

Uncle Joe

Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Four Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion*, Verso, London and New York, 2000. 160 pp., £16.00 hb., 1 85984 792 7.

A well-known Slovenian philosopher and a British Army officer walk into a bar. One says to the other, 'You are just a product of complacent leftist ideology, afraid to turn words into real action.' The other replies, 'That's not true. Haven't you seen my latest publication? I've put Joseph Stalin, a real man of action, on the cover.' Slavoj Žižek then has to admit that he hasn't actually seen the latest edition of *The British Army Review*.

Slavoj Žižek and the British Army seem to share a common cause: a desire to re-evaluate a figure who regularly contends for the title of the twentieth century's greatest despot: Joseph Stalin. Implausible as it might seem, an army whose primary military objective for forty years of cold war was the containment of a regime held to be the antithesis of Western democratic freedom suddenly in the Winter 1999–2000 issue of *The British Army Review* awarded Stalin the title of 'Man of the Century' in view of his both 'monstrous and magnificent achievements'. Surely Stalin was the 'enemy' within British military logic for so long that it must be too soon for them to be considering the 'magnificent' aspects of his impact on history – but apparently not. So when Slovenian philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek titles his new book (which also features Stalin on the cover) with the question, 'Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?', and one is forced to reply 'Yes, I think the British Army did', then one has clearly entered the terrain of inverted ideological messages, repression and paradoxical logic that Žižek has dedicated himself to explaining.

As it turns out, a reevaluation of Stalin is not the least of the controversial moves that Žižek makes in his most recent book. With a chapter entitled 'Hitler as Ironist?' and including a self-improvement test to determine whether the reader is irrefutably a racist, it is apparent that outrageousness has been carefully incorporated into the book's design. This performative and motivational effect is precisely what Žižek aims for in what is his most clearly delivered remedial

plan for the contemporary Left. Whereas before there have been relatively obscure Lacanian directives to traverse the fantasy of political ideology or to embrace the hidden relevance of German idealism for modern thought, here he offers a far more practical guide to locating oneself within the current discourses of Marxism, psychoanalysis, 'third way' theory and cultural studies. Moreover, he explains how the received view of totalitarianism operates so often as a shibboleth that it restricts the aims and objectives of these movements. In a familiar term from his other work, the book is intended to provide a 'detonating force' that will allow theory, and especially a thoroughgoing Marxist materialism, to free itself from the various culs-de-sac of deconstruction. It aims at preventing more conservative ideologies, including the middle-of-the-road 'third way', from labelling and dismissing the radical Left as unnecessary obscurantism.

The enormous variety of cinematic, musical, literary and pop references that have always been Žižek's trademarks are here in abundance. The relative restraint of his more philosophical books, such as *The Ticklish Subject* (1999) is abandoned, while the increasing concern with religion found in *The Fragile Absolute* (2000) is continued. People who were troubled by a perceived Christian fundamentalism in the latter book will find more reason for worry in Žižek's claims about Christianity's unique tragic dimension, which is lacking in both Judaism and Buddhism. Again, this can be attributed to a calculated outrageousness on Žižek's part. He deliberately provokes the distinction between Christianity and other world religions to see who will come to the defence of the offended doctrines. It is his suspicion that it will not be the 'true believer' who will be outraged by his claims but rather the postmodern leftist academic whose overriding demand for tolerance and contextualization precludes precisely this kind of decisive statement. He provokes what he perceives to be a complacent leftist discourse in order to determine if there is an underlying agenda of disavowed principles. While the deconstructionists

claim that all concepts can be contextualized, it is interesting to see which ones still provide offence. If all concepts are metaphors, why is totalitarianism such an exceptionally effective irritant?

This is where Stalin comes in. It is Žižek's contention that the limitations of radical leftist discourse can be seen in the way in which its own paradoxical nature, divided by a need to provide criticism and yet also admit to the contingency of that criticism, is neatly wrapped up and set aside by using totalitarianism as a stopgap. The postmodern Leftist can only survive if he or she is able to limit the basic demand for tangible social and economic change by instead worrying about the danger of slipping into totalitarianism, a system where tangible change was the central goal. Žižek finds that totalitarianism is too conveniently accepted as the system that went too far. Since everybody knows that totalitarianism is inherently wrong (except for the British Army, apparently), the questions that totalitarianism poses are not questions for us; nor, according to Žižek (in reference to Hegel's observation that 'the secrets of the Ancient Egyptians were also secrets for themselves'), are the questions of totalitarianism treated by modern theorists as questions for totalitarians themselves.

There is a basic assumption that the centralized authorities within these governments knew exactly what they were doing and were in complete control at all times. Žižek doubts that this is entirely true. Indeed, it is at the moments when totalitarianism is most unstable, during the purges of the 1930s for example, that the regime reveals its potential. The moment of revolution occurred in the Soviet Union during the purges when Stalin himself did not know what was going to happen – that is, when the fate of the regime was a secret even to the leader. It was at this moment that the social and economic forces were able to act freely beyond any possible control by the government, impossible to incorporate into any Five-Year Plan. This radical ambiguity, the impossibility of anticipating the future, allows for dialectical materialism at its purest. In Lacanian terms, it allows for the repositioning of the *point de capiton*, the ground of the symbolic order, and thereby opens up new, previously inconceivable, discursive territory. Žižek is quite willing to admit that the purges had appalling consequences, but

he is not willing to accept that this tragedy can be accounted for by the supposed radical evil of Stalin or the *nomenklatura*.

This is not meant to be a defence of Stalin's regime but rather the initiation of a new discussion into the social factors and ideology at work in actually existing communist governments. Indeed, not even the Khmer Rouge can be dismissed on this view (and the book contains an interesting discussion of the state-managed sexual practices of that regime). Simply put, any communist government should be worthy of examination for emancipatory potential. One consequence of this revaluation is that it disputes the standard Western valorization of the dissident within the totalitarian system. To this end, Žižek makes several controversial claims about a number of dissident figures: Nikolai Bukharin was still acting as a proper Bolshevik in offering to shoot himself despite knowing that the charges laid against him in his 1937 show trial were entirely false; the composer Dmitri Shostakovich, once blacklisted and forcibly distanced from the official ideology, assumes the ineffectual 'closet dissident' status that actually helps preserve the regime; even Václav Havel's status as an emblem for post-communist democracy is questioned, echoing right-of-centre Czech politician Václav Klaus's suggestion that Havel's humanistic vision relies on the continuance of communist, not democratic, ideals. These figures are not to be considered victims of an inherently evil form of government but, rather, as the integral parts of a system that was actively trying to reconcile socialist ideals with historical circumstances.

