REVIEWS

By Jingo

Finding The Right Level

John MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire, Manchester University Press, 1984, 288pp., £25 hb

MacKenzie's book is one of that kind that takes a debate which has been going on in papers, articles and reviews, and tries to assemble a definite thesis out of the debate. It is a compilation of a case, and has the many virtues of that. Its purpose is to respond to the Abercrombie and Turner thesis that the nineteenth century does not evidence a simple 'dominant ideology'. (Whether many Marxists meant by 'dominant ideology' anything like the notion they attack is another matter.)

MacKenzie's reply is to compile a huge array of areas within which what he calls a 'core ideology' of imperialism is present. His array is striking, and a lot of the material is quite fascinating. He covers music halls, Exhibitions, early cinema, school textbooks, picture postcards, cigarette cards, juvenile literature, and the direct propaganda of the dozens of imperialist organisations that operated between the 1870s and the 1940s. In all this, MacKenzie's approach shows once again the interesting closeness of a lot of current historical work to the cultural studies tradition, with its concern for popular culture and forms of ideology. If I want now to criticise it, let me first stress both its interest and its importance.

Some reviewers have commented that, for all its delightful range and detail, the book leaves largely untouched the question of the influence of imperialist ideology. This is true, and I suspect MacKenzie would be the first to admit it. There are such severe methodological difficulties in determining the impact of ideologies. He relies largely on the suggestiveness of autobiographical recalls - not irrelevant, but definitely slim, and with many mediations between events, recall, and subsequent claims about influence. But to me the question of the degree of absorption of the ideology is not the central one.

The fact is that MacKenzie says very little to define what he means by a 'core ideology'. At the end it is briefly summed up as encompassing Social Darwinism, nationalism and monarchism. Throughout the book, the most commonly referred to element is racism, and a belief in white superiority. At other times, it is encouragement of migration through showing the 'panoramas' of the Empire. Yet again, it can be via stressing the economic interdependence of Britain and its subject countries. The great Exhibitions, with their combinations of tea, cocoa and rubber stands, their 'native shows' and their information guides to other colourful cultures, seem to have combined them all.

But how do these add up to a 'core ideology'? At times, I felt that any information about Empire, no matter how presented, had to count as a phenomenal expression of the ideology. That is odd. Given that there was an Empire, there was bound to be information and ideas pertaining to it. And some elements in his core seem frankly contradictory. How compatible with Social Darwinism (the form of which, incidentally, is not specified) is the idea he cites of 'service to our brothers abroad'?

Moreover, it is not entirely clear what role this ideology had to play. Surely the spread of imperialism did not depend greatly on convincing the home population, except insofar as emigration was needed. For the rest, MacKenzie's most interesting suggestion (though again not really explored) is that there were endemic links between imperialism and patriotism. But patriotism survives without imperialism, as we know only too well. I just don't find convincing MacKenzie's repeated remarks that Falklands jingoism represents the last flicker of this old ideology. Its links with the specific ideology of the current New Conservatism are far more definite.

In this, therefore, the book suffers some of the vices alongside the virtues of a compilation. It is fascinating to find connected together the Imperial Exhibitions, the cigarette cards and the geography wall displays. But to make sense of the connections, more was needed of the theoretical underpinnings of the cultural studies perspective.

MacKenzie seems more confident in handling some materials than others. His discussions of the role of history and geography teaching is far more analytical than some other parts, for example. And it is just in those that he gets closest to acknowledging and exploring distinctions within his core. In other places, where he is less at ease with the particular materials and the methods required for their analysis, he might have done well to have pointed to specific areas needing further exploration.

A simple example. In his discussion of juvenile literature, he argues (the not uncommon view) that the late nineteenth-century imperialist literature in the Boys' Own Paper, Union Jack and the like transformed the interclass violence of the Penny Dreadfuls into an acceptable interrace form. And since we 'don't care' about killing savages, the violence can be seen as less harmful, more character-building than the Dreadfuls. This is important and could be checked. Suppose we looked at the presentation of killings in, say, Wild Boys of London (the Dreadful that produced most ruling-class angst) compared with good old imperialist Jack Harkaway. The role of the violence within the different narratives could be tested, and the differences explored. But if you begin that kind of investigation in detail, I suspect that MacKenzie's case that his 'core ideology' remained essentially unaltered in the juvenile literature right into the comics of the 1940s and 1950s will look decidedly shaky.

Still, these kinds of criticism, hopefully, are contributions to the next stage in the debate. MacKenzie has done a service in making possible, through his well-organised and well-written book, exactly these kinds of disputes. I wish it didn't cost so much. It's hard to make it required reading for students at that price. I await hopefully a paperback edition so that the fruitful crossovers between history, cultural studies and ideology-theory can be developed on its basis.

Martin Barker

Philosophy in History

Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (eds.), Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, 1984, 403pp, £27.50 hc, £7.95 pb

In recent years there have been two trends visible in British and American philosophy, which indicate the possible emergence of new attitudes among philophers to the history of their discipline. One has been the use, by philosophers trained broadly in the analytical tradition, of historical studies as a resource to make quite radical interventions in current philosophical debate, to re-orient discussion and attack dominant prejudices. The works of Richard Rorty, Alasdair MacIntyre and Ian Hacking on, respectively, epistemology, ethics and the philosophy of mathematics, are prominent examples. The second trend has been a more diverse and disparate movement within British academic philsophy to turn towards more serious and sustained historical study. This movement found expression in a Royal Institute of Philosophy conference on the history of philosophy, at Lancaster in 1983, and in the subsequent formation of the British Society for the History of Philosophy. The volume under review serves to represent both these trends. It contains work by Rorty, MacIntyre and Hacking, along with contributions by social and political philosophers Charles Taylor, John Dunn and Quentin Skinner, and others. Its failings stem from the fact that it adequately represents the methodological diversity and confusion of intentions manifested in the second trend, while lacking the clear aims and radical intentions of the former.

There is nothing necessarily radical, or even novel, about philosophers addressing themselves to history, if by that is meant simply discussing the texts of dead philosophers. They have long been doing that, though with varying degrees of hermeneutical sophistication. Nor is there necessarily anything philosophically significant about careful historical research into the thought of individuals or traditions. Such studies may be historically interesting, though the contributors to this volume who attempt them make no attempt to defend them on those grounds, and show in general a lack of awareness of historiographical argument. The important question, in the eyes of readers of Radical Philosophy, is likely to be the use to which the results of historical enquiry are put, to pose radical questions, suggest new perspectives, and challenge the current structure of academic philosophy. The contributors generally make gestures in this direction, but with varying degrees of boldness and success.

