1951 to 1984, five previously unpublished in English. A short general preface, an introduction to each individual piece and explanatory notes guide the reader through some undeniably dense texts and succeed in giving a sense of Levinas's project as a whole. Current readers of Levinas will appreciate the new translations; impecunious scholars will appreciate the price, considerably lower than the alternative Nijhoff selection of Levinas's *Collected Philosophical Papers*. For those looking for a first taste, there is plenty on offer. To pick out just one thread, Levinas's abiding theme – the complaint against philosophy's adequation of thought and being, *noesis* and *noema* – is rehearsed in various ways, some of them surprising. From the assertion of 'the necessity for a philosophical meditation to resort to notions such as that of the Infinite or God' ('Meaning and Sense', 1964), to the insistence on the intelligibility of that which would transcend conceptual knowledge ('Transcendence and Intelligibility', 1984), Levinas's quarry is always the arrogance of a totalizing philosophical thinking which claims to comprehend and encompass all that it encounters. As the editors point out, the Derridean description of the Greek *logos* as recuperative of all its Others does not escape the glare of Levinas's critique ('God and Philosophy', 1975), perhaps most powerful in the denunciation of an alleged history of universal enlightenment and freedom which no longer recognizes itself 'in its millennia of fratricidal, political, and bloody struggles, of imperialism, of human hatred and exploitation, up to our century of world wars, genocides, the Holocaust, and terrorism; of unemployment, and the continuing poverty of the Third World' ('Peace and Proximity', 1984). Whether hyperbolic or not, the implied equation of the hegemonic domination of the philosophical category of totality with totalitarian or imperialist political forms ('Transcendence and Height', 1962) is joltingly suggestive, and opens out epistemological debates into exciting new territory.

Stella Sandford

We have received a protest from John Rosenthal about the editing of his obituary of Wal Suchting in RP 85. In Rosenthal's judgment, the published text is not merely shorter than the original, but represents a departure from the latter in significant respects. The original text is available from him at JRosenthal@cc.colorado.edu.

A whole new ballgame?

John Gray, *Endgames: Questions in Late Modern Political Thought*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997. xi + 212 pp., £45.00., £12.95 pb., 0 7456 1881 2 hb., 0 7456 1882 0 pb.

A key strength of John Gray's work has been its accessible combination of theoretical nous with an eye for 'real-world' developments. There is no substantial change in tone or style between his strictly academic writing and his columns in *The Guardian* (twenty of which are compiled here): both are laudably lucid, subtle and astute in presenting dominant theories in terms of their bearing on contemporary socio-historical horizons.

At one time a heavyweight contender on behalf of the New Right, Gray's mission these days is to show why that same neo-liberal project, as well as

They are all of them damned either because they are still helplessly in thrall to modern conceptions of progress, or because their key presumptions are in deep tension with our *fin-de-siècle* world-historical state, or both. Hence liberal-egalitarian theories depend on a hubristic extension of Western individualism across cultures oblivious to its attractions. Social democracy clings to old objectives, like full employment and social equality, rendered futile by recent socio-economic developments. John Roemer's market socialism has simply adopted the worst aspects of abstract, legalistic liberal egalitarianism and omitted socialism's best bits: its concerns with 'solidarity and community and the subordination of market processes to the satisfaction of human needs' (p. 68). Green thinkers tend to cling, sub-consciously, to anthropocentric views of social progress that reproduce the instrumentalism which Gray sees as the legacy of the Enlightenment. Communitarians often miss the point that 'our culture is too suffused by the individualist demand for greater autonomy' for nostalgic conceptions of communal oneness to be any longer workable, or desirable (p. 83).

Postmodernists, too, display a sneaking attachment to modern credence in the power of theory to regulate the world.

Unsurprisingly for an ex-insider, Gray's most incisive and effective analysis is of the paradoxes and inconsistencies which have dogged neo-liberal Conservatism in the UK. He is brilliant here in teasing out the basic contradiction between recent Tory fundamentalisms: a Hayek-style enthusiasm for unfettered global markets on the one hand, and a hankering for tradition and stability in community life on the other. He concludes that there is no longer the historical space for coherent conservative thought. It is singularly ill-equipped to confront what Gray sees as the greatest problem of the age: 'reconciling the subversive dynamism of market institutions with the human need for local rootedness and strong and deep forms of common life' (p. 100) – a problem, of course, largely of the New Right's own making.