The treatment of National Socialism is more circumspect, but here Žižek's main target is the Holocaust industry rather than the regime itself. Again, it is a case of totalitarianism being used as a stopgap, this



time, in order to avoid a critical confrontation with the social and economic factors that contributed to the Shoah. Žižek points to the failure of films such as *Schindler's List* and *Life is Beautiful* to confront the figure of the dehumanized 'Muslim', who cannot be portrayed as either tragic or comic. He is suspicious of any attempt to represent the extreme nature of the Nazi concentration camps, arguing that any portrayal is ultimately abusive of the Muslim. While this criticism attacks obvious targets such as Hollywood, it is also meant to include any attempt within academia to elevate the Holocaust into a diabolical evil, approachable only through respectful silence. This moral approach to a political situation, treating the Nazi regime as a manifestation of metaphysical evil and not the political consequence of various social and economic factors, surreptitiously reinforces its own unacknowledged political objective: the continued separation of Judaism from Western culture. This separation, justified on the basis of the Holocaust's supposed singularity, is actually the same one at work in anti-Semitic conspiracy theory and ironically may also exempt Israel from certain human rights decrees. Only by confronting its empirical origins and not accepting the received view of the inherent evil of totalitarianism can a continued examination of the Holocaust stay productive.

There is a clear sense that Žižek wants something new to be introduced to leftist thought. He is tired of the protracted debates that stop short of questioning the actual circumstances that led to the rise of totalitarian regimes – circumstances which, acting as a classical Marxist, he believes lie in class struggle and the recognition of labour. The rest of the book diagnoses the various ways that Western liberals masquerading as radical Leftists continue their own self-deception. There is the embrace of melancholy over mourning that can be found in the work of Judith Butler, and the forced separation of ethics from politics found in a post-secularism influenced by Levinas. In each instance, Žižek finds that it is the concrete political act that is precluded by the constant need to contextualize and maintain ambivalence. It is not that these theorists are misguided in their intent but that they are contained within a discourse that lost its radical potential years ago. A basic Hegelian dialectical structure raises itself in Žižek's work; the development of radical leftist discourse has reached its point of stagnation. What may have been genuinely radical and subversive in the past is now fully incorporated into the dominant liberal system and a 'detonating force' is needed in order to enter a new terrain. If contemporary academic discourse genuinely wants to consider what may lie

beyond a globalized, capitalist economy (and Žižek is not entirely convinced that deep down they really do), they will need to search for this kind of force in the place they are currently unwilling to go – totalitarian discourse.

After such a great motivational speech, it would be good if Žižek was actually able to provide the Five-year Plan that will steer academia out of the doldrums, but unfortunately this is precisely what his book does not provide. There is very little indication of where in totalitarian discourse the secret detonator lies. The closest Žižek gets is the recounting of a Soviet propaganda film where a traitorous spy is promised 'a severe, but just' sentence from a Bolshevik court and, instead of summary execution or the Gulag, receives access to universal education and health programmes. According to Žižek, the court 'redefines the meaning of "severe justice" itself in terms of excessive forgiveness and generosity', achieving a genuinely radical goal of opening up new discursive territory. This is what the Leftist should try to emulate, but no more guidance is given. Žižek has admitted elsewhere that he has yet 'to pull the rabbit out of the hat', and this remains a rabbitless hat of a book.

Without more information about where to look for this emancipatory material, it is difficult to avoid seeing it in places that Žižek would not approve. For example, it is not clear whether a typical affirmative-action programme in a Western democracy reduces symbolic differences between political antagonists to that 'underlying all-pervasive Sameness' which Žižek denounces, or whether it actually addresses the concrete social and economic needs of an underprivileged class, altering their circumstances on a materialist level, of which he would approve. The symbolic and the material do not seem to be as easily separable as Žižek would suggest. While he is correct in claiming that the Left has become increasingly concerned with politics at the symbolic level, the division between this symbolic concern and more traditional projects of social and economic change is not definite enough to warrant choosing one at the expense of the other.

On the other hand, perhaps postponing a definitive plan is not such a critical fault so long as he delivers a message about the current limitations of leftist discourse and its inability to confront totalitarianism. As an exhortation to overcome this shibboleth in contemporary postmodern academia, the book is a complete success. The British Army cannot be allowed to have all the fun.

Kit Barton

Euro-things

Andrew Barry, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*, Athlone/Continuum, London, 2001. 305 pp., £50.00 hb., £16.99 pb., 0 485 00439 9 hb., 0 485 00634 0 pb.

The promise of modern Europe is bound up with technology 'as threat' and 'as potential'. Europe is an information society, not because information has produced a radical break with the past but because societies operate as if it has. Contemporary society takes technical change to be the model for political action. This is the starting point for Andrew Barry's account of Europe as a political machine, an account which demands recognition of the 'critical part played by technology in the modern political enterprise'.

Barry's central assertion is that science and technology should not be viewed as external to political processes, political institutions or political subjects. In *Political Machines* he sets out to demonstrate that the relationship between these categories is more intimate and more complex than much political science would suggest; and if the focus here is on Europe, Barry is clear that his argument should have a wider applicability.

The theoretical underpinnings of this work are to be found in the sociology of science and technology. Indeed, Barry's work is to be understood as an attempt to translate critical thinking in this arena into the broader sphere of political science. For Barry the insights of the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) are valuable. He also draws on work developed by actor network theorists such as Latour, Callon and Law, using their insights and general approach to address what he perceives as the blindness of much political science to the specificity and force of technology.

