

The right to party

Raoul Vaneigem, *A Declaration of the Rights of Human Beings: On the Sovereignty of Life as Surpassing the Rights of Man*, trans. Liz Heron, Pluto Press, London, 2003. 133 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 7453 2022 8 hb., 0 7453 2022 8 pb.

Praised in *Le Monde* as a volume ‘all opponents of globalization should carry in their luggage’, its English translation enabled by a bursary from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, copyright protected and with a bar code on the back: Vaneigem’s tract looks official indeed. In contrast, back in 1972 his *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (*Traité de savoir-vivre à l’usage des jeunes générations*, 1967) appeared in English wrapped in a pirated Brueghel, encrusted with quotes from Breton, Blake and the Ranter Joseph Salmon, hand printed at the Community Press in 1972 by its chief translator, Paul Sieveking. The translation was edited together from various sources – pamphlets and a chunk in *King Mob Echo* – and was unpaid. The edition was anti-copyright. Has Vaneigem now been reduced to a system-endorsing commodity? In situationist jargon, ‘recuperated by the spectacle’? In other words, has he ‘sold out’?

Despite the aesthetic immediacy of alternative products, the law of value remains unshaken by petty-bourgeois modes of production. My copy of the second impression of *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, bought in 1976, sports a Compendium Books price sticker of £2. Despite its underground provenance, to find out what Vaneigem was thinking in 1976 you still had to pay the equivalent of six pints of beer, just what the Pluto Press volume costs today. Politically, too, the Vaneigem of 1967 endures. He still adheres to the situationist doxa: Marx and Freud united in all-out materialist war on every moral justification for class society. Today’s established bodies have simply come round to Vaneigem’s way of thinking: he’s now so overground he can seize the mantle of Thomas Paine and declare a new *Rights of Man* for an epoch of anti-capitalism. ‘Every human being has the right to life ... to knowledge ... to happiness ... to healthy food ... to comfort and luxury’, and so on: fifty-eight rights in all.

For a short book, it’s not an easy read. The utopian afflatus of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* was intoxicating, leading the reader to accept each twist and turn

in Vaneigem’s expressionist polemic. Here, you suffer jolt after jolt, as intriguing commentaries on particular rights finish, and another right is bannered in capitals across the page (in this, it recalls the experience of Hegel’s *Logic*, where the expositions in smaller type – oral improvisations transcribed by his students – are more accessible than the propositions themselves). The language of rights – ‘Every human has the right to the freely available necessities of life’, and so on – carries the stale air of the United Nations, where pious wishes are so regularly and brutally betrayed their hollowness is palpable. Vaneigem’s subtitle – ‘On the Sovereignty of Life as Surpassing the Rights of Man’ – registers this problem, but it does not prevent him using the form.

Marx famously criticized the Rights of Man declared by both American and French Revolutions, pointing out that ‘not one of the so-called rights of man goes beyond egoistic man, man as a member of civil society, namely an individual withdrawn into himself, his private interest and his private desires separated from the community’ (*On the Jewish Question*, 1843). Declarations of the rights of individuals mask the real workings of capitalist society, which has socialized production to an extraordinary degree. Towards the end of his life, in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Marx reiterated his critique: the Lassalleans’ assertion that ‘the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society’ was actually – because human beings have different capacities – a ‘right of inequality, in its content, like every right’. Against the language of rights, Marx counterposed the slogan ‘from each according to their ability, to each according to their need’.

Vaneigem proceeds from Marx’s vision of a humanity whose happy existence and reproduction is the main event, and for whom the accountancy of capital is a decimating, perhaps lethal, plague. He merrily rides the paradox of declaring ‘rights’ which supersede ‘rights’, flouting analytical logic, but giving heart to

those who find their values contradicted daily on television by military commanders and financial experts. 'We cannot be satisfied with abstract rights in a society where economic ascendancy abstracts human beings from themselves': like every situationist, Vaneigem is a master at the Marxist device whereby a conventional-sounding descriptor ('abstract rights') is sprung from its usual logical chain and transformed (*détourné*) into a direct appeal to the experience of the reader. These sudden turns against the grain of philosophy – stark immediacy where you expected mediation after mediation – bring situationist texts into the orbit of poetry, leading spirited readers to relish arguments which might otherwise be rejected as riddled with political error.

The situationist term 'spectacle' made possible criticisms of ideology that were aesthetic as much as political. Vaneigem adheres to this Parisian tradition, somewhat confusing for British socialists, where the poet is suddenly in the vanguard. You will search British left literature in vain – including bestselling works against branding and commodification – for sentences like these:

Comfort and luxury have been the decor of the will to power, of money and vain concerns about appearances. In this, 'having' tried to compensate for the deficiencies of 'being'. Thus consumerism filled the world with a tawdry display of cheap miracles which underlined even more poignantly our exile from the body, the dehumanisation of our everyday surroundings, the glacial nature of our landscapes.

The situationists began with a critique of representation, a closely argued analysis of art's history which vaunted vandalism for its destruction of kitsch and cliché. Paradoxically, this demolition of the pretensions of art gave them a freedom in the deployment of the big themes ('consumerism', 'the body', 'our landscape') lacking in either academic Marxism (hobbled by 'theory') or activist Marxism (hobbled

by the mass media's narrow concept of 'politics'). Artistic thinking focuses on singularities, and from the political viewpoint is open to the charge of anarchism and uselessness. Political thinking focuses on abstractions, and from the artistic viewpoint is open to the charge of reductionism and sterility. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, whose Artaudesque concept of a 'body without organs' proposed epileptic spasm as an alternative to intellectual comprehension, Vaneigem addresses the specific/general (body/mind) problem in ways which suggest avenues for science.

There are no organs which are either noble or ignoble, nor are there high or low functions. Each component of the organism, like the individual in the social body, possesses the capacity for enjoyment of the self through sharing with others. When it has become the human mode which conveys the expression of the body as living matter, the mental faculty possesses the means to perfect and refine it. As an emanation of the vital energy which animates every part of the body, it is the passive and active consciousness of each single particle of the body and of its totality.

Students of political theory who have wrestled with Hobbes are wary of bodily metaphors for the state, but it's possible to contend that an *unconscious* image of the body necessarily underlies all political systems.



Driven by their antidemocratic politics, Platonic and Pauline idealists overemphasize the brain and downgrade limbs, lungs, genitals and stomach. Vaneigem's dialectic, which refuses to suppress the physicality of desire and pleasure, imagines the body as an ensemble of organs. This chimes with recent research on the biochemistry of hormones, as well as proposing a progressive vision of society: differentiated, but replete with reciprocal influence. Blake and Marx provide appropriate figureheads for Vaneigem's doctrine.