Taylor and MacIntyre for example clearly have something quite ambitious in mind; the former with his suggestion that a historically-oriented philosophy could serve as a form of radical social and cultural criticism, the latter with his argument that history of philosophy has a privileged role within the discipline in enabling us to interpret historical change and discontinuity. These views contrast markedly with the implicitly conservative stance of the editorial introduction, where the fact that the past must be interpreted in the light of present concerns is taken to imply that those concerns can only be those current in contemporary academic philosophy, and hence that we must continue to write 'histories' of 'epistemology', the 'mind/-body problem', etc. The contrast here relates to a fundamental argument about the role of the history of philosophy, which deserves to be treated at much greater depth than it is. The major disappointment of this volume lies in the fact that writers such as Rorty and Hacking, whose historical researches have had significant impact on current philosophical debate, contribute 'historiographical reflections' to the first part of the book, in which they survey the different genres of historical writing, but make few strong recommendations. On the other hand, the 'case studies' included in Part II are on limited and specialised areas of philosophy, and generally make very little connection with the issues discussed in Part I.

The volume indicates the ways in which the current movement in history of philosophy is looking towards other disciplines, and other national philosophical traditions, for models of how to proceed. Recent developments in the history of science are held up as a model in several papers. The work of Thomas Kuhn is repeatedly cited, but there are substantial disagreements (as between Rorty, Krüger and Hacking) as to what Kuhn has achieved. My own view, as an historian of science, is that history of science may have much to teach the history of philosophy in terms of historiographical methods; but that historians of philosophy will probably wish to maintain a closer and more dialectical relationship with philosophy itself than historians of science have managed to maintain with the sciences. As regards the influence of Continental philosophical traditions, the Germans are much better represented here than the French. Several of the contributors are German, and the work of Hegel, Heidegger and Gadamer is prominently discussed. Foucault is also cited several times, but surprisingly there is no reference to Derrida. Given Derrida's role in French reflection on the history of philosophy, and given his impact on American literary criticism, where similar

issues of the definition of a traditional canon, and of proper methods of interpretation, are at stake, this may mark a missed opportunity for the history of philosophy.

In general, this volume is a worthy representative of current debate on the history of philosophy. The papers are of uniformly high competence and readability, and the volume is well produced. In its diversity of views and approaches, the book is illustrative of the crucial point at which the history of philosophy appears to stand. It is far from certain that the trends I have mentioned will amount to anything, but there are some signs that (in the right hands) the historical approach could be capable of significantly re-shaping the discipline of philosophy in its present academic form.

This book is the first in a promising-looking series entitled 'Ideas in Context', to be published 'with the support of the Exxon Education Foundation'. We can only be appropriately grateful.

Jan Golinski

Marcuse's Unfinished Legacy

Douglas Kellner, Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism, Macmillan, 1984, 505pp, £22.50 hb, £8.96 pb

This is the fourth serious study of Marcuse to be published in as many years. It is also the longest, the most comprehensive, and probably the most sympathetic to date. And while there is little in its interpretations of Marcuse's main works which is in itself surprising or new, the comprehensiveness, lucidity and coherence of its exposition alone should establish it as the standard reference work on its subject for the foreseeable future. Certainly, it supercedes Schoolman's idiosyncratic The Imaginary Witness (Free Press, 1980) as a source for a detailed overall account of Marcuse's life-work. However, while Kellner has conducted a number of interviews with Marcuse on the topic of competing interpretations of his work, he has not had access to the various unpublished manuscripts on aesthetic questions discussed in Katz's Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation (Verso, 1982).

The basis of Kellner's success in presenting a unified exposition of Marcuse's diverse and often seemingly inconsistent output lies in his decision to treat it, from beginning to end, as "a series of revisions and renewals of Marxian theory" (p. 5), rather than, for example, as a series of radical speculative excursions which simply draw upon aspects of the Marxist tradition as one source among others. The attempt to 'reconstruct' Marxism was, it is argued, the 'fundamental determinant' of Marcuse's life and work (p. 368). And it is maintained that Marcuse's appropriation of progressive elements from other parts of the Western tradition was always carried out in the context of a 'radical questioning of Marxism from within' (p. 374).

The interpretive results of this approach are impressive. And Kellner provides detailed readings of all Marcuse's main writings as philosophical articulations of problems posed for Marxism by the major social and political transformations of the century. In particular, he reasserts the centrality of Soviet Marxism to the development of Marcuse's thought, both as a counterpart to One-Dimensional Man and as a classical example of dialectical criticism. And he emphasises the way in which Marcuse made significant modifications to his position after 1965 in response to political developments in Europe and the United States by returning to a more classical Marxist conception of the political dynamic associated with the development of the basic contradictions of capitalism, while at the same time augmenting this conception with both a new concept of revolution and an extended, libertarian, and heavily aestheticised idea of socialism - developments which, in his final essay, he extended further by drawing upon Bahro's idea of 'surplus consciousness' - the emancipatory counterpart of his own earlier conception of surplus repression.

It is in this final, and it is argued, unjustly neglected, phase of Marcuse's development (1965-1979) that Kellner locates his most substantial achievements. In particular, he singles out 'his projections of aspects of a new society and demands that we develop new visions of human life in our struggles for a better society' (p. 319). The persistent if flawed process of theoretical reconstruction of the previous forty years is seen to reach fruition in Marcuse's attempts to formulate new political strategies to further the advance of the new left. And whatever the particular deficiencies of these strategies, and of certain aspects of the theoretical revisions upon which they are based, Marcuse's achievement is rightly held to be that through these activities he preserved and fostered a tradition of non-dogmatic dialectical criticism in conjunction with the project to develop Marxism in response to changing historical conditions.

My main criticism of the book is that Kellner is prone to overemphasise Marcuse's, admittedly significant, achievement of persistently maintaining a critical attitude towards both radical theory and practice, at the expense of providing sufficient analysis of the implications for our understanding of the value of Marcuse's work of the major deficiencies which he acknowledges characterise it. With regard to this problem, Marcuse's legacy appears to be not merely 'unfinished', as Kellner suggestions in his conclusion (and what theoretical legacy is not unfinished?), but deeply problematic. Not simply in the sense that, as Kellner notes, Marcuse's writings exhibit 'a very uneasy mixture of tendencies' and a number of essential 'theoretical ambiguities' (p. 373), but in the sense that, as Kellner's account itself demonstrates, it is precisely Marcuse's readiness to make fundamental theoretical revisions in response to changes in political conditions (which Kellner values as perhaps his greatest merit) that is responsible for these tensions and ambiguities.