For those working within SKK it has become a commonplace that 'laboratory knowledge' cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the play of social and economic interests. Rather, such knowledge needs to be studied in its particularity. On the one hand, this tends to involve the adoption of particular research methodologies, such as ethnography. On the other, it involves a thoroughgoing attempt to give symmetrical attention to humans and non-human elements involved in the production of objects, knowledges and scientific 'truths'.

Actor network theory (ANT) is founded on a fierce adherence to this principle of symmetry. Artefacts of all kinds – software architectures, hardware, software, or documentation, for instance – may all be enrolled alongside humans as actants within hybrid networks

which, in constituting a knowledge, or an object, also constitute a social reality. For some ANT theorists, networks produce their own contexts. They cannot be understood in relation to overarching social contexts (ideology, social relations) although they may be investigated in relation to other networks.

Latour understands that the 'Parliament of Things' that emerges as a consequence of such an approach amounts to an assault on a particular kind of sociology. Andrew Barry might be understood to be taking up Latourian cudgels against a particular kind of political science. Certainly, a central movement of *Political Machines* is the attempt to translate ANT's conception of the social/technical relation and the methodological approach it prioritizes from its current niche in science studies, and from its concentration on laboratory matters, into mainstream political thinking.

In *Political Machines* this ANT-like respect for the role of the technological artefact (the non-human in the network) is used to complement a more or less Foucauldian conception of government as a dispersed series of practices and political technologies. As Barry sees it, what is at issue is not 'the question of the state, but ... a set of practices and technologies of governing which operate across distinctions between state and market'. Two senses of technology – technology as artefact (as an information network with a particular architecture for instance) and technology as technique – are thus brought into relation. This redoubled sense of technology allows him to argue that the assemblages or networks he discerns operating throughout the variously formed spaces he investigates are producing Europe as a socio-technical machine *and* (simultaneously) as a political institution.

Political Machines itself is formed by these assemblages and networks since they become the focus for a series of case studies loosely based on European government (making up the first half of the book) and European citizenship (the second). Each study opens a different window on Europe, which is thereby viewed at a series of strikingly different scales, paces, locations and modalities.

To explore the governing technologies of Europe, Barry draws on Appadurai's sense of differentiated spheres of action (the technoscape, mediascape, ethno-

scape) which might operate to fracture or complicate territorial boundaries. Technoscapes, for instance, may not map onto existing media- or ethnoscapings. Barry's focus is on the overlapping technological zones that mark out Europe. These zones are produced where particular forms of technical standardization have been achieved, for instance, or where intellectual property laws have been agreed upon. Zones are thus viewed as 'spaces of circulation within which technologies take more or less standardised forms'. Barry argues that such zones have become the object of developing forms of transnational regulation. In other words, they have become the objects of, and *the means for the effecting of*, various forms of European integration and harmonization.

In the second half of *Political Machines*, Barry turns his attentions to the European citizen, here regarded as constituted in part through her active involvement in new forms of cultural consumption, and in new forms of information and knowledge gathering. The model of the interactive museum is explored here as a general model for informed and active citizenship, and interactivity itself is taken as a model for conforming the subject which is based not on discipline (as in Foucault's model) but on permission. Rather less convincingly, Barry attempts to understand the road protests at Newbury bypass through an analysis of the 'objects, technologies and practices' which produced the event itself.

The connection between the two sets of case studies is to be found in technology. In the case of the citizen (as user) and in the case of the regulatory initiative (for instance, an intellectual property regime), order is given through the redoubled sense of technology outlined above. That is, as Barry himself puts it, 'politics does not circulate just through the flow of ideologies or rationalities of government, but through diagrams, instruments and practices'.

Viewed in this way, a certain idea of 'Europe' dissolves. In its place a new Europe emerges, reconstituted as a complex socio-technical entity. This new Europe assumes peculiar characteristics, takes on new modalities, and becomes more clearly composed of many layers, not all of them coterminous. Its boundaries therefore seem less clearly defined, and indeed seem to be defined *in process* rather than being fixed. This new Europe is at once a more or less harmonized legal zone, a 'place' demarcated in various ways (by the signposts marking a European air pollution project in Southeast London, for example). Finally, Europe is defined by the activities of its citizenry, its use

practices, its consumption practices, even its protest practices.

How convincing is all this? If Barry simply set out to attack the increasingly-difficult-to-sustain argument that technology is external to the political, he has certainly succeeded. Barry's actants are always assembled with beautiful precision, his networks are marshalled precisely, and each case study reveals a web of complex and intimate relationships operating between scientific or technological actors and networks and political institutions, structures and bodies. Barry's work, however, is more than a collection of case studies about socio-technical imbroglios. It is an attempt to understand how modern Europe, thus reconceived, might be at once a technical institution *and a political one*. And it is here that the problems arise.

First, it seems important to note that in making his case for Europe as a techno-social machine, Barry is arguing that there are possibilities for political intervention and political action. He recognizes that a sense of political possibility is threatened when the information society thesis is taken on board; when the belief that a society's horizons are bounded by the technical not the political becomes a general belief, a model for action. The case for understanding Europe as an active and extensive operation rather than as a centralized bureaucracy, often characterized by its inactivity, is well made, and becomes a part of his attempt to offer new grounds for (ground level or micro) political action.

On the other hand, this account produces a peculiarly depoliticized sense of what Europe is, and *does*, not at the level of integration/harmonization initiatives, nor at the level of the local protest or the actions of the citizen-consumer, but as an actor on a wider stage. The central blindness of the book concerns the other reality of Europe – its wider political and economic reality and its place within a global order. While Barry's account explores the socio-technical constitution of the grounds of Europe (real and virtual), it refuses to reach beyond these grounds, to ask how Europe as thus constituted figures in the wider world. Here Barry's adherence to ANT is very clear, and might be said to take on its limitations as well as its strengths. Actor network theory defies context; the network itself produces the social world as network effect. ANT is hostile to the concept of a horizon within which networks might be formed or made, a horizon within which actants might be operating – which might take them beyond their network 'script'.