The revolutionary sexual politics of Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown – eclipsed in the 1970s by feminism and the politics of social identity – resurface as Vaneigem recommends the unalloyed pursuit of pleasure as the sole remedy for social ills. Again, as in his critique of abstract rights, the pseudo-liberalism of 'equal citizens' in a society based on monetary exchange comes under Marxist fire. The pleasure principle brings benefits undreamed 'by moral entreaties, which form the spearhead of the citizen's ideology. When achieved by coercion, the best becomes the worst. Ethics resuscitates the kinds of barbarism that it has crushed with the noblest of intentions.' Having extinguished Marx and Freud as guiding lights of radical thought, post-structuralist philosophy created a vacuum into which relativism rushed: an 'ethical turn' (or rather intellectual implosion) was inevitable. As the moral panic over Kosovo and NATO's bombing of Serbia paved the way for Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq, Vaneigem's vision of ethics turning into barbarism couldn't be better illustrated.

As few writers currently dare, Vaneigem goes beyond anticapitalism to a defence and celebration of the life humans actually want to live. His vision relies on the romantic ideal of lifelong personal unfolding that Marx inherited from Goethe, and that seems so hard for Marx's readers – especially those 'trained' in economics or politics – to understand. It speaks beneath the lofty pinnacles of 'theory' with a directness anyone involved in anticapitalism might grasp. It ought to be a popular book. However, two things stand in its way.

Vaneigem's strength is that he can talk grandly and poetically about what it is to be alive; his weakness is that his own life becomes a template for his ideas. Although the publishers stoke the traditional situationist mystique by reporting 'he is rumoured to live in Belgium', it's easy to read between the lines. Vaneigem's rose-tinted view of a new, green capitalism selling 'clean energies' to a resplendent new world

could only come from someone who is doing rather well in a privileged part of Europe, replete with wind farms and goat's cheese. Apparently, 'organic farming' and 'market humanism' mean that after ten millennia of an 'unnatural system' we can now regain 'what rightly belongs to the nature of human beings'. Vaneigem's view of history is so undifferentiated – the patriarchy of the Bronze Age paved the way to 'the infamy of concentration camps and the annihilation of natural resources' – and his solution so individual (artistic integrity; producing use values not exchange values), that his politics veer close to the religions he reviles. Like Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death*, this poetic dualism (a product of a startling imaginative grasp of both the horrors and possibilities of capitalism) revives the moral binary of Good and Evil. Revolutionary seizure of the means of production is no longer a demand and progressive politics becomes a matter of 'us' living the good life.

A second problem, at least for the English reader, is a translation that sacrifices readability to faithfulness. English cannot support the florid *fin de siècle* sentences which were surrealism's gift to modernity. Rather than having one's soul scorched with words afire, you end up parsing sentences for subject and verb: 'Taking leave of the old world means doing away with a dialectic of heavenly order where decline, corruption and death have been the curse of humankind and of the earth ever since their inaugural sacrifice on the altars of the economy of the profit.' It was not for nothing that punk rewrote situationese into statements short, sharp and penetrating.

Nevertheless, despite its difficulties and illusions, Vaneigem's text deserves to be read, and widely. In creating a paranoiac subject freed from subservience to capital, situationist writing fomented turbulence and independence of thought. It understands that without mentioning the rights of elephants, autarchic sexual gratification, alchemical transmutation and identity-busting, the rhetoric of social change waxes moralistic and pompous; that religion's appeal cannot be countered by reason, but only by play. At a time when lying governments are bringing all aesthetic semblance into disrepute, Vaneigem reminds us that 'in the most far-fetched fiction, the most ephemeral lie, there is a spark of life which can rekindle all the fires of possibility.' His links between the critique of the commodity – both mass and intellectual – and the defence of the active imagination are crucial.

Ben Watson

Thinking fast and keeping faith

William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002. 216 pp., £42.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 0 8166 4021 1 hb., 0 8166 4022 X pb.

William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, 2nd, expanded edition, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002. 272 pp., £15.99 pb., 0 8166 4086 6.

William Connolly's now prolific writings exhibit a continual and fascinating preoccupation with two connected themes: the inherent creativity of human thought processes and the 'existential faith' that may be cultivated as a result of this in late modernity. This intertwining is once again evident in his latest study, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, the publication of which coincides with the appearance of a new, expanded edition of his best-known work, *Identity/Difference*. In the latter, a substantial new preface explains and further justifies some of the core ideas motivating his interventions in debates about identity. *Neuropolitics* does so too, but in a somewhat different way. It draws upon recent research in the neurosciences, innovatively connects this with insights from film theory, and uses the combination to explain the creative potential of thinking, a multilayered notion of culture, and the cultivation of a pluralistic ethical sensibility. The uniting factor, the book claims, is the critical role of 'technique' in each of these areas. Showing how a range of films from *Five Easy Pieces* to *Citizen Kane* unsettle orthodox conceptions of space and time in contemporary cultural theory, Connolly seeks to solidify the commitment to an ethic of generous responsiveness towards difference – an ideal he has pursued relentlessly from *Identity/Difference* through his subsequent works, *The Ethos of Pluralisation* (1996) and *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (2000).

Led to question his own initial prejudice that the neurosciences unjustifiably neglect phenomenological aspects of thought, Connolly focuses on recent research emphasizing how cultural life contributes to the composition of body/brain processes, and vice versa. This insight destabilizes cultural theory's reaction against the reductive biology of standard neurophysiological research and unsettles its equally reductive focus on cultural representations of the body. These conceptions should be revised, according to Connolly, since aspects of popular culture also inform processes of layered thinking: images and rhythms in films, for example, 'prompt a synthesis of experience', stimulating us to different kinds of micropolitical activity, by deploying techniques that organize our perceptual experiences.

These ultimately help to create dispositions to think and act in more creative and receptive ways.

These claims are ambitious and attractive – all the more so for Connolly's explicit declaration that the work is 'hitched' to an underlying agenda of defending the sort of democratic pluralism that would respond to the acceleration of speed and the multidimensional diversity of modern life. Against the teleological conceptions of nature and culture underlying much 'deliberative' democratic theory, he argues that culture is constituted by the perceptions, beliefs and concepts in it; and that, reciprocally, subjective desires, demands and anxieties coil back on 'culture'. Since thinking helps to compose culture, and, reciprocally, since the objective dimension of culture helps to compose thinking, the relays that connect bodies, brains and culture are exceedingly complex. Techniques of the self (choreographed mixtures of word, gesture, image, sound or rhythm) and micropolitics (tactics deployed individually or collectively by non-political associations) set the conditions for thinking, ethical sensibility and a particular 'existential faith'.

One of the most striking and engaging aspects of this book is its claim that film, which affects cultural values on a mass scale and on a variety of different levels, is a potentially powerful motor for micropolitical activity. Stanley Kubrick's much-discussed *Eyes Wide Shut*, for example, deploys colour and slow pace to depict dream-states, which, as Connolly says, 'place us in a position, after the fact ... to ponder how our eyes can become wide shut too', by mobilizing our thought processes subconsciously. This is *ethically* significant, since it can lead us to dissect the organization of our perceptions, particularly when we are confronted with the cruel effects that our habitual thought patterns have on those we marginalize and 'demonize' by them. This thought is later developed through Connolly's defence of a naturalistic conception of both thinking and culture that is set in neither a theo-theological nor a classical scientific frame. Relying instead on Nietzsche's conception of an 'underworld of becoming', which signals the false universalism of any law-like scientific model, he outlines a conception of



to forge between interventions in empirical scientific research and the ethical imperative it centrally defends. Connolly is optimistic that making this link might encourage devotees of different perspectives to acknowledge the ultimate contestability of the 'theoretical' ethical source each professes. This would, he thinks, encourage diverse people to work together to overcome resentments arising in the absence of any definitive answer to the most perplexing problems facing us, such as the search for a

consciousness capable of working on itself via modes of 'self-artistry', shifting and altering its subconscious assumptions about the world and the people in it. This conception is supported by cognitive psychological research into anxious and depressive conditions: to change your thinking on something central to your identity often involves work on subconscious layers of thought, but to assess the effects of those experiments involves reinvoking cognitive or conscious thought directly.