This problem - the problem of Marcuse's failure to mediate his 'philosophical' and more basic sociological revisions of Marxism with his perception of political developments via a sufficiently concrete historical social theory - throws doubt upon the value of another of the achievements claimed for hiswork by Kellner: its preservation of the classical role of the philosopher. For, arguably, it is precisely the philosophical cast of Marcuse's work which is the root cause of its notorious theoretical and political instability, despite the underlying continuity of its project.

Kellner is aware that the philosophical cast of Marcuse's brand of social theory is a source of 'one of its greatest weaknesses - the lack of adequate concern for detail and particularity' (p. 367), but he does not face up to the difficulty created by his simultaneous assertion that it also 'constitutes ... one of his greatest strengths - the ability to grasp the essential'. For it is only possible to hold these two propositions simultaneously on the basis of an undialectical (and non-Marcusean) concept of essence. The implication of this would seem to be that, while it is certainly true that Marcuse 'preserved the classical role of the philosopher as someone who is concerned with what is important in human life and who aims to conceptualise what is essential to human liberation' (p. 366), it is also the case that, despite his own injunction to synthesise philosophy with empirical analysis, he ultimately preserved the role of the philosopher as someone who is concerned with 'philosophical' as opposed to 'scientific' concepts and analyses, along with it. In this sense, his later works (which Kellner values most) represent a continued, and problematic, retreat from, rather than a return to, the 1930s Frankfurt conception of critical theory which Marcuse was

so active in developing, despite both their explicit project and the presence within them of certain more orthodox elements of Marxism than can be found in some of the intermediate works.

Overall, though, Kellner's account is meticulously researched and referenced and operates at a sophisticated level of theoretical analysis - providing, for example, the most nuanced examination of Marcuse's earliest work (1922-1933) yet available. It also contains the most complete bibliography of Marcuse's own writings so far, superceding both Schoolman and Katz in this respect. The persistence of the problem of evaluating Marcuse's legacy is more a reflection of the continued centrality of his deepest concerns to the project for a 'renewal' of Marxism than of any particular failing on Kellner's part to provide an adequate account of his work.

Peter Osborne

Marxist Aesthetics

Pauline Johnson, Marxist Aesthetics: the foundations within everyday life for an enlightened consciousness, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, 168pp, £13.95 hc

Everything about art, Adorno was fond of reminding us, has become problematic; not least the idea of aesthetics. The idea of a specifically Marxist aesthetics is doubly problematic insofar as the very idea of aesthetics seems to involve some kind of claim for the 'autonomy' of its subject-matter from the social conditions of its production - three times problematic in fact, if the disreputable political history of the idea is taken into account. Yet, perhaps for these very reasons, it has been central, in one way or another, to that process of deepening, expanding and 'revising' Marxism which has constituted the 'critical' Marxist tradition of the last fifty years.

Pauline Johnson's Marxist Aesthetics sets out with the aim of establishing the 'broader significance' for the development of Marxism of the 'Western' Marxist tradition of aesthetic theory which runs from Lukacs's work on realism in the early 1930s, through Benjamin, Brecht and Lukacs's later work up to the final works of Adorno and Marcuse. Against Perry Anderson's notoriously negative judgement on this tradition in Considerations on Western Marxism (1976), it is argued that it 'was responsible for the preservation and exploration of the vital issue of the practical possibility for ideological struggle' (p. 3) after the virtual collapse of the workers' movement in Europe, in the context of the restructuring of capitalism; and that it contributed to 'the articulation of the goals of a socialist society' (p. 4). The main aim of the book, however, is to produce a critical assessment of the tradition from a perspective sympathetic to what the author takes to be its fundamental project: the attempt 'to determine the basis of the emancipatory impact of the work of art' (p. 1). Both the strength of the book and all that which is deeply problematic about it derive from the restricted sense in which Johnson interprets this task. For, as the book's subtitle indicates, it is not, strictly speaking, concerned with aesthetics as such at all, so much as with the ontological and sociological presuppositions required of any aesthetic theory which attributes an 'emancipatory' or 'enlightening' capacity (the two terms are treated as synonymous) to art. Johnson is concerned with the conditions of reception of art, and treats the problem of aesthetic form, the immanent aesthetic condition for the production of 'emancipatory' art, exclusively from this point of view.

The result of this approach is that considerable light is thrown upon the way in which the aesthetic work at issue is vitiated by the limitations of the more general social theories upon which it is based. But ironically (given the author's initial aim) the main theoretical contributions of the authors in question (Lukacs excepted, to some degree) are obscured. Lukacs alone is judged to have begun satisfactorily to address the problem in which the author is interested, through his postulation of the emergence of the conditions for a universal 'species-consciousness' out of the needs generated by the contradictions of everyday life.

Agnes Heller's conception of 'radical needs', developed on the basis of Lukacs's later work, is taken by Johnson as a yardstick for measuring the relative success of the work of the other authors she discusses. Any contribution they may have made to theorising the 'specificity of the aesthetic' (ironically, the title of Lukacs's work which Johnson most admires) is ignored. The brief, successive analyses of the work of individual authors which make up the substance of the book thus broadly undermines the claim for the significance of the tradition under consideration made at its beginning. For while Benjamin, Brecht, Adorno and Marcuse may have 'preserved' the question of the possibilities for ideological struggle, their actual work is judged to have been woefully inadequate to the task of answering it. So little is Johnson interested in the aesthetic as such that in her chapter on Adorno she does not even refer to his major work on the topic, Aesthetic Theory. (admittedly this was unavailable in translation at the time the book was written. But the possible merit of devoting a chapter to Adorno's work on aesthetics without being able to refer to it must surely be very slight.)

The problem with Johnson's approach is that the question of the ontological and sociological basis of the radical needs which an emancipatory art work might stimulate and articulate cannot be treated independently of the question of the character of the aesthetic object which is to stimulate and articulate them, if, as all the authors with whom she deals maintain, the realm of the aesthetic has any specificity. Furthermore, her emphasis on the 'consciousness of the individual' (p. 1) tends to lead Johnson to seriously misinterpret, and underestimate, certain positions held by the authors she criticises. Thus, to stick with the case of Adorno, although I think there are serious problems with the readings of Brecht and Benjamin offered as well, it is not merely his general theory of the reification of social life which underlies his inability to adequately ground the emancipatory character of art, as Johnson suggests, but his theorisation of the specific place and function of art, as an institutionalised practice, in capitalism. This theorisation led Adorno to deny that art could perform a 'subversive' social function in capitalist societies, however successful 'authentic' modern art might be in preserving and developing the truth of the metaphysical tradition in its restricted cognitive capacity. It is thus most misleading to present Adorno has having 'failed' to establish the subversive character of authentic modern art.