So much for the current landscape (feminism being a curious, rather glaring omission). What now? Gray recommends a sort of pragmatic dropping of all modern presumptions about human agency and progress so that we might better confront what is new and particular about the postmodern predicament. Habits of thought



most others with their roots in the Enlightenment, is coming up against its limits. 'Ours has become a culture of endings', he suggests, in which 'the ruins of the projects of the modern age ... litter the landscape in which we must find our bearings' (p. 156). During the course of this collection Gray finds reasons to reject just about every major school of political thought going. Social democracy, Rawlsian left-liberalism, analytical Marxism, the Conservative Party, humanism, postmodernism, most Green theory, nostalgic communitarianism, and universalisms in general are all deemed to have gone the way of neo-liberalism as regards their applicability to contemporary problems.

have some catching up to do with reality. But what would an appropriately 'post-everything-else' political thought be like? Gray has no big answers, and indeed sees theoretical certainties as part of the problem. The book is presented rather as a kind of clutter-clearing prelude to future thinking.

What is interesting is that in his rare affirmative moments, Gray endorses a kind of liberal communitarianism (anti-universalist, culturally specific, but pluralist and radically Green), which represents a concoction of those few parts of old ways of thinking still deemed acceptable. As the game of modern thinking changes and moves on, Gray does keep faith with certain stalwart players. Though he only rarely quotes, he cites often, and not always disapprovingly: his liberalism is that of Mill rather than Rawls, empiricist and unprogrammatic; there are qualified endorsements of Hobbes and Berlin. But there can be no overarching strategy. Gray's favourite accusation is that of 'hubris', be it levelled at humanism, Western ethnocentrism, or Conservative politicians cut adrift in their arrogance from ground-level realities. It seems worth noting that his own thought, in its sweeping indictment of the gamut of established thinking, is less than wholly humble. Except, perhaps, in its radical hesitancy to suggest genuinely new alternatives.

Gideon Calder

Determining the good life

Craig Beveridge and Ronnie Turnbull, *Scotland After Enlightenment: Image and Tradition in Modern Scottish Culture*, Polygon, Edinburgh, 1997. 189 pp., £12.99 pb., 0 7486 6223 5.

Craig Beveridge and Ronnie Turnbull's book is the latest in the 'Determinations' series, which was launched in 1989 with their first collaboration, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*. The series explores a crucial debate in Scottish studies – namely, the relationship between self-determination in the sense of political autonomy and in that of self-definition. This text is also determined in that it seeks to establish the viewpoint and practical purpose of cultural history. Using this knowledge, the authors hope to recuperate Scottish cultural history in the tradition of 'democratic intellectualism'. Developed chiefly in the work of

George Davie, the concept marks the need for dialogue between the academic world and a 'wider reading and thinking public'.

There are two key terms which emerge from Beveridge and Turnbull's reading of democratic intellectualism: 'perspective' and 'debate'. The first half of the book is concerned with examining the unacknowledged perspectives of the post-Enlightenment historical accounts, addressing the neglect of intellectual culture in history. This discussion attempts to resolve the apparent tension between the common assessment of pre-Enlightenment Scotland as a place of 'cultural darkness', and the emergence of scholars like David Hume, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson who put Scotland at the centre of Enlightenment. Through a reading of works like David Allan's *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* and Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Beveridge and Turnbull attempt to connect the Enlightenment to a particularly Scottish tradition of intellectual enquiry. Allan identifies a Calvinist-humanist interest in history as 'moral and edificatory', which can be linked to similar Enlightenment assumptions about the function of history. The reason that the Enlightenment appears as a rupture in Scottish history is partly due to Enlightenment thinkers themselves, whose commitment to the Union with England (which they saw as a gateway to prosperity within the Empire) demanded a reworking of pre-Union Scotland as backward and uncivilized in comparison with the liberal history of England. In Beveridge and Turnbull's reading of MacIntyre, David Hume emerges as the prime defector from the traditions of Scottish philosophical practice by seeking an account of moral judgements without reference to tradition or authority. Hume's position is contextualized as an Anglicizing movement towards a universal ethical standpoint which can be uncovered through empirical investigation.