So, if Connolly is right that thinking is at once *immanent*, in subsisting below the reach of consciousness, *material* in the sense of embodied in neurological processes, and *cultural* in being shaped and perpetually reinscribed by experience, the Kantian model of command, Rawlsian public reason and Taylorite attunement to a higher purpose in being all turn out to be problematic, underestimating the role of technique in the formation of thought and belief. Support for this viewpoint is found in Varela's discovery that judgements about oneself and others emerge from complex relays between several systems connecting the self and the world at varying velocities, rather than from a central coordinator in the self acting upon the world. This critique of a central coordinator, and, by extension, of the transcendental self of modern epistemology, should not however be taken as an apology for personal or social irresponsibility. Rather, it suggests that, since one can always think, feel and act otherwise, one can and should consciously cultivate an affective response that is appropriate to the contours of contemporary political problems and realities.

The attractiveness, and at the same time the potential vulnerability, of this book lies in the links it attempts

justification for human suffering and mortality. And this echoes his long-standing claim that such existential anxieties lie at the emotional core of aspirations to universal identity: to assert identity is to assert oneself as normal, good and true, and, in the same move, to demarcate the other as abnormal, deviant or flawed. Now, by supplying hard data concerning the plasticity of our thought processes, he wants to emphasize further that resentment, and the cruelty to 'the other' it harbours, are not our only possible affective responses to the world.

The later chapters build upon this claim by showing how the 'flooding' of slower layers of conceptual thought and imagination can have creative outcomes for individuals or groups, if informed by a Nietzschean 'visceral gratitude for the abundance of being'. This helps us to be *critically* responsive to different interpretations of the world – that is, to decide which new infusions to support, which to tolerate and which to resist, at a time when the tempo of life moves faster than ever. The discussion here recalls Connolly's point, which he introduced first in his early, more analytical work, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, that the language of politics is not a neutral terrain of unmediated concepts generating sets of rationally assessable interpretations. Rather, it is a structure supported by institutions and disciplines, which channel meanings in particular, often explicitly political ways. This thought has turned him increasingly towards Foucauldian and Deleuzian analyses of power and affect. His claim now is that a collective ethos is necessary to foster our capacities to respond generously, but critically, to this interpretative pluralism; and that only by doing so can we learn to react less anxiously or aggressively

to those 'fugitive' interpretations which might thereby emerge.

Speed, or, more precisely, differences in tempo across the spheres of social life, is important here. Political time, as Sheldon Wolin has said, requires a certain slowness, at least in its democratic form. But nowadays politics is overwhelmed by economy and culture, which, because of changes in the infrastructure of media, communications and transport, move at breakneck pace. Against Wolin, Connolly is optimistic about fostering an ethos of pluralism appropriate to this asymmetry in zones of time, primarily because the asymmetry means that people are forced to become less dogmatic in their identities. For example, the pace of change in fashion, in school curricula and faith practices, have led to far-reaching revaluations of standards of sexual identity. Moreover, and importantly for Connolly, this point is confirmed in Nietzsche's recognition not only of the tragic character of life (in which 'identity' ultimately stifles and attempts to extinguish creativity) but also of the non-linear nature of time: Zarathustra ultimately learns to 'affirm the rift' engendered by the dissonance between systems and events which they cannot perfectly assimilate. Connolly is aware of the ethical ambiguity that the use of Nietzsche engenders for democracy and hence declares his position of 'antagonistic indebtedness' to him. Finally, Connolly thinks, a Nietzschean politics of becoming can encourage much more than a politics of recognition. The latter merely *recalls* things that have been forgotten or repressed, while many people, whose identities are constructed through multiple axes of difference, need to balance commonality and predictability with self-artistry and 'the surge of the new'.

As well as going well beyond the array of disciplines on which political theorists usually draw, *Neuropolitics* is impressive in its ethical range. For example, it is concerned as much with Deleuzian micropolitics as with global justice, an issue it addresses by examining Virilio's claim that when time accelerates, space is compressed. Here, Connolly tries to establish the positive role of speed in intrastate democracy, by examining recent attempts to overcome the presumed ethnocentricity of Kantian 'cosmopolitanism'. Many of these are found problematic, because they still share with Kant a concentric model of political culture. But, against this, there are numerous 'eccentric' connections exceeding any one circle: ties might be forged, for example, to environmentalists or feminists in South America, out of the need to challenge oppressive practices across states. These coalitions might, Connolly thinks, help us to cultivate self-modesty in our

personal and political identities, and thus to generate the collective ethos necessary to address macro-level issues, which cannot be solved by any one nation, religion or philosophy.

Ultimately, one might wholeheartedly endorse the ethical sensibility of *Neuropolitics*, without necessarily being so sanguine that the empirical data that it foregrounds will make it any easier in modernity. Nevertheless, Connolly is at least rigorous in applying his own methodological commitment to self-inquiry to his own ideas. This is evidenced by his engagement with his critics in the new edition of *Identity/Difference*. First published in 1991, this book advances a post-Nietzschean account of the relation between identity and democracy, contending that every identity, individual or social, presents a paradox, in the sense that it establishes itself with reference to a range of differences which it constitutively aims to stabilize or 'fix'. It is organized around a letter to St Augustine, in which Connolly entreats the saint to accept that his position as a 'post-pagan' is similar, in the sense of heralding a similar cultural break, to the post-theism marked by Nietzsche and Foucault. In a substantial new essay, 'Confessing Identity/Belonging to Difference', Connolly responds to the criticisms these ideas provoked from many directions; and while he does not retreat from his earlier claims, he takes the opportunity to explain their premisses in a manner that usefully unpacks some of the denser passages of *Neuropolitics*.

Connolly acknowledges that his critics have often focused on his denial that he is a postmodernist, by which he understands one who believes identity is fluid and that ethical life is unimportant. The standard criticism is that, although he is evidently concerned with ethics, his politics is so slippery and ambiguous that it cannot locate a source certain enough to sustain the ethical perspective that it embraces. He aims to refute this by arguing that 'nontheistic reverence' for the continual diversification of life is his most basic ethical source. Attractive though this claim might be, however, one question is how, to use Connolly's words, responsibilities will be affirmed and rights acknowledged. In fact, the question is really whether the Foucauldian premiss concerning the ubiquity of power can provide support for the claim that, due to relations of historical disadvantage, some identities are more vulnerable than others to the effects of particular forms of power. This is to say that from explicitly feminist or postcolonial perspectives the concern is that it is difficult to translate the Foucauldian insight into a sustained political philosophy. Given Connolly's

explicit preoccupation with marginalized identities and institutionalized forms of normalization, it would be useful to know how his theory can address the historic inequalities between liberal individualist discourse and the discourses of minority traditions. All in all, since Connolly characterizes his position as a 'post-Nietzschean liberalism', it is difficult to know how his contribution to a postcolonial perspective might proceed.