ANT has been criticized for producing a celebratory account of technology where whatever is achieved is

presumed to be *right*. Barry arguably comes rather too close to this in his essentially romantic account of the construction of Europe. Indeed, it might be the beautiful complexity of the kinds of networks Barry constructs, their self-sufficiency, that allows him not only to suggest that Europe has done more than many of its detractors would allow, but to say that it has done *better*. In conclusion, the Europe Barry delivers us up to is something that is no more than a socio-technical effect of the actions of actants within the networks that constitute it. Seen this way it can be celebrated, even loved. In these times, it may be clear that such love is rather dangerous.

Caroline Bassett

Pure illusion

Bob Carter, *Realism and Racism: Concepts of Race in Sociological Research*, Routledge, New York and London, 2000. 185 pp., £55.00 hb. £16.99 pb., 0 415 23372 0 hb., 0 415 23373 9 pb.

This book has two aims. The first is to provide a coherent account of sociological scientific realism (SSR) which defends the idea of social science as a source of privileged knowledge about social reality against the postmodern and poststructuralist critiques of grand narrative. The challenge here is to provide an account of SSR which rests on a genuine analytic dualism between agency and structure, the two indispensable ingredients of any social scientific realism. This has to avoid any conflation of the two while providing a coherent picture of the relationship between them – how each has the power to act upon and transform the other.

The second aim is to show that the concept of race has no role to play in sociological theory, and that sociological accounts that do use the concept as an explanatory tool are misleading and misguided. In order to succeed here Carter has to explain why the concept of race is sociologically useless, and, just as important, how sociology can provide helpful explanations of racism and other race-based social phenomena without employing the concept of race to do so.

These two projects are connected, because it is through the second that Carter hopes to convince us of the first. In the end the book is a defence of the idea of social science as a privileged source of knowledge, and this defence is provided by taking the topic of race and showing that the only way to provide a coherent

account of it is within the framework of SSR. This is because SSR takes the radical step of removing the concept of race from the theoretical realm and confining it to lay discourse. Accounts that let the concept run free through their theoretical languages are taken to be fraught with confusion.

The claim that SSR provides the best explanation of race-based social phenomena by rejecting the concept of race is, on the face of it, deeply paradoxical; but I do think Carter succeeds, in the end, in resolving that paradox. Even if one is not going to buy his version of SSR, one is at least left extremely cautious about the theoretical utility of a concept of race.

Carter's version of SSR has three essential features. The first of these is the analytical dualism between agency and structure. Carter's favoured form of explanation is the morphogenetic model provided by Margaret Archer. This recognizes that the causal interaction between structure and agency takes place in different time frames and the only form of sociological explanation that can illuminate it is therefore narrative. Social change takes place in morphogenetic cycles. First (T1) we describe the social structural context that is in place and that is going to condition, but not determine, the actions of individuals and groups in this context. Next (T2), we describe those actions as they take place in and against that context. Finally (T3) we redescribe those social structural conditions to see how the actions have affected them – they may have been altered (morphogenesis) or not (morphostasis). The cycle of causation between structure and agency then continues.

The second essential element of SSR is ontological depth. There are different levels of social reality with their own causal structures and properties. Sociological explanation has to be suited to the relevant level or domain. Following Derek Layder, Carter outlines four domains. The first two are part of agency: psychobiography (dealing with individual development of the self) and situated activity (face-to-face interaction between two or more persons). The second two are to do with structure: social settings (the locations within social structure that frame social interaction) and contextual resources (the material and cultural resources available to social actors in those contexts). Race ideas can be active in any of these domains: as a way of expressing one's psychic need for identification; as a resource in situational interaction; as a formal system of discrimination, such as immigration and nationality law; or as part of a society's general cultural capital.

The third essential element of SSR is the distinction between lay and scientific discourse. Most sociological

terms have 'dual citizenship' within lay and sociological discourse, and so lead a double life. This makes social scientific theory a much more problematic enterprise than physical scientific theory, but it is not an intractable problem so long as sociologists are alert to this double life of their theoretical terms. Common-sense notions of class, for example, are partial, limited, and sometimes misleading as accounts of the social world. Sociologists operate with a theoretical notion of class, which is fit for the purpose. The means it has a logical place within a body of theory, and receives support from other terms within that body of theory. The problem with the concept of race is that it has no referent in social reality – there is no such thing as race. Therefore we need 'more active border controls between social scientific and lay discourses with regard to race'.

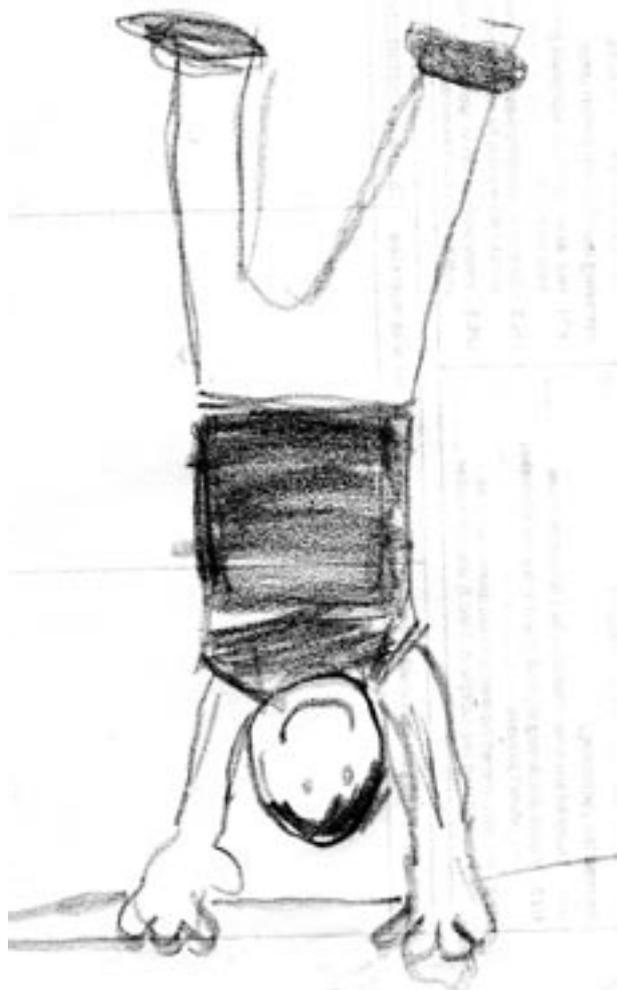
However, sociologists have been reluctant to take this step. One reason is the view that notions of race have a common-sense vitality and therefore exert an influence over social actors. If belief in races is real and motivates people, then the belief has real consequences; and so race is, in that sense, real. This will not do, says Carter, because it reduces social reality to actors' beliefs about it. 'This restricts social science to providing a (circular and largely otiose) description of the social world as seen by its members.' Sociology has to be in a position to question critically the adequacy of actors' descriptions of their social world, and SSR enables it to do this.