The second half of the book is devoted to the idea of 'debate'. Using the perspective of Augustinian anti-modernism, which they earlier identify as exemplary of the continuous tradition of Scottish thought, the authors take recent studies in philosophy, sociology, therapism and education, and read them against one another. In many ways the juxtaposition of various discourses can be seen as part of the project of democratic intellectualism, and arguably its most successful feature. However, the identification of 'Augustinian anti-modernism' with Scottish cultural tradition relies so heavily on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre that it is

not always clear whether the engagement with other scholars, such as David McCrone and Colin Kidd, is simply undertaken in order to stage an unfavourable comparison with MacIntyre. This becomes a problem when MacIntyre's call for a 'framework of belief which concerns the nature of the good life' is presented as a political solution. At some point the telos of Enlightenment self-discovery slips imperceptibly into the goal of Scottish self-determination, which is the result – reward even – of 'the good life'. The argument is that a distinctively Scottish set of beliefs would counter the sceptical relativism of our age, which currently precludes the possibility of progressive debate (or reaching what MacIntyre calls 'the best account so far'). The authors reject the 'pick'n'mix identity' offered by David McCrone, favouring instead a sense of tradition which provides 'conditions of the self being able to attain practical rationality; and hence self-determination in both its senses.

Beveridge and Turnbull argue convincingly for a broad structure of ideological commitment, and their assertion that 'there are no views from nowhere' should not come as a surprise to many people. Indeed, this book is at its most effective when exploring how the idea of Scottish cultural identity as fractured and contradictory has been shaped by the fiction of academic neutrality. The final chapters offer an instructive overview of current debates over education and will be of particular interest to followers of MacIntyre. *Scotland After Enlightenment* is stronger on questions than solutions, but is sure to be a timely addition to debates about the Scottish intellectual heritage as the promise of 'the good life' hovers on the horizon in the shape of devolution.

Ellen-Raïssa Jackson

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PLI Vol. 6, Summer 1997

ISBN 1-897646-02-X

Circumcising Freud

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1996. 113 pp., £14.95 hb., 0 226 14336 8.

Despite Freud's hopes regarding the scientific results of psychoanalysis, Derrida has always been more interested in its points of theoretical and figural instability, and in the rhetorical strategies with which Freud's texts negotiate their moments of difficulty. Their strange brew of theoretical speculation, narrative fiction, casuistry and clinical study could not have occurred, according to Derrida, without the mandate of the authorial signature conferred by modern conventions of literary address. The Freudian corpus thus exhibits what *Archive Fever* presents as an *a priori* of the 'archive': the requirement that inscriptions be 'consigned' in a context which co-ordinates their interpretation and use.

The incorporation of context within the 'incorporeal' dynamics of the text is a consistent feature of Derrida's work to date. It locates the textual event within a horizon of ethico-political contestation and material contingency which it must nonetheless always elude. This idiomatic coupling of immanence with alterity (or non-identity) is the fulcrum for almost all the ontological and ethical problems posed by deconstruction. It invites the (predictable) riposte that deconstruction now offers little more than a free ride for 'infinite' recontextualization. It is possible to show, however, that it has certain hardwired preferences and antipathies; that some ways of reading texts are far more precarious in the light of deconstructive methodology than others.

The reading of Yosef Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable*

and *Interminable* which forms the centrepiece of *Archive Fever* is particularly instructive in view of this problematic, because its conclusions follow only if we accept the theory of the archive that Derrida develops schematically in the first part of the essay.

The question at issue in Yerushalmi's text is whether psychoanalysis is a 'Jewish Science'. His response is an equivocal 'perhaps'. Perhaps Freudian theory is informed by a patriarchal conception of civilization and reason – one embodied in the 'arche-violence' of circumcision where the child is subsumed without recourse under the ordinances of Judaism. Perhaps not: because of Freud's secular apostasy, his abdication of messianic hope for a reconciled, post-Oedipal future. Both these attempts to 'circumcise' the Freudian archive depend, according to Derrida, upon a remarkable literary performance. In the final chapter of *Freud's Moses* Yerushalmi abandons the objectivist third person of historiography to address Freud in the second person as a fellow Jew. Yerushalmi's 'Monologue with Freud' appends his theses with a supplementary 'perhaps': that of a secret whose resolution escapes the 'material truth' of history, pending an outcome that is simultaneously universal (independent of Judaism as such) and singular – the resolution of a historical vocation devolved upon a unique people and place.

Derrida also describes messianic 'doors' to the future as 'the condition

of all promises or of all hope, of all awaiting, of all performativity': 'I am prepared to subscribe without reservation to this reaffirmation made by Yerushalmi. With a speck of anxiety, in the back of my mind, a single speck of anxiety about a solitary point, which is not just any point.'