Another question arises about the demandingness of the psychological orientation Connolly defends. In a sense, his perspective assumes that we can all think very fast and laterally, putting our identities constantly in question. He argues that he finds it noble to treat his faith as contestable, but the difficulties associated with this self-distancing for those professing marginalized world-views is acute. He seems only too aware of this problem: as he explains, when existential resentment becomes intense, others who question your faith 'can become targets of your revenge in the name of morality'. He responds by saying that the process of asserting identity, along with all the cruelty it can

harbour, is at once necessary and necessarily unjust. It is necessary because it is lodged in the very structure of human desire; and it is unjust because it denies all life that exceeds its contours. So, although he advocates adopting a range of tactics of the self, from Deleuzian micro-political self-fashioning to irony and mimesis, to overcome resentment and replace it with responsiveness, it is sometimes difficult to see how subjects can achieve this.

Connolly addresses the general difficulty by pointing to the social and political responsibility that institutions should bear for cultivating a broad ethos of responsiveness to difference. However, this is to raise one more question: doesn't the existence of social criticism presume some *common source* for respect for persons, for democracy, or for ethics? Connolly replies that respect is not deep respect until one acknowledges the dignity of those who embrace different sources of respect. Most importantly, he shows why the ethic is so necessary, exactly because of our everyday distance from it.

Monica Mookherjee

Penumbra

Christopher J. Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'*, Brill, Leiden, Boston and Cologne, 2002. viii + 263 pp., £52.00 hb., 90 04 12798 4.

Chris Arthur is known for his philosophical investigations of the work of Marx and Hegel as well as, more widely, for his student editions of *The German Ideology* and *Capital* (Volume 1). His new book, *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'*, although intended for a specialist readership versed in Marx's theory of value and Hegelian dialectics, reveals the close relationship between the reflexive and editorial operations involved in both the scholarly and disseminatory aspects of his endeavours. I am referring not merely to clarity of argument and expression, but to how attention to the textual detail of his source materials – so important to the pedagogic work of an editor – grounds the philosophically 'new' in his approach to both Hegel and Marx. A good example of this is to be found in his second chapter, where from a critique of the 'myth' of simple commodity production there emerges, first, an argument for a 'systematic' rather than a historicist dialectic, and, second, the main object of theoretical concern – the value form – which will be developed in the rest of the book.

Taking its cue from the cultural criticism of Adorno, Marcuse and Jameson – all concerned with questions of 'form' – Arthur's work is a philosophical intervention in the Marxist tradition that is critical of its historicist inflections in both their positivist and idealist guises, as well as of more recent structuralisms, especially as they impact on the analysis of Marx's *Capital*. If for Engels, and subsequent writers in the tradition of the status of Ernest Mandel and Paul Sweezy, the first chapters of *Capital* tell a story of linear historical development from a precapitalist stage of 'simple commodity production' to capitalist production proper, Arthur, in contrast, following in the Hegelian footsteps of the young Lukács, argues that Marx's analysis involves a dialectical account of an established social totality – that is, an account of a self-reproducing capitalist whole that is *systematic* in character. The difference in perspective is crucial for Arthur, since it liberates value theory from a post-Engelsian orthodoxy for his own 'new' dialectic, which, although Marxist in ethic, is Hegelian in method. Inspired by the now

classical work of I.I. Rubin on value as a social form, Arthur shows how value, particularly as money, mediates and produces the social. Hegel's idealism is seen to register this in its categories: it is the peculiar spectral power of capital to make the abstract Ideal become paradoxically real.

This is where Arthur's textual knowledge – the kind of knowledge the pedagogy of good editions demands – comes decisively to the fore to support his philosophical argument. He shows in some detail how the historicist idea of simple commodity production evokes a mythical precapitalist beginning from which a series of models of society of increasing complexity may be derived, and how, as such, this idea convinced Engels that Marx's method was simultaneously logical and historical. Arthur notes:

a model of simple commodity production as a one class society allows [Engels's Marx] to give a complete account of the law of value, and ... the subsequent introduction of a model of capitalism as a two class society allows him to demonstrate the origin of surplus-value through the specific inflection capital gives to the law of value; subsequently more complicated models, including landed property and the like, introduce still further distortions of the operation of the law of value.

The effect of this positivist narrative is to separate value historically (and thus theoretically) from the logics of capital accumulation. For Arthur, in contrast, value can only be understood as a capitalist social form. Methodologically, this means that Marx's *Capital* begins abstractly rather than historically, and moves to the concrete systematically in reconstructive mode, presenting 'a progressive development of the forms of the *same* object', value (from, for example, the formula of commodity exchange C–M–C, to another mediated by money M–C–M'), such that at each level of concretion the previous level of conceptualization is reworked and redefined by the next. Arthur's 'new' dialectic is a systematic one: 'logical progression is at the same time a "retrogression"' so that 'the sequence of categories has to be read in both directions, as a disclosure, or exposition, progressively, and as a grounding moment retrogressively'. Such transitions have little to do with historical *evolution*, he points out, but with *systematic* categorial leaps that attend to 'the insufficiency of the existing stage [of the argument] to comprehend its presuppositions'. Finally, rounding off his argument against Engels's, Sweezy's and Mandel's logical historicism, Arthur reveals that Marx never used the idea of simple commodity production at all; that it was in fact an invention of Engels's which has now

become institutionalized (particularly through the work of Mandel) as orthodox mythology.

Arthur's *The New Dialectic* is also an engagement with the idealist philosophy of Hegel. It does not, however, tackle its historicism, but seeks to show how we may understand Hegel's systematic panlogicism from the perspective of its fetishistic registration of the 'determinate absenting of the real' by value in capitalist society – in other words, the spectral Being of Nothing (capital). There is, Arthur insists, a homology between Hegel's 'systematic dialectic of categories' as outlined in his *Logic*, and Marx's presentation of the value form in *Capital*, in which

the movement from commodity exchange to value parallels [Hegel's] 'Doctrine of Being'; the doubling of money and commodities parallels the 'Doctrine of Essence'; and capital, positing its actualization in labour and industry, as 'absolute form' claims all the characteristics of Hegel's 'Concept'.

Here lies the key to Arthur's other, most important, critical intervention. If, as we have seen, he explodes the myth of simple commodity production through philosophical argument and textual erudition, in his account of value Arthur goes on, not to dismiss but to sideline the importance of the labour theory of value. Instead, he privileges commodity exchange and the money form (particularly the formula M–C–M', in which money appears to generate more money) over abstract labour. Arguing methodologically from the point of view of his systematic dialectic he 'corrects' Marx's hurried introduction of production and labour into his discussion of the determination of value and its power to abstract: 'Before the positing of labour as "abstract"', he writes, 'the *ontological* foundation of the capitalist system' is founded on the '*reality* of that abstraction in exchange predicated on the identification as "values" of heterogeneous commodities.' In contrast to recent neo-Spinozian celebrations of the 'positivity' of living labour (Negri), Arthur's arguments here are rigorously capital-centred and all the more powerful for it. Abstraction in exchange is thus not only a mental operation, but real, and produces, Arthur argues, a 'reality of pure forms which then embark on their own logic of development (as in Hegel)' culminating in self-valorizing capital (Hegel's 'Idea').