Despite these problems, however, and in certain respects because of them, the book is a stimulating and provocative read. Its final part contains a concise and useful critique of recent attempts to theorise the political effectivity of art from the point of view of Althusser's theory of ideology. This part should be useful to undergraduates who need to confront the still dominant position of Althusserian work in cultural studies. The earlier chapters, however, despite their brevity, cannot really be recommended as introductions to the aesthetic thought of the authors with which they deal. But then at £13.95 for 168 pages with no paperback available, the book is unlikely to be a big seller in college bookshops.

Peter Osborne

Agency and Totality

Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society, Polity Press, 1984, 440pp, £19.50 hc

Like many of the important attempts at synthesis in social theory, Anthony Giddens's new book has the feel of a sustained and comprehensive introduction to key debates and issues in the area. In previous publications he provided more or less elaborate sketches of the same ideas, but here they have gained in depth and range. It is his most thorough work to date.

What Giddens offers is a systematic approach to social theory; that is, a middle way between full blown theoretical systems and the various hermeneutic deconstructions. He seeks to avoid the dogmatism and falsity of the grand sociologies (principally, for Giddens, historical materialism and structural functionalism), but wants to hold on to some notion of structural constraints on social relations. This puts him against subjectivist currents. His attempt to carve a way between rationalism and endless deconstruction is neither original or uncommon, but it is developed with conviction and skill in a variety of more particular theoretical contexts.

Giddens is conversant with the relevant philosophical literature about human action, and he spends some time boxing around his definitions of the knowledgeable human subject. He then concretises his assertions by putting sociological substance into the dialectical desiderata of getting beyond free agency and determinism. This is done in his theory of structuration. Structuration refers to the predominant social rules and resources which constrain individual capacities, but which at the same time enable courses of meaningful interaction. In turn, the central patterns of domination and reproduction are re-affirmed or transformed in and through social practices. Rules and resources are thus said to be intrinsically 'recursive' phenomena, and ones which involve distinct power relations. Amongst the key resources will be those to do with economic 'allocation', but these have no necessary primacy. For Giddens, 'authoritative' resources, and symbolic, legitimating and political practices all have an equal right to be termed structural. Using these variables, he develops historical schemas with which to interpret past societies and 'time-space' differences within global processes. These enable Giddens to theorise tribal, class-divided, and capitalist societies according to the empirical weight of the various rules and resources he cites.

Even this brief flavour of Giddens' package of concepts and neologisms should indicate its attractiveness and prompt possible criticisms. Much hangs on how satisfactory the middle-range level of theorising can be. Giddens spends a lot of time debunking evolutionary and supposedly monocausal theories, and much of this critique is valuable. But the upshot is that his own concepts are bound to remain rather formalistic. Certainly he gives useful examples of the sort of empirical research which seems to fit his rules of sociological method. Yet the subtitle of the book is revealing in that after several presentations of structuration theory this major statement may turn out to be just one more prolegomenon to the real thing! In fact it is essential to his defence of the 'approach' level that no 'ultimate' commitment to causal or ontological primacy be given.

So Giddens will continue to frustrate readers who look for greater logical economy and firmer empirical direction. Has he, they will ask, really produced more than a basketful of new terms for old problems? I sympathise with that line of criticism, but, for the first time in his work, the burden of proof has been firmly passed over to his critics. Giddens knowledgeably and cogently ranges over geography, history and psychology as well as more familiar sociological territory in an effort to show the theoretical unity of the social sciences if taken in the spirit of his perspective. And in breaking down some of the big polarities in social theory, he usefully decomposes several smaller ones (for example between qualitative and quantitative methods, between 'macro' and 'micro' analyses). In that light, Giddens has produced a text which is at once an appropriate synopsis for sociology in the climate of the 1980s, and a distinctive manifesto for what I would call 'critical pluralism'.

Gregor McLennan

Ian Craib, Modern Social Theory, From Parsons to Habermas, Harvester Press, 1984, 230pp, £5.05 pb

At a time when there is available a veritable kaleidoscope of contributions to social theory this book attempts to make sense of the variety by tracing out key lines which both divide and unify the varying approaches.

Craib focuses his exposition and analysis by first spotlighting what he regards as a dilemma. He observes that on the one hand societies and agents are two different types of being or object requiring different types of explanation or understanding. On the other hand, in order to understand social reality he states that we have to understand both, in that societies would not remain in existence without agents and vice versa. From this position it is suggested that Roy Bhaskar's allocation of societies to sociology and agents to psychology is a false division because 'each separate science requires the others to make sense ... such an inclusive "totalising" theory seems ... to be implied in the very enterprise of sociology. However, for whatever reasons, it does not yet seem possible' (p. 27).

Craib observes that most of the theories he deals with have laid claim to being totalising theories and this has given rise to an erroneous fragmentation. In effect they have tried to generalise a theory appropriate to one type of object in the social world to all types of object. The attempt, it is claimed, has led to 'very clear inadequacies in dealing with either agency or societies or both'.

The attempts to totalise, the resulting erroneous fragmentation and the tension between the analysis of social structure and the analysis of social action, sum up the major themes of the book. This is reflected in the divisions of the work. Part II deals with 'Theories of Social Action', which include Talcott Parsons's structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, phenomenological sociology, and ethnomethodology. Part III, 'From Action to Structure', focuses on the linguistic model of structuralism, structuralist Marxism personified in the work of Louis Althusser, and the fragmentation into post-structuralism. In Part IV, 'From Structure or Action, to Structure and Action', Craib moves to the third approach, labelled as critical theory. The works of Georg Lukacs, the Frankfurt School and Jürgen Habermas are assessed as variants of this.

Whereas social action theory is seen to suffer by fragmenting the world through the generalisation of a theory of persons to a theory of societies, structuralism's problems are regarded as lying in the opposite direction by generalising explanations of social structures to agents. Post-structuralism errs in its focus on the embodiment of reality in 'discourse'. Critical theory, although going some way to avoid the former errors, by recognising the independence of both structure and action, is seen to leave the problem unresolved due to an oscillation between the two.

Summarised so briefly, the import of Craib's message tends to lose its impact. Yet, as a person who has been on the receiving end of the vagaries of sociology, I find Craib's exposition and analysis useful because they 'treat' the varying paradigms not as discrete entities, but focus them around the aforementioned themes; themes which epitomise the problems which have continually plagued the discipline.

His book does not reveal solutions other than a tentative suggestion which advocates that the different approaches in social theory could be organised together by linking the 'teleological "door" of agency to the "structure frame" of society', via language theory and psychoanalytic theory. However, the main aim of the work is clearly concerned with presenting an appraisal of the contributions to social theory, together with their associated problems. To this end, the work appears as a very useful introductory text which, because it comes equipped with extensive references, also makes a useful source-book.