Another objection derives from the postmodern questioning of the validity of the distinction between lay and sociological. If all concepts are social constructs, why should we privilege theoretical terms just because they are constructed by social 'scientists'? In the accounts that arise from this postmodern critique, race retains a role as a discourse or symbolic form, or as a source of privileged knowledge. But 'this absence of an object is a recipe for incoherence and as is commonly the case with such recipes the end product is often half-baked'. These problems are associated with a 'wider uncertainty amongst sociologists about the status, meaning and viability of social science'.

Carter argues here that we must not confuse the insistence that sociology is a science with *scientism*. Scientism is the positivist view that science produces objective facts through neutral observation which enables us to formulate general laws. SSR is theory-driven, and precisely because it is theory-driven it acknowledges that there can be no neutral observation of social reality. The concepts that make up the theoretical framework can only be the social constructs of

social scientists, but they are precisely constructed as elements of a theoretical system aimed at giving an account of social reality, and this means they are different to the concepts of lay discourse, even where they have a double life. This is because the social reality they have to capture is not limited to the everyday experiences of social actors and their descriptions of those experiences. Social reality, as we have seen, is multi-layered and in principle unobservable, consisting of structures that have causal powers – generative mechanisms. The social scientist must create theoretical models of those generative mechanisms, and then search for empirical evidence that they are in causal play in specific contexts.

Having excluded the concept of race from social scientific discourse, how can Carter make the paradoxical claim that SSR provides the best theoretical framework for understanding those phenomena? It performs this task by getting us to set aside any notion of a theoretical concept of race that can perform an explanatory function, and rather focus on the role of race ideas in lay discourse. Although SSR rests on an analytical dualism between agency and structure, in this version the structural element itself has two parts: social structures, which seem to have most to do with



the meaning and distribution of material resources; and the cultural system, the 'propositional register' of a society. The cultural system is the body of beliefs and ideas which people draw upon in pursuing projects and interests. Race ideas exist in the cultural system, as 'ideas, or imaginings, that draw upon a concept of race'.

The concept of race underlying race ideas is one of distinct biological groupings of peoples with visible physical and cultural differences. This concept has no empirical consistency and therefore cannot 'cross the border' into scientific discourse, but remains alive and well in lay discourse. Sociological analysis will explain how agents come to have certain ideas about race in particular contexts, and the ways in which they use those ideas. But none of this is to employ the concept of race at the level of sociological analysis, because at that level the concept is unemployable. Race ideas have a reality as the objects of social scientific enquiry, but not as conceptual tools in such an enquiry.

Some hard-nosed social scientific conclusions follow from this. For example, someone cannot be an unconscious racist, any more than they can be an unconscious Marxist or Christian. Racism involves a specific set of false ideas about humanity, and the racist is a person who holds those ideas. Also, racism has to be distinguished from other exclusionary tactics such as nationalism or xenophobia, as these are based on different sets of ideas in the cultural system. They can, of course, become connected, and very often are.

A third conclusion is that not everybody is ethnically located. Given that ethnicity is socially constructed, then it can only be a sociological concept under conditions which lead agents to interpret the world and themselves in ethnic terms. Not all agents live under such conditions, and therefore for them there can be no ethnic identity in play. It is not that they have failed to perceive that they have an ethnic identity (that would be to reify ethnicity) – it is simply not an idea or an imagining that has a role to play in their social context. 'Rather than "uncovering" hidden ethnicities, sociologists should be asking why notions of ethnicity figure prominently in the subjective careers of some but not others.'

In the end, Carter resolves the paradox he has set himself in a convincing way, but questions remain. Most importantly, of course, one has to be convinced that social scientific realism is a viable project, and this is Carter's most pressing concern. However, there is another puzzle. Carter poses only one border, between lay discourse and social scientific discourse, but of

course the border is between lay discourse and theoretical discourse in general, unless one assumes that social scientific discourse is the only relevant body of theory. Once we allow that there are other bodies of theory in play, the border country becomes far more complex, with many different boundaries of varying permeability. Indeed, the relationship may be such that the whole notion of a boundary makes no sense here. While the concepts of race and ethnicity may be justifiably banned from entering within the territory of social scientific discourse, it is not clear that they cannot pass into other theoretical zones. The implication of Carter's argument is that they should not, because they fail to describe any reality. But it may be that the purpose of such theories is not to describe reality, and that the realist manifesto should not be extended beyond its own theoretical boundaries.

Phillip Cole

Back in the 80s

Phillip Cole, *Philosophies of Exclusion: Liberal Political Theory and Immigration*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000. 256 pp., £45.00 hb., £16.95 pb., 0 7486 1218 1 hb., 0 7486 1219 X pb.

Many years ago, as a member of the Anti-Nazi League, I would regularly talk to meetings of trade unionists, students and political activists about immigration controls and their impact on the growth of right-wing and racist politics in the UK. Discussion at these meetings invariably turned on the issue of immigration controls and their putative necessity, and on whether it was possible to devise a 'rational' immigration policy. Speakers usually meant by this whether there was some principle of exclusion whose ethical basis could reasonably be grounded in, or made consistent with, social-democratic or liberal notions of fairness and social justice.