Negativity and labour, however, are never far away. As is evident, Arthur for the most part reads Hegel into Marx. But he also at times does the inverse, reading Marx's critique of political economy back into Hegel to find, for example, the 'shadow side' of Hegel's reconstructive method in the *Logic*, the side of Nothing rather than Being. This is the place where, as

in capitalism, 'everything is inverted'. It is the beginning, too, of a 'hellish dialectic' (commodity exchange in Marx) where it turns out that, in Adorno's words, 'the whole is false'. Hegel, however, did not take the path of Nothingness, but rather the path of Being to Truth. Nevertheless, Arthur insists, this all suggests that, despite himself, Hegel may have been writing about capitalism all along.

This is where the thematic of exploitation and the figure of labour come back into Arthur's argument, undermining the phantasm of capital's spectral but sovereign self-positing and self-valorization. Value theory may not rest, in the first instance, on abstract labour, but capital accumulation cannot occur without it. As is well known, the use value of labour for capital is the production of surplus value. If from this perspective labour is an effect of capital, capital also needs and depends on it. Labour thus returns to Arthur's argument in the form of an ambiguity: systematically, and from the point of view of value theory, labour as abstract labour (purchased labour power), would seem to be internal to capital's accumulative logic of sovereign self-positing. Politically, however, it seems *logically* to preexist capital, endowed with its own autonomy and the power of negation. At this point we would seem to have reached the limits of Hegelian systematic dialectics, but in a theoretical context in which an appeal to history seems to have been radically weakened. Thus even Arthur's appeal to the revolutionary class rings hollow, melodramatic even:

We take our stand with what escapes the totality, yet supports it, social labour, the exploited source of capital's accumulated power, no matter that this is denied. We saw, with Marx, that (form determined as wage labour) living labour realizes itself only by its de-realizing itself, producing 'the being of its non-being', capital. Only through the negation of this its negation can labour liberate itself, humanity and Nature, from the succubus of capital.

Although Arthur goes on to say that '[t]he reality of this standpoint is still historically open-ended', here his 'new' dialectics would seem to have reverted to the linear and teleological logic of 'realization' characteristic of Hegel's idealist historicism, of the kind criticized by Althusser, rather than, for example, the logic of overdetermination that thinking politics may require. What, in my view, becomes increasingly clear in *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'* is that it is not possible to derive a politics directly from a *systematic* account of the dialectics of the value form. Some kind of critical history is required here.

Its absence leaves the politics of the text theoretically bereft: every anticapitalist gesture appears as mere assertion because as yet radically undertheorized – symptomatic, perhaps, of the need now to retheorize the *historicity* of the value form and of labour both within and without it.

In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx says that Hegel's late work is characterized by a combination of 'uncritical positivism and equally uncritical idealism'. It is not clear that Marx himself ever quite overcame the positivist-idealist combination. The main object of Arthur's criticism is the Marxist historicist tradition, which has both its positivist and idealist versions. His critique of positivist historicism (the myth of 'simple commodity production') is outstanding, as is his systematic and dialectical account of the value form. The politics derived from the category of labour, however, remains uncritically historicist and idealist. This is what gives the book its, at times, defensive and self-satisfied tone, and perhaps what keeps it from engaging with contemporary forms of value outside of the 'pure capitalism' of the factory that Arthur, following Marx, constantly evokes as the real object of value form theory.

John Kraniauskas

Quite contrary

Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003. xiii + 331 pp., £45.00 hb., £16.95 pb., 0 52166 144 7 hb., 0 52100 417 9 pb.

This book is an important addition to the now quite extensive literature on Mary Wollstonecraft. While many studies of Wollstonecraft focus on literary analyses of her texts, on historical and biographical discussions of her life, or on assessing the nature of her feminist views, especially as evident in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Taylor's work encompasses all three. It is emphatically not a biography. At the same time, its psychoanalytic approach to Wollstonecraft involves a constant shift backwards and forwards from the life to the texts, as it explores the ways in which Wollstonecraft's childhood, adolescence and adult experiences are reflected and reworked in her writings. This approach allows for a careful and nuanced account of the changing political and intellectual circumstances in which Wollstonecraft lived.

The discussion of the 1790s, of the rapid shifts in outlook in Britain that followed the French Revolution, and their impact on the ways in which Wollstonecraft was read and understood is particularly insightful.

As the title indicates, the book's central concern is the imagination. Taylor chose to focus on the imagination, she explains, in part because it was such an important concept in late-eighteenth-century thought – especially in discussions about women. But her psychoanalytic interests are important here too, for imagination refers both to reasoned creativity and to 'the implicit, often unconscious fantasies and wishes that underlie intellectual innovation'. Wollstonecraft's imagination is clearly the most important, but hers is not the only one that is explored. Rousseau's sexual fantasies and the role they play in the construction of his female characters and his broader notion of femininity are discussed in detail. Indeed, one of the most engaging sections of the book deals with Wollstonecraft's complex relationship with Rousseau, with her simultaneous love of and identification with him, her enjoyment of his paradoxes, and her anger at the way in which his fantasies lead to prescriptive invention in which the character of woman is contorted into the feminine position.

The relationship between Wollstonecraft and Rousseau is a paradoxical one, and it is just one of the many paradoxes that Taylor explores. The underlying paradox of feminism – its emphasis and even reification of the category of woman in its very attempt to transcend it – has been discussed extensively recently by Denise Riley and Joan Scott. Taylor is less concerned than they with categorial issues. Rather, she focuses her attention on the paradox evident within Wollstonecraft herself, with her 'shocking misogyny' and repeated insistence that many women are morally, intellectually and socially worthless, on the one hand, and her deep and abiding concern for the fate and future of womankind, on the other. It is not just in Wollstonecraft that paradoxes are to be found, however, but in many different facets of the social and intellectual world in which she lived. There were paradoxes in the relationship between reason and imagination, especially as outlined by Rousseau and Burke. The whole question of what it meant to be a Christian woman, something that had become extremely complicated by the 1790s, involved a paradox as women were supposed to be innately religious and even devout – but not to have any independent engagement with religious ideas or beliefs. The paradoxes presented here serve both as an insight into the tensions and contradictions evident in social attitudes generally and

as a way into the complex imagination that underlay Wollstonecraft's ideas.