Paul A. Fox-Strangeways

R. Hinton Thomas, Nietzsche in German Politics and Society, 1890-1918, Manchester University Press, 1983, 146pp, £16.50 hc

'The nearer one gets to the madhouse, the more certain one is to be on the right road to becoming a good European': not Nietzsche but an ultra-nationalist German in 1900 contempuously dismissing Nietzsche. By his searing rhetoric against party politics, religion, morality - and Prussian nationalism - Nietzsche had indeed earned antagonism from conservatives. It is all the more ironic then that when this same conservatism mutated into National Socialism a different Nietzsche became a household god. But this time, it was Nietzsche's elitist rhetoric that was dedicated to the destruction of democratic values.

Thomas's book is a straightforward study of Nietzsche's influence and reputation in Germany from 1890 (when Nietzsche collapsed mentally just as fashionable interest in him spiralled) to 1918. By speaking aphoristically, Nietzsche provided words for the inarticulate but ardent of all persuasions. But, putting the record straight, Thomas describes how socialists, anarchists and even some feminists found inspiration in Nietzsche as a liberator of the individual, while nationalist and völkisch prophets were more likely to be critical. It would appear historically that individualists of the spirit and intellect read most honestly. Neither Franz Mehring, for whom Nietzsche was 'the philosopher of capitalism', the position that became left orthodoxy, nor the racists, who scorned his pro-Jewish remarks, wanted a serious reading. Thomas's book is a valuable resource for understanding Wilhelmine political ideology, intellectual fashion, and the constitution of meaning in highly specific historical settings, when even to name the author was to release an emotional charge. The detailed study of the literature shows how Nietzsche became part of the small change of political discourse. Though atheoretical in approach (for example, Thomas does not venture social explanation for 'popularisation' or 'influence'), the history transcends simplistic identification of Nietzsche with subsequent barbarisms, leaving us to confront both Nietzsche and barbarism in more rational terms.

Roger Smith

Herbert Schnädelbach, Philosophy in Germany 1831-1933, (trans. Eric Matthews), Cambridge University Press, 1984, 265pp, £24 hc, £7.50 pb

This book offers an account of philosophy in Germany, beginning with the collapse of idealism in 1831 and culminating with the establishment of the Third Reich in 1933, as practised and defined by the academy. Thus, important figures such as Marx and Nietzsche are pushed to the periphery, and what, at first, looks like madness in his method - why not place the margins at the centre? - becomes method in his madness as Schnädelbach addresses himself to a history of problems rather than a hagiography of figures, and presents to the reader a deftly constructed picture of post-Hegelian German philosophy, including generous treatment of neglected and discarded schools of thought.

The book is divided into eight chapters dealing with the areas of History, Science, Understanding, Life, Values, and Being. The general scenario which unites the various themes is 'the identity-crisis of German philosophy after Hegel and which still continues even today' (Preface).

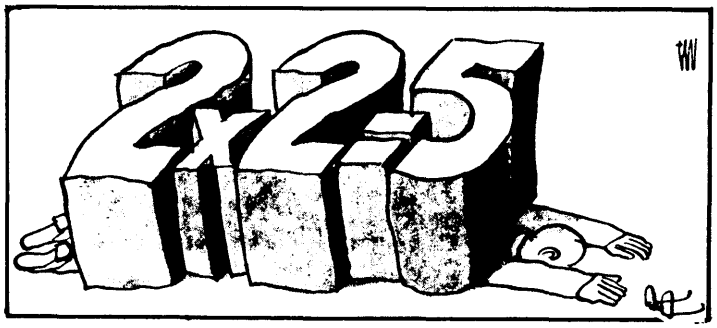
The book does have its omissions (I would have liked a chapter on aesthetics for example), but as a whole it is a first-rate introduction to its topic. As a historian of philosophy Schnädelbach shows himself to be the most able and perspicuous of guides, and the book will not only help to enlarge the self-understanding of any student of philosophy but helps one to place the issues facing a contemporary radical philosophy and its heritage in a historico-philosophical perspective that is greatly illuminating.

Keith Pearson

Mark Poster, Foucault, Marxism and History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information, Polity Press, 1984, 173pp, £16.50 hc, £5.95 pb

There has been a plethora of recent commentary on the work of Michel Foucault, but Mark Poster's book promises something rather more original. He claims to have applied key categories of Foucault's social analysis to the effects of the current revolution in 'information technology'.

The crucial notion here, extrapolated by Poster from Foucault's work, is that of 'mode of information'. This is intended as a new category for the critique of structures of domination in contemporary society, replacing the Marxist analysis of 'mode of production'. The Marxist concept relies on the notion of labour, action on objects by autonomous human subjects; but Foucault's work, the historical analysis of the constitution of the human subject, is seen as having undercut this notion. The alternative analysis of 'mode of information' focuses on the constitution of humans as subjects, through the power-effects of certain 'discourse/practices'. Examples of these 'discourse/practices' include surveillance, punitive discipline, incarceration, medicine and sexuality. It is the fact that domination is exercised through these types of power which provokes resistance by members of the disparate groups constituted as subjects thereby: women, prisoners, racial minorities, mental patients. Their resistance is independent of the organisation of production as such, and may be expected to increase, since Poster claims that the new communications technologies will increase the possibilities for domination via the 'mode of information'.



The problem with this book is that in the event it fails to escape from the current preoccupation with discussing Foucault in the genre of commentary. Substantial sections consist of little more than summaries of Foucault's books, and the coherence of the work is further damaged by (authoritative but arguably irrelevant) accounts of Foucault's relations with Sartre and with Western Marxism. Poster's contribution to extending Foucault's ideas, his notion of a 'mode of information', remains vaguely formulated, and its connections with new communications technology unexplored. Poster is of course correct to suggest that Foucault's emphasis on surveillance, as a key element in the constitution of individual subjectivity, deserves extension in the light of the availability of new surveillance technology; but he has nothing original to say about the social location and application of that technology.

While it might justifiably be said that Foucault's concept of power (positive and creative in its effects, pervasive and mobile in its application) implies that it is wrong to look for the origins of all power in the state, the questions of the relationship between new technologies of surveillance and the large-scale structures of domination in our society remain pertinent, and demand answers. Foucault's work may well have a contribution to make, to an understanding of the relationship between new forms of technology and large-scale regimes of social power, but it will require a sustained and energetic development of his ideas to show this. Surely, it is by using and extending Michel Foucault's work that we can best pay tribute to its fecundity and originality.