Speaking at these meetings in the late 1970s, I found that about half of the audience would answer 'no' to this question, insisting that immigration controls of any sort were rationally and politically indefensible. By the mid-1980s, however, I encountered scarcely anyone prepared to challenge restrictions on international freedom of movement. The issue of national borders seemed to have become rationally and ethically unproblematic; they were there, there was little that could be done about them, and opposition to the restriction of movement between them constituted the

wildest form of utopianism. Of course, the restrictionist policies of successive Labour and Conservative governments since the 1960s contributed significantly to this shift, but what struck me about many of the arguments for immigration controls was the disturbing assumption that the boundaries of the political community – broadly those to whom one might be considered to have a moral obligation and to whom one would extend political rights – coincide with the boundaries of the nation-state. It is precisely this assumption that Phillip Cole's timely and cogent book gets to grips with.

Cole's starting point is the key question of whether the exclusive membership practices of modern states can be morally justified within the terms of liberal political philosophy. The difficulty that Cole identifies here is that liberal political philosophy has at its core a belief in the moral equality of persons: any moral principle has to be capable of being accepted as rationally and ethically legitimate by any moral agent.

However, liberal notions of citizenship, grounded in the reality of nation-states, directly undermine this belief in two directions, first by making a distinction between members and outsiders by drawing a boundary *around* the community, and second by making a distinction between citizens and subjects by drawing a boundary *within* the community. Problems of rights and obligations, of the distribution of freedom and welfare, are tackled within already bounded political communities; the question of how membership of these boundaries is to be fixed is set aside. It can only be set aside comfortably, though, if this is done in ways that are compatible with the central principles of liberal political theory. And this is the rub: how is it possible to distinguish between insiders and outsiders in a manner consonant with the principles of equal respect and concern for humanity *as such* – and not just that part of it that gets to be defined as 'our responsibility'? The bulk of Cole's book explores the various answers that liberal theorists have proposed to this question.

Perhaps the most significant of these answers has concentrated on a definition of political community that sees it as constituted by common meanings. The work of Michael Walzer is central to this body of work, and Cole develops a powerful critique of it. Walzer's thesis runs along the following lines. Successful political communities need a conception of themselves, a self-conception that needs to be protected through immigration and naturalization controls. Since only members of the community are in a position to identify the limits of the shared understanding underlying their self-conception, it is only they who can decide on the

membership rules – that is, on who is eligible to belong to the community.

This is a popular view within the human and social sciences (and not only there), and Cole argues strongly (and rightly) that it simply sets aside the principle of humanity by appealing to a kind of moral relativism. If all moral principles arise from communities, there cannot be a moral principle of humanity because, as Cole points out, from Walzer's point of view humanity does not constitute anything recognizable as a community. Furthermore, this moral relativism seriously limits the scope and nature of any normative judgements we may want to make about the criteria of membership (for example, 'Aryans only') that a particular community decides are appropriate or may want to adopt.

There is a further difficulty: why should we suppose that an individual's identification with a particular nation-state outweighs for them other forms of identification? Cole puts forward a similar argument in his discussion of the 'cultural nationalism' of writers such as Yael Tamir and David Miller. Having established the value of culture as the context of social life which provides individuals with meaningful needs, aspirations and purposes, such writers then assume that the nation (as opposed, say, to other more local groupings) provides the most valuable and significant cultural context. One dangerous implication of this assumption, as Cole notes, is that we *ought* to identify with co-nationals.

There are other implications, too, and it would have been useful if Cole had extended his critique a little at this point. In particular, I think that much of his argument against taking culture and values as constitutive of national communities could be profitably applied to the discussion of ethnicity, where it seems to me that analogous claims are often advanced to justify the description of populations as belonging to this or that 'ethnic group'.

Cole concludes his survey of liberal theorists' efforts to square the circle of defending membership controls with the central moral commitments of liberal philosophy by insisting simply that it cannot be done. Any such strategy, he points out, 'involves an incoherence between internal and external principles, and the result is that in both theory and practice liberal theorists and states apply non-liberal if not illiberal principles to outsiders.' Part of the problem for liberal theory for Cole is its ahistorical approach to the formation of nation states and in particular its neglect of the role played by European colonialism in shaping the world. This neglect is the chief reason why

it finds it difficult to theorize actually existing borders. It is also the means by which liberal theory maintains its appearance of universality: the moral and political goods it distributes are due to everybody, but in liberal theory ‘everybody’ refers only to those included within the boundaries of the liberal polity. Cole suggests that the adoption of a postcolonial perspective might help in formulating how the boundaries of political communities should be drawn in a more global order, and, although this is left undeveloped, he is unequivocal about the implications for liberal theory: the only consistently liberal solution to membership control is complete freedom of international movement, and ‘if liberal egalitarians cannot bring themselves to accept this conclusion, then they have to ask themselves what they mean by liberal egalitarianism’.

Cole has written a clear and boldly argued text; one whose audience should be wider than that suggested on the back cover – students of sociology, racism and ethnicity will also find much that is relevant to their disciplines. Now, if only I’d had a copy back in the 1980s...

Bob Carter

The fates of Kantianism

Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000. xiii + 351 pp., £35.00 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 521 78101 9 hb., 0 521 78614 2 pb.

Eckart Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis*, Harvard University Press, London and Cambridge MA, 2000. xx + 207 pp., £23.50 hb., 0 674 00166 4.

Brigitte Sassen, ed., *Kant’s Early Critics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000. ix + 331 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 521 78167 1.

The horizon of meaning of Kant’s work has been in flux since its origin, partly as a result of the instability of Kant’s own self-understanding, as each of these books testifies in different ways. Sassen’s collection of very early responses to Kant’s theoretical work shows how ‘untimely’ that work was in its own time, and if in the ensuing period the central difficulties of Kant’s claims have at least been identified and narrowed down, the framework for receiving them seems to shift regularly.

At the moment, there appears to be a broad consensus that the weight of Kant’s theoretical project rests on the transcendental deduction of the categories, with claims around transcendental apperception bearing ultimate responsibility, while transcendental idealism is subordinated to these issues. Two opposing camps have coalesced within this framework, exhibiting differences that seem ever more irreconcilable, thus perhaps foreshadowing a new shift. On the one hand, a ‘normativist’ approach insists on the irreducible spontaneity of apperception, and makes stronger or weaker claims about how this undergirds the capacity to conform to epistemic norms. On the other hand, a ‘functionalist’ approach wants to dissolve apperception into the sum of the cognitive, synthetic functions that are alleged to make it up. Ameriks’ and Förster’s books are signs of new and important directions out of this impasse, in that both stress the limitations of theoretical claims about apperception, and both insist on the irreducibility of some kind of metaphysics in Kantianism.