The relationship between history and psychoanalysis is complex and controversial. Taylor defends her use of psychoanalysis strongly, arguing against the idea that one cannot analyse individuals and ideas that existed in a pre-Freudian age with the tools that Freud devised. At the same time, she acknowledges that there is a problem with the ways in which a psychoanalytical historical approach might deal with the historicity of beliefs and feelings and their changing meanings over time. As a result, she insists that she has made only limited use of psychoanalytic concepts in this work. While this disclaimer is important, and the use of psychoanalysis certainly yields valuable insights into Wollstonecraft, the difficulties of dealing adequately with the historicity of belief using a psychoanalytic approach is also evident in the book. It can be seen most clearly in the longest and pivotal chapter, that dealing with Wollstonecraft's religious ideas.

On the one hand, Taylor insists on the significance of religion to Wollstonecraft. She emphasizes its centrality in the world that she inhabited, and provides a thorough discussion of contemporary beliefs such as Rational Dissent and the kind of pantheism that was important to Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs were highly personal and unorthodox, however, and were not entirely understood even by her closest companions. Taylor is right to insist on the centrality of religious beliefs to Wollstonecraft's feminism. And the accounts of the idea of immortality, of the erotic content of Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs, and of her sense of the importance of the Deity in enabling women to be sexual subjects free from masculine fantasy and constraints are cogent and convincing. On the other hand, there is a clear underlying argument that Wollstonecraft's religious beliefs met a psychic and emotional need that could be overcome.

The passions of religion, Taylor suggests, are at least partially responses to love's failures; and in Wollstonecraft, as a child of unloving parents, this involved a failure of self-love. As Wollstonecraft herself moved from the agony of rejected love to the final satisfying relationship with Godwin that helped heal some of her own psychic wounds, so too one can see in her texts a shift from the early heroine who is completely dependent on religion to a later more mature one who is able to do without it. Thus Mary, the eponymous heroine of Wollstonecraft's early novel – a deeply unhappy young woman, forced by unloving parents into a mercenary marriage, and finding consolation in a dying man whom she loves in an intense and spiritual way – is a

romantic martyr, unable to separate divine and earthly love. By contrast, Maria, the heroine of the last novel, is able to disentangle the erotic and the religious, to recognize the extent to which she has engaged in fantasies about the man she loved, to acknowledge her own erotic desire and to understand emotional realities in a more mature way. 'Rather than a new relationship with God', Taylor argues, Maria acquires at the end of her torments 'a new relationship with herself'. Taylor recognizes that this move is implicitly anti-theistic, but insists that at the same time as she wrote the novel Wollstonecraft was writing a critical essay reaffirming her belief in the close connection between the erotic imagination and the sacred and their link to creativity. Nonetheless, the use of William James and of Freud in framing the approach to religion here does serve to reinforce the idea that it fulfilled an emotional need rather than being integral to a world-view.

Taylor addresses, and often seeks to defend Wollstonecraft against, some of the criticism made of her in recent years. Just as she seeks to argue against the view that Wollstonecraft was excessively critical and puritanical on the question of women's sexuality by emphasizing the importance of her religious ideas and the changes in her ideas over time, so too she seeks to defend her against the charge of being a 'bourgeois thinker' and to insist on her social radicalism. In part, the argument here depends on an analysis of the precarious social and economic position of Wollstonecraft and her fellow journalists, who had little in common with the mainstream of the middle class. But it also involves a discussion of Wollstonecraft's increasingly critical attitude towards 'the adoration of property' and the growing affluence that she saw all around.

Wollstonecraft's hostility towards the wealthy and indolent is seen as important to her many vicious criticisms of women, most of which are directed against leisured and affluent women rather than against all women. At the same time, Taylor points to the difficulties that Wollstonecraft had in acknowledging how few women in eighteenth-century England were the pampered, sensual and indulgent creatures that she so despised – in contrast with the vast numbers of women whose lives were spent in paid and unpaid labour and in struggling for their own survival and that of their families. The imaginary and emblematic Woman that plays such an important part in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* took much of her colouring from Wollstonecraft's own unhappy early experience as an employee and from the masculine fantasies that she could not escape, although she did so much to puncture them. This version of

Woman had to give way to a different idea of the female citizen for Wollstonecraft's feminist vision to become whole.

It is in Wollstonecraft's last book, *Maria*, that this process begins, through her attempt to explore the importance of class differences in the trials that women face, and in her depiction of the mutual concern and partnership that develops between the middle-class Maria and the plebeian Jemima. It is the different but equally intense sufferings of the two women at the hands of cruel men, and of a male-dominated social and legal structure that bring them together. The relationship they forge is an unequal and fraught one, and their future uncertain. As Taylor shows, the vision presented here is thus in no way a utopian one. It reflects the difficulties faced by reformers in the reactionary years of the mid-1790s, the lack of concern with the situation of women among the radicals of that and the previous decade, and the obstacles feminists would face in the century to come. In its concerns with the lack of rights of mothers, the need for women to be financially independent in order to support themselves and their families, and its recognition of the need for women to provide support for each other, however, it points also to the most important directions that feminist thought would take.

Barbara Caine

Philosophy in the world

George Yancy, ed., *The Philosophical I: Personal Reflections on Life in Philosophy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham MD, 2002. 295 pp., \$75.00 hb., \$27.95 pb. 0 7425 1341 6 hb., 0 7245 1342 4 pb.

At first sight, an edited collection of autobiographical essays by sixteen prominent American and Canadian philosophers is not the most attractive of prospects. Intellectual autobiography is a genre in which legitimate pride and satisfaction in achievement can all too easily turn into self-aggrandisement or smug accounts of 'my brilliant career'. The contributors do, however, succeed in resisting that temptation, though it has to be said that some (notably Douglass Kellner and, to a lesser degree, Sandra Harding) do not entirely escape the trap of supplying annotated personal bibliographies. The sixteen authors demonstrate in various ways both that the personal is philosophical and that

the philosophical is deeply embedded in the personal. Philosophy is always-already in the world. The reminder that this is the case came with the wake-up call of 9/11, which, as Yancy puts it in his introduction, ‘woke us from our hyperreal slumber’. This sounds very much like a last goodbye to Baudrillard and all that. This time it’s for real, so what are the responsibilities of philosophy and philosophers? When, in 1755, an earthquake devastated Lisbon, Voltaire famously concluded in *Candide* that philosophers and others should ‘cultivate our gardens’. What do we do after 9/11?



Yancy and his contributors all conclude that philosophy must assume and work with its worldiness, with its being-in-the-world. This implies that philosophers must come to terms with their own worldliness. Autobiography is one way of doing so. This concentration on the self and its emergence implies neither sterile narcissism nor a simplistic notion of selfhood. No one here is arguing that the self is a transcendental source of meaning or even an absolute starting point. As John J. Stuhr has it, a person *is* a history. The underlying consistency of a self is that of a narrative, of what MacIntyre calls the narrative unity of a life. This does not mean that the self is a starting point, or a cogito that exists outside time; still less does it mean that particular selves are destined to become philosophers – that choice of vocation is often the contingent effect of an encounter with a book, a teacher or an institution. A life or a self is never a finished project. It is a contingent ‘adventure’ (Sandra Harding) that is narratively temporal and historically dynamic. Few psychotherapists would disagree. In a few of these essays, the authors come close to or even flirt with the later Foucault’s notion of an aesthetics of existence, though none endorses his advocacy of a combination of S&M, heavy drugs and ‘extreme experiences’. In this perspective, the old ‘life and/or works’ dichotomy collapses as the two merge into a single project that never ends.