Jan Golinski

Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), Criticism and Critical Theory, Edward Arnold, London, 1984, 146pp, £6.95 pb

'More on mapping the field than on resolving boundary disputes': thus the editor outlining this volume's objective. The mapping is fairly conscientious with such current preoccupations of literary studies as feminism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis prominently on view. The result is a generally sound, if somewhat pedestrian, collection of articles which should serve as a useful enough introduction to relative newcomers to the field.

Given the concern for mapping as opposed to engaging in disputes the text has little to offer in the way of surprises, and at times declines into highly self-conscious displays of critical technique. Maud Ellman's Lacanian reading of Chaucer comes into this category, scoring high on ingenuity without ever managing to suggest that the connection between these two figures is anything but extremely contingent. The ultimate value in critical terms of this kind of tour-de-force is very questionable.

Not all contributors are so self-regarding and implicitly élitist. Ian Wright, for example, is quite provocative, adopting an 'emperor's new clothes' approach to deconstruction: 'what does this (Derrida's critique of metaphysics) have to do with literary texts? Nothing'. Wright's reductivism is in the service of a pro-Gadamerian hermeneutics which probably misses the whole point of the iconoclastic approach to literary studies - the calling into question of entrenched ideological and epistemological attitudes - but it is nonetheless refreshing to observe someone rejecting the fairly simplistic correlations of philosophical and literary-critical discourse made by some deconstructionists (cf. Geoffrey Hartman).

Literary studies has become more self-consciously philosophical over the last decade (just as philosophers have been correspondingly more willing to find merit in the critical enterprise) and this volume bears witness to the discipline's continuing search for theoretical grounding, illustrating as it does so the somewhat uneasy nature of this 'historic compromise': especially with figures like Derrida around, happily fomenting boundary disputes. Mapping is an altogether less contentious activity, although perhaps it too has its ideological side: 'agreement can be agreement to differ' remarks Wright. Ah yes, the old pluralist battle-cry! Let's make radicalism safe for democracy?

Stuart Sim

John B. Thompson, Studies in the Theory of Ideology, Polity Press, 1984, 347pp, £25 hc, £7.95 pb

Books on ideology tend to be spread along an axis. At one extreme are ones that work at a very high level of generalisation. These take up such broad philosophical issues as truth, objectivity and relativism. At the other extreme are studies which pretty well assume one theory, and 'grid' it on to the world. There have been very few books in the middle of the axis.

I found this book very useful, on a number of counts. First, it is a serious attempt to make some relationship between the two poles of the broad theoretical, and the close empirical. The theme running through this series of essays is the need for an empirically usable theory of ideology, that has come to terms with modern debates within and about Marxism (though Thompson is somewhat selective about which debates he finds relevant to the task).

The book is particularly useful, secondly, because of its span. Thompson provides a clear introduction to thinkers many of us have been putting off reading for too long, or whom we can't read because they are untranslated. Castoriadis, Lefort, Bourdieu, Ricoeur, Jean Pierre Faye, Pecheux, and Habermas are all dealt with, though the choice of Faye to represent narrative theory is idiosyncratic, to say the least. There is also a very useful critique of Anthony Giddens's theory of 'structuration', important because of the way Giddens has set himself up in business as our contemporary 'synthesist'. (Though I am irritated by homage such as that accorded to Giddens, to the effect that 'despite my stringent criticisms, this work remains one of the most insightful studies of ...' - when nothing of these insights has been indicated.)

Thompson's theme involves three commitments, which are all largely unargued and little explored. He repeatedly insists that the concept of ideology must have reference to the maintenance/masking of domination - this is the concept's 'critical edge', as he calls it. This has to do, he insists, not only with the form of ideas, but also with their content. And he maintains that ideology is embedded in the day-to-day practices of ordinary life. This naturally takes him to discourse analysis, where he tours several competing approaches. On the other hand, it makes the absence of any reference to Gramsci and the discussions of his conceptualisations of ideology very odd, since Gramsci's concept of commonsense was designed precisely to embed ideology in the way Thompson seeks. (Also, for my money, I would have liked to see Thompson tackle Volosinov's different approach to discourse, since the implications of his approach for the idea of domination are important.)

Despite being largely unargued, the three commitments do prove illuminating. For to have clearly drawn out how, for example, the East Anglian discourse analysts (Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew) neglect content of discourse to analyse the ideological force of grammatical forms, is helpful - whether or not they are right to neglect content, and whether or not their analysis is compatible with another level of analysis concerned with content. The same goes for Thompson's critique of Giddens's notion of structuration as 'rule-following'. It illuminates it by showing what it can't do.

For the time being, I think this book will assist. It is well written. It makes no claim to be comprehensive, simply tackling authors Thompson has found most useful. Overarching is a clear influence from Habermas and the speech-act theorists, though Habermas is carefully criticised in two closing chapters. If this is a sample of the new Polity Press's quality, it bodes well indeed.

Martin Barker

John Callaghan, British Trotskyism: Theory and Practice, Basil Blackwell, 1984, 255pp, £19.50 hb

Many modern socialists have sought an alternative to social democracy and Stalinism. Trotskyism can be seen as one such attempt. But, as John Callaghan documents in his very useful study, this attempt has had little success. Hand in hand with a failure to replace or transform social democracy has gone the adoption of distinctly Stalinist characteristics. Furthermore when the various Trotskyist groups have made political advances it has usually been when they have been most open-minded, tolerant and experimental and furthest away from orthodox Trotskyism.

The gravitational pull exerted by Leninism on British Trotskyists is repeatedly revealed by Callaghan. Rosa Luxemburg may have influenced the International Socialists and Marcuse the International Marxist Group but all have ultimately sought to 'Bolshevise' themselves. But what an ambiguous figure Lenin is. He played an important role in the radical rescue of Marxism in the Second International, championing a flexible revolutionary Marxism against Bernstein's revisionist trajectory towards social democracy and Kautsky's rigid orthodoxy. But he was also the author of What is to be Done? (or as some anarchists have called it Who is to be Done?) with its thorough-going centralism. Trotskyism has perpetuated this ambiguity, at its infrequent best fighting the rigidities of Stalinism and developing a living Marxism, yet, with its vision of the omniscient centralized party, predominantly acting as the twin of Stalinism.

To add to their problems, as Callaghan points out, British Trotskyists have accepted uncritically a number of highly dubious theoretical pronouncements from Lenin and Trotsky. In particular he refers to the inadequacies in the Trotskyist analyses of liberal democracy and the consequent naive and politically damaging position that 'parliamentary democracy is a mere sham'. But 'what else', Callaghan asks, 'is to be understood by Trotsky's remark that bourgeois democracy is merely the "hypocritical form of the domination of the financial oligarchy" or Lenin's that it is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class'? (p. 201).