Ameriks’ *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* in particular is an extraordinary work, composed of reworked material dating back fifteen years. It will surely have a major impact on work on Kant and post-Kantianism, if not for its general thesis, then most definitely for the sophistication of its argumentation (his account of apperception is perhaps the most sophisticated around). Its title is somewhat misleading, as it is as much about theoretical as about moral philosophy. It concerns the validity of the powerful tradition of critique and development of Kant’s philosophy that began with Reinhold, and continued directly into Fichte and Hegel. (Schelling is absent, perhaps because of the epistemological bias of the book.) Fichtians and Hegelians will be put on the defensive, as Ameriks wholeheartedly reverses a recent trend towards making Fichte and Hegel ‘acceptable’ by showing them to be reasonable Kantians deep down, if only you just get to know them.

The book begins with a deceptive appeal to the intrinsic ‘modesty’ of Kant’s system. Kant, Ameriks claims, was *not* concerned with defeating scepticism (being apparently persuaded of the futility of that task), but rather with providing coherent justification for our ability to make empirical judgements (what should be taken as a ‘fact’). This justification proceeds by unearthing the conditions for judgement itself (e.g. apperception) and for our spatiotemporal representations. If we wish to provide a coherent structure for these conditions, we are led towards a metaphysical thesis – transcendental idealism – which explains that

whilst our knowledge is restricted to appearances, this does not rule out a domain of non-spatiotemporal things in themselves, which may be represented by thought, but not known. Ameriks insists that the intelligibility of *moral* claims about freedom must presuppose a full theoretical ground-clearing of this kind. The post-Kantians, he argues, overlook the subtlety of this approach, going on to produce ever more radical claims about moral and theoretical autonomy, derived ‘directly’ from the ‘evidence’ of self-consciousness.

One of the key results of Ameriks’ analysis is criticism of the use of the concept of representation by Reinhold and his successors. Ameriks convincingly argues that Reinhold infects Fichte and Hegel with a mistaken impression of Kant’s project that has wide ramifications for their own projects, and will ultimately undermine their absolutist schemes. Reinhold’s original sin is to claim that *all representations* must be accompanied by the activity of the ‘I think’, when Kant only talked about *judgements*. As a result of this radical, explicitly anti-sceptical claim, Reinhold then

believes he can move directly to what Ameriks calls a ‘short argument to idealism’: that, as all representations are conditioned by the subject, things in themselves cannot be represented at all. Ameriks goes on to show how Fichte extrapolates further that the notion of things in themselves is not even coherent. The path to absolute idealism is now cleared.

There is a genealogical aspect to Ameriks’ project, as his wider historiographical purpose is to show the *contingency* of this wrong turning after Kant, in order to disrupt the sense of destination that attends the history of post-Kantianism. But his philosophical aim is squarely to recover the integrity of the Kantian project by putting right the error. First, he shows that Kant does allow unconscious representations. Second, he shows that Kant’s central claim that ‘the I think must be able to accompany all my representations’ does not refer to all possible representations, but only to representations that are already taken as mine. The apperception thesis in Kant does not refer to all representations, but only to empirical judgements (or ‘experience’ in its technical sense); it simply cannot

support the claims made for it by the post-Kantians. Third, the only argument to idealism in Kant is a ‘long’ one, not straight from ‘representation’ itself, but from the fact that we are limited by *specific kinds* of representations – spatiotemporal ones. Hence Kant’s idealism concerns the Transcendental Aesthetic, not the Analytic. In conclusion, Ameriks argues that the ‘imperialist’ turn that begins with Reinhold, to ground all science and philosophy on a radical principle of unity, is quite distinct from Kant’s route to autonomy. Rather, for Kant, moral autonomy is assured precisely by keeping open the possibility of a metaphysical, immaterial realm of things in themselves distinct from appearances, and on the basis of that possibility, appealing to strictly moral arguments as the *ratio cognoscendi* of autonomy. Instead of being guaranteed by one radical principle, freedom can only be secured by the very split between theoretical and moral claims.

However, one can’t help being drawn to the uneasy coexistence of Ameriks’ two polemical claims: on the one hand, for a ‘modest’, ‘common sense’ reading of Kant, and on the other, for the irre-



ducibility of metaphysical arguments in Kant. His soothing claims to common sense can sometimes appear like attempts to avert the reader's eyes from the metaphysical elephant that is, if not in the room, then at least in the hallway. Ameriks' first book, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, was proudly unfashionable in its metaphysical concerns, and indeed Ameriks has quite recently described himself elsewhere as having a Leibnizian (i.e. *not* commonsensical) interpretation of Kant's claims about the self. Why not just admit that, if one is going to try to provide 'common sense' with a justification for itself, opening up the space for metaphysics may not be the way to do it, because metaphysics has to be about more than reassurance of common sense? Nevertheless, I would suggest that this vacillation only adds to the thought-provoking power of Ameriks' book, in that it puts in question all the more profoundly the future of Kantianism.

It is useful at this point to turn to Förster's *Kant's Final Synthesis*, which provides a superb and lucid reconstruction of Kant's *Opus posthumum*. Anyone who knows Kant cannot but be astonished at some of the moves made in Kant's final work, with its talk

of organisms as 'self-moving machines', its denials that intuition is purely receptive, its insistence on the primacy of Ideas of reason, and its attempt at a 'system of transcendental idealism' to rival Schelling's. I cannot do justice here to Förster's vital work in making sense of these moves, but it is interesting to compare his treatment of Kant's final thoughts about apperception in the *Opus posthumum* with the conclusions drawn by Ameriks (who never refers to this work).

Förster shows how Kant starts to speak of apperception as the act by which 'the subject makes itself into an object', and that this requires the *determinability* of the subject in a spatiotemporal field, one that is no longer defined merely formally, but as completely filled with moving forces. Kant ends his life arguing that the subject must 'posit itself' 'as a thing and a person', and he reintroduces the old pre-critical trinity of self-world-God as the ultimate axis of this self-positing. Again, like Ameriks, Förster shows how at crucial points the weight of Kant's core claims is displaced onto the outer limits of his system, onto a fragile metaphysical horizon.