The various authors supply vivid and often very moving accounts of the vexed question of affirmative action in universities, of struggles over sexism and racism, of the horrors of the APA’s annual conference-cum-slave-market. Yancy offers a major contribution on doing ‘philosophy in a black skin’, whilst Charles W. Mills nicely pinpoints the inherent instability of all ‘racial’ categories. In the Jamaica where he grew

up, he is a ‘red’ man; when he teaches in the USA, he becomes a ‘black’ man. Harding, who graduated in 1956, tells of the trials of living in the dismal age of the feminine mystique. Lorraine Code speaks of the difficulty of being at once an apprentice and a ‘faculty wife’ (and what a ghastly phrase that was/is). For her, studying and then teaching philosophy was a way of escaping the life of a stay-at-home mother as much as an expression of any intellectual desire.

Some of the details of these lives in philosophy are at once amusing, terribly moving and human, all too human. George Yancy’s childhood prayer is quite irresistible, and could raise some interesting theological debates: ‘And God bless the devil. Help him to be a better person.’ A young Sandra Harding tried to read the library in alphabetical order... and got, she thinks, to ‘M’. Similarly, Linda Martín Alcoff spent a lot of her youth reading ‘classic novels’, mechanically and rather like the Autodidact in Sartre’s *Nausea*. They weren’t the only ones.

The variety of positions held by the contributors is remarkable, ranging as they do from feminist epistemology and ‘standpoint epistemology’ (Nancey Murphy, Lorraine Code, Nancy Tuana) to philosophies of race and ethnicity (Yancy, Mills), ethics (Lachs, Stuhr), philosophy of religion (Murphy, Nicholas Rescher) and pragmatism (Joseph Margolis). The range of standpoints is testimony to the pluralist vitality of transatlantic thought, even though most if not all contributors express a certain unease about its state of health. Many also express a certain weariness with contemporary orthodoxies. The linguistic turn is described by Lachs as ‘the folly of academics’. For Margolis, the hyperactivity of some forms of postmodernism (Foucault, Derrida) ‘obscures the philosophical doldrums of our end-of-century. We are marking time, waiting for a

new infusion.' For Kellner, 'reaction and retrenchment' set in with analytic philosophy; worse still, continental philosophy has segregated itself into circles in which specific philosophers are revered as the Voice of Truth, Derrida being its most voluble spokesman. The underlying cause of the malaise is not purely philosophical. Despite the emphasis on the need for a philosophy that is 'steeped in the real world' (Yancy), which definitely suggests a certain optimism, there is sometimes a quiet note of something bordering on despair. Looking back at her formative years, when government grants were easily available and when tuition at Florida State was cheap, Alcoff – a 'Latina' from a poor background – remarks: 'These days, I doubt if I would have made it.' And would Yancy – born one generation away from institutionalized segregation – now make it from the despised housing projects of North Philadelphia to the

philosophy department at Duquesne? Would he now make it from the street to the faculty? Like Alcoff, I somehow doubt it.

9/11 was no simulacrum. For many of the contributors it was a traumatic reminder that philosophy is embedded in the world, and cannot go on living in denial or bad faith. The echoes of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are deafening, and it is perhaps significant that so many contributors first encountered philosophy in one of its phenomenological–existentialist guises. Yancy strikes a similar note in his introduction, where he contends that philosophers have a responsibility to help create new habits of thought 'in the service of a more pluralistic, democratic and just world culture'. He adds: 'perhaps philosophy has a responsibility toward creating authentically rich values.' Surely the only contentious word here is that hesitant 'perhaps'.

David Macey

Another dogma of empiricism?

Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 2002. ix + 190 pp., £23.50 hb., 0 674 00905 3.

The fact/value dichotomy – the theory that statements of fact are objective and verifiable, whereas evaluative claims are mere matters of opinion and subjective – has been a fundamental tenet of a great deal of modern philosophy. It is questionable whether Putnam is right to suggest that it originates with Hume; like many analytical philosophers Putnam is somewhat casual when it comes to history. Nevertheless, Putnam is undoubtedly correct that the fact/value dichotomy has been a fundamental article of faith of Hume's empiricist and positivist successors in the twentieth century. Perhaps, Putnam muses at one point, it should even be regarded as another 'dogma of empiricism'.

The issue of fact and value is usually discussed in ethics, where the main concern is with the nature of values. Putnam reverses this. Most of his work over the years has been in philosophy of language, metaphysics and philosophy of mind. His main focus in this book is on the concept of a 'fact'. This proves to be a suggestive and fruitful approach.

Putnam starts by recounting the history of attempts to distinguish logical truths from matters of fact in positivist and empiricist philosophy, culminating in Quine's celebrated abandonment of the analytic/synthetic distinction as an untenable 'dogma of empiricism'. On this basis, Putnam goes on to question the very notion of 'fact' as it has been developed

in empiricist philosophy. No clear-cut separation of facts from values is possible; the two are inextricably connected in most contexts. This is true even for what are normally regarded as the ethically neutral facts of science, mathematics and logic. For even in these areas, evaluative considerations of what is 'coherent' or 'rational' play an ineliminable role in determining what is to be accepted as 'objective' and as 'fact'. Indeed, following Dewey and other pragmatists, Putnam argues that 'value and normativity permeate all experience'. But empiricist philosophers and their analytic successors have been 'determined to shut their eyes to the fact that judgements of coherence, simplicity, beauty, naturalness, and so on, are presupposed by physical science.... Yet *coherence* and *simplicity* and the like are *values*.' As Putnam puts it, 'epistemic values are values too'.

The entanglement of facts and value is even more evident in the realm of ethics. Putnam focuses on what have come to be called 'thick ethical concepts', such as 'rude' or 'courageous'. Concepts like these cut right across the fact/value divide. They combine both an evaluative and a descriptive aspect (in contrast to 'thin' concepts, such as 'good', 'right' or 'ought' and their opposites, where the descriptive content is minimal). With thick concepts, sometimes the descriptive aspect, sometimes the evaluative one may

be to the fore, but this sort of concept presumes a particular moral perspective and can be used only from within it. In characterizing a person's behaviour as 'rude', for example, I am not simply giving a neutral and factual description of it, I presuppose a moral framework without which the concept would be incomprehensible.

These arguments raise important issues. Putnam mainly stresses their critical and negative impact, particularly on what he sees (rather narrowly) as 'positivism' and its legacy. Indeed, it is a symptom of the restricted range of his philosophical horizons that pretty well all his targets of criticism are rolled up under this heading. At one point even poor old Habermas gets treated as a 'positivist'.