This failure to assess thoroughly the historical and contemporary value of Lenin and Trotsky is also apparent in what Callaghan terms the 'catastrophism' of many of the groups. Convinced that they are witnessing the death agony of capitalism which will automatically generate the classic Bolshevik scenario, the groups develop a vulgar millenarianism, a last days mentality, self-righteous and intolerant. Such dogmatic apriorism, impregnable against fact, disillusions and divides the membership and marginalises the organizations still further.

Much of this emerges in the language of the groups. Hierarchical military images abound: a 'vanguard' develops 'correct strategy' and provides 'leadership' for the 'rank and file'. A vicious and vitriolic polemical style is employed, much of it against other socialists, much of it personal and insulting. Analysis is rhetorical, ritualistic and cliché-ridden.

With regard to the future, Callaghan hopes Trotskyism can put its own house in order. He stresses the need for democratic organisation, for an end to conspiratorial manipulation, and for a rejection of 'the belief that a single revolutionary party contains within itself all the vision and strategic wisdom'. The 'socialist revolution', he maintains, 'must be based on a plurality of organisations and movements' (p. 204). Callaghan has only a passing reference to Beyond The Fragments by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, which, with its clear anti-vanguardist approach, has been seen both as a creative continuation and a partial rejection of Trotsky's legacy. Perhaps this reflects a residue of orthodox Trotskyism in Callaghan? Whether this is so or not he has produced a most useful book, written in a generous spirit.

Vincent Geoghegan

Rogers Brubaker, The Limits of Rationality, Allan and Unwin, 1984, 119pp, £12.95 hc, £4.95 pb

'Weber's ideas about rationality are central to his sociological work, and they are central to his moral perspective. But these ideas are neither easily accessible nor easily understandable, in part because Weber never systematized them, in part because his work is usually encountered piecemeal and seldom studied in its entirety. Brubaker reconstructs Weber's rich but fragmented discussion of rationalism and rationalization in a systematic fashion, thereby illuminating his empirical and moral diagnosis of modernity...'

Thus says the blurb to this short book; and it has to be said that Brubaker indeed achieves his object. He has written a useful textbook with such admirable clarity of expression that any student should be able to follow his argument.

One of the most irritating things about Weber is the generality of application of the key term 'rational'. In a single book Brubaker finds sixteen apparent meanings of it. Nonetheless he thinks there is no real problem here as long as the sense 'rational' is given is distinguished in each sphere of its application. Thus he covers in sequence the following topics: 'capitalism and calculation'; 'legal formalism'; 'bureaucratic administration'; and 'asceticism'. Brubaker pays particular attention to Weber's distinction between formal and substantive rationality, and the tension between them. The spread of rationalisation in modern life refers us to the formal sense. Science can trace this development and note its inhospitality to the values of equality and fraternity; but, because scientific reason is itself incapable of defining substantive rationality, this is its limit.

In the last chapter - on Weber's moral vision - Brubaker explores Weber's deeply ambivalent attitude towards this rationalised world, and his conviction that conflict and tension in social life is inevitable.

It is a little unfortunate that this book appears in a series entitled 'Controversies in Sociology' because this might give rise to expectations that the debate over Weber will be central. In fact, the book is almost entirely devoted towards sympathetic exposition. In that, it is very useful.

C.J. Arthur

David L. Hall, Eros and Irony: a Prelude to Philosophical Anarchism, SUNY Press, 1982, 271pp, no price
Alphonso Lingis, Excesses: Eros and Culture, SUNY Press, 1983, 166pp, no price
Jacob Needleman, The Heart of Philosophy, RKP, 1984, 237pp, £4.95 pb

Each of these books breaks with the classical Western tradition of philosophy teaching; each author is an American philosophy professor, and each sees the revaluation of eros as vital. But there the similarities end. For Needleman, eros is contrasted with ego, and is the impulse behind everyday thought and feeling leading us towards an ideal reality; it is a good thing, and what philosophy ought to be about. Hall's eros is the same (that is, Platonic), but is not such a good thing, needing Socratic irony to recognise the limits to what we can say or do. Lingis's eros is the most erotic of the three, leading off from Lacan's remark that de Sade's bedroom is the equal of the Academy or the Lyceum.

David Hall's is a serious, sensible, academic text that should be read with interest by those pursuing philosophy within the tradition of A.N. Whitehead, a heady cosmic embrace modulated by keen critical rationality. But be not deceived by the title: there is little that is erotic or ironic or anarchic about the contents.

Joseph Needleman has a Tolstoyan vision, that all will be well if, and only if, the 'great philosophical ideas' are reintegrated into peoples' lives. Back to Plato; and beyond to his teacher Socrates; and beyond to his teacher Pythagoras - Needleman's history has a consciously mythopoeic quality - and somewhere beyond is eros, the desire for truth, in your life. All this is done so engagingly and caringly as to recall Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance. Philosophy really matters to Needleman, and he communicates this most effectively. What will be of particular interest to teachers of philosophy over here is the account of the author's teaching philosophy classes at the San Francisco University High School. These start unpropitiously, verging on self-parody: 'I began by asking them to write down the one question they would put if they were to meet someone really wise - a Moses or a Socrates or a Buddha.' But by the end students and parents and Needleman himself have all learnt more about themselves and begun the Platonic process of remembering. It doesn't sound much like the 'A' level Philosophy syllabus, but could valuably complement it.

For all its mildly radical flavour, inveighing against 'museums called philosophy departments', Needleman is perfectly 'safe' and respectable; he even gets embarrassed (which one would have thought unnecessary in San Francisco) over the homosexuality of Alcibiades and Socrates. Excesses is a different matter: even the author's name seems a Joycean conflation of 'lingam' and 'penis'. Our hero perambulates in primitive parts pondering on polymorphous perversity in pungently purple prose. Lingis meets savages and decides that Freud is questionable; watches Bali dancing and meditates on Nietzschean metaphysics; holds up Platonism to the erotic carvings of Khajuraho and finds it wanting; feels hatred for a beggar at Jajanta and discovers the limitations of Aristotle; loves a Javanese boy and ponders the Nichomachean Ethics; is massaged, beside huddled lepers, under a Calcutta bridge and flies back to New York. This is a book that won't make the 'A' level syllabus, but has a richer and fuller humanity than many that are. It might have been even more so had he just got on with a bit of sodomy, rather than becoming entangled with whether sodomy is or is not 'a semiotic term in an aberrant discourse'. Still, that's the white man's burden for you.