Christian Kerslake

Free and windy chaos

John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connection*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2000. 167 pp., £23.95 hb., £10.50 pb., 0 262 18205 X hb., 0 262 68120 X pb.

What does it mean to make art in the twenty-first century? This is the problem John Rajchman sets himself in his latest book, as he ploughs through the thirty or so titles of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in search of answers. Rajchman, a leading art theorist and longtime collaborator with journals such as *Artforum*, *October* and the Architecture magazine *ANY*, has circled around the question of artistic creativity from one book to the next. His previous effort, *Constructions* (reviewed in *RP* 96), concentrated on problems of architecture and design in an attempt to create a zone of proximity between philosophy, the arts and urbanism. In this way Rajchman hoped to formulate new problems in the field and sketch their socio-political implications.

Having left us with a battery of concepts with which to negotiate the city and its temporalities, he clearly felt that he had taken his part-time experimentation with Deleuze's philosophy as far as it could go: a head-on confrontation was needed and this could only take the form of a book-length study. The product should be of interest to artists and phil-

osophers alike: practitioners because the emphasis is on the creative act in every artistic domain; theorists because it puts every one of their treasured presuppositions into question. In a sense, Deleuze, the most rigorous of recent French philosophers, was also the most anti-theoretical, to the extent that he consistently sought out alternatives to theories that impose themselves in grid-like form on whatever contingent fodder comes their way, in one long search for new ways of conceiving unity and the relations between part and whole.

Rajchman's is an experimentation with, rather than an application of, Deleuze's thought. One of Deleuze's main aims was to discourage faithful followers whilst encouraging novel uses of the multitude of concepts he invented, especially in non-philosophical domains. The list of artists, filmmakers and writers who have sought to inflect Deleuze's thought in new directions is endless; not to put it into practice, since theory was already a kind of practice for Deleuze, but to discover a common, immanent compositional plane.

The first thing that interests Rajchman is how to invent 'new expressive materials' and new aesthetic possibilities, signs and images that will allow us to resist the global tele-information culture. Deleuze's is a transcendental philosophy, but only in his own idiosyncratic sense, describing the forces that condition and give rise to what we see and know. And art has a privileged position in relation to this transcendental unconscious. 'Artworks aren't there to save us or perfect us but to complicate things, to create more complex nervous systems no longer subservient to the debilitating effects of clichés, to show and release new possibilities of life'. This quotation could serve as a summary of Rajchman's book. Rajchman thinks we need a new conception of the brain if we are to stave off the totalitarian effects of cognitivism, propagating as it does the lightning-fast stimulus-response brain as demonstrated by American culture. We need to think of the brain as 'an uncertain system'. What is required is a probabilistic, lived brain operating through irrational breaks and connections, rather than the programmed brain dear to cognitivists. We must focus our attention on what it is that can occur *between* stimulation and response, action and reaction, and what can occur is thought and creativity. The Deleuzian brain weaves rhizomatic links prior to cognition, finding under individualized persons the impersonal power of singularities.

The political aspect of this follows from Deleuze's view of society as defined by its lines of flight, its leakages. In Rajchman's gloss, 'there is no determination of ourselves that does not at the same time create zones of indetermination – indetermination with respect to our individualizations as persons, sexes or genders, classes or strata, even as members of the human species'. The question becomes one of how minorities may come to bring about new lines of flight and 'insert becomings in the official history of majorities'. Deleuze died as he was writing a book on Marx: one eye on developments in neuro-science, the other fixed firmly on the different creative processes involved in art and philosophy.

What is distinctive about Rajchman's work, previously on Foucault and now on Deleuze, is its preoccupation with the ethical implications of philosophy. *The Deleuze Connection* contains an ethico-aesthetic paradigm, allowing its readers to experiment with modes of existence and styles of thought. And in the best Deleuzian manner it demonstrates that 'a non-philosophical understanding of philosophy is at work in and through the arts'. Perhaps what is most fruitful in the interplay between these two practices

are the zones of indistinction to which works such as those of Warhol and Duchamp gave rise. What Deleuze wanted, Rajchman makes clear, was for art to assist philosophical thought to leave behind its dogmatic presuppositions and become attuned to the singular (a philosophy of the event); to guide artists through the slit in the (metaphorical) umbrella that shelters people, to 'tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears through the rent', as *What is Philosophy?* so infectiously put it.

In the new global megalopolis time is uniquely dispersive and bifurcatory, a far cry from temporalities of old, yoked as they were to cyclical nature or divine law. Along with this new indeterminability of time goes an intensive spatiality, which has left behind the idea of extension and its 'well-constituted objects-with-properties and the kinds of distance and relations they suppose'. Rajchman extracts from Deleuze the concept of the amorphous unformed space, demanding a new body capable of novel types of relation: 'We move in space in ways that cannot be mapped by any extension – we fill it out according to informal designs that don't completely organise it – the space and our movement through it become inseparable.' Art can enable us to negotiate inventively the new spatio-temporalities being imposed on us. It can extract sensations from our habituated bodies and their common-sense memories, perceptions and feelings. It can make us see and feel in ever novel ways. 'The neuro-aesthetic problem of sensation is: either to create new connections, new linkages or vital transmitters in the brain, or fall back into a deficiency of the cerebellum.'

Our most pressing problem today is that we no longer believe in the world. As Deleuze has argued, post-war cinema had provided us with new reasons to believe in the world and its possibilities: Italian neo-realism, for instance, inaugurating a new regime of signs and images and creating characters who could no longer react to the conditions around them but who could see the intolerable. Now tele-informational culture has succeeded in robbing us of the world once more and this has been met by cultural and political thinkers with a wrong-headed retreat into transcendent and consensualist philosophies of communication. But it isn't more communication that will save us, says Rajchman, since we only communicate cliché and doxa, but a new belief in the world's possibilities. We need to force sensation beyond every transcendent value, to experiment with what we may yet become in the electronic brain-city.

Fergus Daly