Though he suggests that only a nuance separates him from Yerushalmi on this point, Derrida's doors are structures of the greatest generality, escaping the potentially 'unjust' tautology of a relationship to the singularities of nation and tradition. Their hinges turn almost exclusively upon Derrida's second *a priori* of the archive: namely, that consignment exposes it to technologies which subtend different spaces and rhythms of consignment. This transcendental prosthetic is a coherent enough extension of his previous treatments of the dependence of textual content upon the technics and practice of inscription. However, *Archive Fever's* allusions to the impact of e-mail, artificial intelligence and biotechnology upon the intimate spaces and founding oppositions of psychoanalysis (e.g. *in vitro* technologies show maternity to be every bit as constructed – hence 'patriarchal' – as paternity), indicate that the portals may gape too wide to be linked with anything as determinedly anthropocentric as messianism. If Derrida is correct in contending that 'what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way', then his tryst with *anarchic* technologies

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is counter-traditional and it is hard to see how the presumed affiliation with Yerushalmi can be maintained. The fact that the importunate metaphysics of *Archive Fever* proves allergic to some of Derrida's more pious sentiments aptly vindicates the good faith of deconstruction.

David Roden

Salvaging Romanticism

Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996. ix + 346 pp., £45.00 hb., £13.99 pb., 0 415 12762 9 hb., 0 415 12763 7 pb.

As the sequel to his two previous works on *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* and *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, Andrew Bowie's new book sets itself the task once again of 'salvaging' Romanticism from received misconceptions and displaying the actuality of Romantic thought for contemporary philosophy. The concern this time is specifically with literature – *Poesie* – and its philosophical articulation, from the Schlegels, Novalis and Schleiermacher to Dilthey, Heidegger, Benjamin and Adorno. Arguing against exclusive assimilation to ideology (the predictable target is Eagleton), Bowie pleads trenchantly for a reawakening of the question of truth in art, laying great stress on the Romantics' idea of literature's resistance to exhaustive interpretation under the determining categories of critical judgement, particularly in texts such as Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenäum Fragments* and Novalis's *Monologue* of 1798, as well as Benjamin's neglected doctoral dissertation on *The Concept of Art-Critique in German Romanticism*.

Bowie begins with some polemical references to the current demise of representational conceptions of truth and meaning in analytical philosophy, citing Putnam's rejection of the 'ready-made world', and Davidson's statement that 'there is no such thing as a language ... if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed.' Bowie claims to discern an analogous situation in eighteenth-century Germany with the reception of Kant's First Critique and F.H. Jacobi's critique of the Spinozist attempt to provide grounds for knowledge in an endless string of 'conditions of the unconditioned'. Jacobi's hostility to the pure reason which 'listens only to itself' is singled out against Fichte's spontaneous self-positing of the subject, while Schleiermacher is credited with the insight that there can be no rules for interpretation without prior understanding of how to apply these rules in the 'hermeneutic circle'. The Romantic problem of the being which precedes thought reappears in the second half of the book with Dilthey's pursuit of foundations for the human sciences in 'lived experience' and Heidegger's *Dasein*. Bowie steers sternly and cogently away from Heidegger's later mysticism over Being, with a judicious and sober reading of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' essay, which is followed by a rather harsh verdict on the early work of Benjamin, with its comparable idea of the mythical oneness of language and nature. The hero of the story emerges finally as Adorno, whose negative dialectics Bowie largely defends against the Habermasian 'paradigm change', invoking arguments from leading German scholars such as Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank in favour of a reappraisal of the philosophy of the subject. Subjectivity, as Bowie suggests both here and in the

book on Schelling, 'is not *inherently* a principle of domination, because, as Jacobi argued against Fichte, it is not ground of itself' (p. 331).

In a work of such breadth, Bowie manages to tease out insights from the thinkers he discusses with remarkable dexterity. However, there are times when his avowedly anti-historicist approach leads him to draw parallels with contemporary debate which interfere with the context. One would have liked to read more about *why* the Romantics are important, rather than be constantly told *that* they are important. The later chapters which assert debts owed to Romanticism by figures such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida seem more persuasive than the earlier ones which want to anticipate Davidson or Rorty.

Perhaps the most interesting question left open in the final chapters on Benjamin and Adorno is the question of the relation between the literary and theological. Bowie describes the breakdown of representational views of language at the end of the eighteenth century, when words no longer stood as God's names for things and art and poetry arose as new sites for the disclosure of the divine. If it has taken us a while to recognize the subject's agency in its ability to innovate rationally and creatively against linguistic rules, without us either reifying language or denying the relative autonomy of texts and discursive practices from particular speakers, how are we now to think of the independent space of literature as a possible opening for truth? How, ultimately, are we to salvage literature's claim to reveal and foster a better society in a way which avoids all appeal to the theologies and ideologies of redemption?

Austin Harrington