John Fauvel

Angela Livingstone, Lou Andreas Salomé, Gordon Fraser, 1984, 256pp, £18.50 hb

Friedrich Nietzsche believed he had found in her a disciple; Rainer Maria Rilke became her first lover; Sigmund Freud recognised her as one of the very few truly free spirits drawn to the early psychoanalytic circles. Lou Andreas Salomé led one of the fullest and most independent lives ever led by a woman in intellectual circles; all the more remarkable for the era in which she lived. Nietzsche, Rilke and Freud were only the three best-known of her admirers and confidantes. The list of well-known artists, writers and intellectuals impressed by her personality and influenced by her writing is a very long one indeed.

This is the third substantial biography of Lou to have appeared in English. It is easily the most readable, useful and reliable. It is less detailed and bristles less with quotation and speculation than Rudolph Binion's psychoanalytic study Frau Lou (Princeton, 1968). It does better justice to

her unique form of spirituality than did My Sister, My Spouse, H.F. Peter's workmanlike and pioneering life (London, 1963). Angela Livingstone has succeeded in fashioning something essentially useful; a biography to be employed as an instrument with which to approach the writings and issues which emerge from such remarkable lives.

Lou Andreas Salomé maintained her sexual and her intellectual independence through decades of the fiercest upheaval. She meditated constantly on the unity of erotic, religious and intellectual impulses. She wrote valuable books on Nietzsche, Rilke and Freud. Her copious writings almost all, directly or indirectly, return to the question of herself - but she offered insights across a wide range of spiritual issues and deeply influenced scores of other thinkers and writers. The author of this biography is no over-enthusiastic fan. Her judgements on the writings are sober ones. She admits that Lou Salomé has a weakness for effusion, repitition and vagueness. She lets it appear that it was only with limited success that Lou Salomé wrestled with her solipistic - even narcissistic - impulses. But the life, and the writings, of Lou Andreas Salomé do challenge and invite further study.

Lloyd Spencer

Jean-Paul Sartre, War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phoney War, Verso, 1984, 366pp, £14.95 hc
Ronald Aronson, Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World, Verso, 1980, 358pp, £4 pb

Sartre's War Diaries is the first of many posthumous works which may well produce a radical re-evaluation of Sartre's thought.

The Diaries are entertaining, perceptive and very well written. They are worth reading for Sartre's views about the world around him during the War.

More importantly, the Diaries will help to dispel the interpretational myth of the 'two Sartres'. Even the most sympathetic critics, such as Aronson, seem to have seen his career as having two distinct periods: the early individualist existentialist and the later socialist.

The Diaries were written before Being and Nothingness and contain many ontological passages which reappear in that book. Yet the tone, and much of the content, is more akin to Sartre's post-War writings; the text bristles with interesting discussions of historical explanation and moral and political philosophy.

Probably, the notion of 'two Sartres' first gained acceptance because only one volume of Being and Nothingness was published during the author's lifetime. That book was essentially incomplete. The War Diaries goes some way towards filling in its gaps. Perhaps they will persuade socialists that there is something of interest for them in Being and Nothingness.

Ron Aronson is a sympathetic critic who has written the best introduction to Sartre's life and thought. It is admirably complete with virtually all of the currently available works examined. There is even a discussion of the second volume of the Critique of Dialectical Reason.

The major criticism of this book is that there is constant use of an interpretational schema which is not adequate to understand all of Sartre's work.

Throughout the book Sartre is portrayed as struggling, ultimately futilely, against the attractions of the imaginary realm so as to engage with the world. Sartre is a tormented character, a useless passion. It is true that Sartre's views on literature frequently were tormented, as shown by The Words. Yet the use of this interpretational thesis in other areas of Sartre's work tends to invalidate some of Aronson's more tortured criticisms.

It is likely that the publication of the posthumous writings will lead to a new understanding of Sartre. Certainly all the currently available commentaries are at best provisional. Aronson's book is the best of these commentaries. It is highly recommended.

Steven Hedges

Stuart Schneiderman, Jacques Lacan. The Death of an Intellectual Hero, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1984, 192pp, £5.55 pb

Schneiderman is reputedly the only American to have gone through a training analysis with Lacan and this book is based upon his experiences in Paris in 1973-77. Initially one welcomes the thought of a book on Lacan which comes down from the high plains of theory, and a prurient desire to know 'what happens' in a Lacanian analysis no doubt adds to one's sense of anticipation. But the anecdotal tone, the pretentious excursions into Zen and the hagiographic infatuation with Lacan soon begin to irritate, as do the positively bizarre speculations as to the nature of postwar Franco-American relations. All too often, the author sounds like the archetypal American tourist in Paris - lost, in love and uncomprehending. A number of the anecdotes retailed here are at least second hand, and some are demonstrably inaccurate. It comes, for instance, as something of a surprise to learn that Merleau-Ponty was instrumental in allowing Lacan to transfer his seminar to the Ecole Normal Supérieure in 1963; he died in 1961. Schneiderman does provide some interesting glimpses of Lacan's notorious 'short sessions', and of the origin of so many of his disageements with the International Psychoanalytic Association. He also gives us a certain insight into the feverish atmosphere of the Ecole Freudienne de Paris. But his essay cannot be recommended as an introduction to Lacan's work. Nor can it be recommended as a serious addition to the available literature, not least in that the author seems to be blissfully ignorant of the arts of the index and the bibliography.

David Macey

John W. Yolton, Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Basil Blackwell, 1984, 238pp, £19.50 hc

This fascinating monograph places the relatively well-known British eighteenth-century 'materialists', David Hartley and Joseph Priestley, in the company of dozens of their contemporaries. Yolton blows the dust off some intricate and widely-diffused debates about such themes as the feasibility of mechanical replicas of human beings, the distinction between space and matter, the possibility of action and cognition 'at a distance', the question whether matter can be active, the nature of meaningful action, personal responsibility and will, and the physiology of nerves. The guiding thread of Yolton's story is the fate of Locke's suggestion, in 1690, that thinking might be a property of matter - an idea which you can take as either 'materialist' or 'immaterialist', whichever you prefer. Priestly conceived of matter in terms of points of force rather than particles of solidity, and so was able to ambiguate his 'materialism' by referring, gratifyingly, to 'the immateriality of matter'. This seems to command Yolton's sympathy, as offering a materialism which, he says in an aside, 'need not be opposed to a humanistic conception of man'. Be that as it may, Yolton's highly informative work should give many philosophers pause for thought - especially those who believe, with Engels, that materialism is as old as the hills, and those who hold, with the Reith lecturer, that it was devised forty years ago. Myself, I no longer know what it is.

Jonathan Rée