What Putnam is proposing as an alternative to the fact/value dichotomy is less clear. His positive account of the nature of facts and values and of the relation between them is sketchy. Dewey and other pragmatists are invoked from time to time, but what pragmatism actually means in this area is never spelled out in any detail. For his main example of an alternative and more satisfactory approach Putnam turns to the field of economics and to the ideas of Amartya Sen. Economics is a field in which the fact/value dichotomy has long ruled as orthodoxy. With the rise of neoclassical economics in the 1870s, mainstream economics abandoned any attempt to ground economic value in objective and naturalistic measures of the sort for which classical economists like Adam Smith and Marx were searching with the labour theory of value. Economic value is now regarded as a function of mere preference alone. It thus becomes subjective and arbitrary. The effect of this is to exclude any concern with ethical questions from the realm of economics. Economics is no longer supposed to have anything to do with questions of welfare or human good.

Putnam shows how the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy is fundamental to the quite different approach of welfare economics, of which Sen is a leading exponent. Sen's area is development economics, where the conventional wisdom has been that the sole priority is to raise monetary income and economic output. Sen argues that we have wider economic goals. Sen is no revolutionary. He is arguing for what will seem common sense to most liberal-minded people: namely, that questions of welfare and equality should figure on the agenda of economic planners. Existing economic rationality, however, excludes such ethical concerns, and this is standardly justified on the basis of the fact/value dichotomy. In opposition to this, Sen maintains that ethical and economic questions are

inextricably bound up together. As Putnam explains, he insists that we should

think about what functionings form part of our and other cultures' notions of a good life and to investigate just how much freedom to achieve various of those functionings various groups of people in various situations actually have. Such an approach will require us to stop compartmentalizing 'ethics' and 'economics' ...

Putnam gives little more than a brief overview of Sen's work, but this is clear and thought-provoking and it whets one's appetite for more. For that, however, one must go to Sen's own, highly readable, writing (for example, *On Ethics and Economics*, 1987). Putnam's book is a collection of popular lectures and academic papers which vary considerably in quality and style. Issues tend to get dealt with in a somewhat accidental and haphazard manner; arguments are often not adequately developed and followed through. Nevertheless, the book does a good job of presenting the issues in clear and accessible terms. It contains a strong and stimulating line of argument, put forward with all the verve and flair one has come to expect from this author.

Sean Sayers

Riddling

Kyriaki Goudeli, *Challenges to German Idealism: Schelling, Fichte and Kant*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2002. 232 pp. £45.00 hb., 1 4039 0122 8.

Literature on German idealism in English mainly comprises either austere scholarly monographs on main representatives of the movement (especially Kant and Hegel) or historical and descriptive accounts of it. On rare occasions one encounters inspiring and controversial studies on Kant and Hegel, but one can hardly find similarly fruitful and challenging readings of Fichte and Schelling.

Goudeli's book is an attempt at filling this gap, due to the original narrative it offers on Schelling, and especially on the so-called 'middle period' of his oeuvre. On the one hand, the work seeks to deliver itself from the spectre of Hegel and his impact on subsequent interpretations of German idealism. On the other hand, though, the attentive reader won't fail to recognize the – often indirect – presence of Hegel, on the level of a subtle critique of Hegel's interpretations of the thinkers considered. Goudeli attributes para-

mount importance to the possibilities opened up by the reinterpretation of Schelling with which the book culminates. Despite a recent revival of Schellingian studies, Schelling remains in the margin of current theoretical debates. It is a merit of this book – and a challenge to contemporary academic practice – that it adopts a critical distance from both Deleuzian and psychoanalytic interpretations of Schelling.

The book is divided into two parts, 'The Logic of Experience' and 'The Logogriph of Experience'. The first is dedicated to Kant and Fichte, while the second – more than half of the book – comprises four chapters on Schelling's early and middle-period philosophy.

According to Goudeli, Kant should be considered the first modern thinker who systematically conceptualized the notion of experience, setting the scene and the conditions for subsequent discussions of the concept. In Goudeli's view this occurs by Kant 'sharply distinguishing between Reason's legitimate and illegitimate provinces' and the task she accordingly ascribes to her book is to put a challenge to the alleged 'illegitimacy' of certain provinces. By inquiring, 'how are a priori synthetic judgments possible?', Kant objectifies the very notion of experience. Although spontaneity plays a crucial role in the formation of the concepts of the understanding, as their presupposition, it is nevertheless restricted to the realm of cognitive experience. Spontaneity thus loses its dynamic force and becomes a transcendental concept, a mere 'logical presupposition for the possibility of experience'.

Goudeli then moves into Kant's *Critique of Judgment* as a possible source of a different account of spontaneity and therefore of experience. Preoccupied with the 'contingent' particular, reflective judgement leaves a space open for an interplay between the 'subject and its contingent representations'. However, reflective judgement does not escape the limits of transcendental logic. For although the laws of the understanding do not explain the contingent, the latter should conform to them nonetheless.

The third chapter focuses on Fichte. Despite Fichte's attempt to escape Kant's representational mode of thinking by exploring the conditions of the transcendental unity of apperception, Goudeli shows, he did not manage to escape its trap, remaining thus within the limits of transcendental logic. In the context of Fichte's philosophy, the latter becomes the 'logic of the will' replacing the Kantian 'logic of the concepts'. Although Fichte's notion of productivity – like Kant's concepts of spontaneity and free play – can be seen as anticipatory of a possible transgression of the transcen-

dental notion of experience, both thinkers restrained their insights, remaining within the boundaries of 'the logic of experience'.

The second section of the book begins with an exploration of Schelling's early writings where he develops his system of identity. However, according to Goudeli, it is Schelling's middle period that is of special interest since it is the period in which he breaks with his system of identity, abandoning as well his transcendental point of view. This transition can be traced to 'Schelling's trilogy', *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), *Ages of the World* (1811, 1813, 1815) and *Deities of Samothrace* (1815). Goudeli argues that both Hegel's and Heidegger's accounts of Schelling are 'monochromatic interpretations' of his thought, in the sense that even when they deal with Schelling's middle writings, they neglect this very transition.

Schelling's self-criticism sets the ground for what Goudeli sees as the transition from the 'logic of experience' to the 'logogriph of experience'. What distinguishes Schelling from Hegel's alleged overcoming of 'transcendental logic' is the fact that he escapes the trap of speculative thought by expanding the horizon of experience to include – and also to be conditioned by – the nexus of living forces that constitute the universe, the nature and the human being. This is not tantamount to a repudiation or abandonment of logic. Quite the contrary, Goudeli's reading of Schelling reveals a hidden aspect of logic, namely logic's theurgic interaction and interplay with the 'forces of chaos'. Indeed, logic not only *experiences* but also actively participates in the cosmic enigma, and in this sense it becomes a 'logogriph'.

Schelling uses the term 'logogriph' – literally the 'logic of the riddle' – just once, in a footnote of his book on freedom. Goudeli's contribution consists in making this originally marginal metaphor central to a reinterpretation of Schelling's oeuvre, which serves as the foundation for a critique of the philosophical foundations of modernity. Traditional philosophical concepts of identity, unity, reason, intellectual intuition and the absolute lose their fixed and rigid meaning, acquiring instead both a plasticity and an elasticity, or, in Goudeli's words 'an allegorical and transitive unity'. Longing nurtures the will-to-love, initiates movement and *is* simultaneously chaos. Experience ceases to be a static object for observation and expands its limits to the realm of the unconscious and to abysmal and creative powers.

Vasiliki Tsakiri