



# REVIEWS

## The Realism of Utopia

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (translated by N. S. Plaice and P. Knight), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986 (3 volumes), xxxiii + 1420pp, £120 hb

From the very beginning there has been a utopian dimension in marxism. Despite William Morris's recognition of the value of this dimension, utopianism was a largely submerged element in nineteenth-century marxism. Bloch's great achievement was unashamedly to celebrate Marx and Utopia. In his long life (1885-1977), he produced a string of works extolling the virtues of a utopian marxism; *The Principle of Hope* is his masterpiece. The work is of truly epic proportions: three volumes, almost fifteen hundred pages, nine years in the writing (1938-47). Such a vast work defies review - all one can do is reveal its underlying structure and a little of its flavour.

For Bloch the enemies of hope are confusion, anxiety, fear, renunciation, passivity, failure, and nothingness. Fascism was their apotheosis. But since all individuals daydream, they also hope. It is necessary to strip this dreaming of self-delusion and escapism, to enrich and expand it, and base it in the actual movement of society. Hope, in other words, must be both educated and objectively grounded; an insight drawn from Marx's great discovery: 'the subjective and objective hope-contents of the world' (p. 7).

*The Principle of Hope* is an encyclopaedic account of dreams of a better existence, from the most simple to the most complex, from idle daydreams to sophisticated images of perfection. It develops a positive sense of the category 'utopian', denuded of unworldliness and abstraction, as forward dreaming and anticipation. All the time, however, the link between past, present, and future is stressed - concern with what one might be is the royal road to what has been, and what one is: 'we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness, in order to penetrate precisely the nearest nearness' (p. 12). This whole project is examined under five headings, each referring to a distinct form of hope:

- (1) Little Daydreams: all those flights of fancy, and reveries that occupy people throughout their day.
- (2) Anticipatory Consciousness: the very basis of hope, the roots and purpose of dreaming in the individual.
- (3) Wishful Images in the Mirror: the expression of hope in such forms as display, fairytale, travel, film, and the theatre.
- (4) Outlines of a Better World: planned or outlined utopias - medical, social, technological, architectural, and geographical utopias, plus the 'wishful landscapes' of painting and literature.
- (5) Wishful Images of the Fulfilled Moment: the most

powerful conceptions of authentic humanity.

### (1) *Little Daydreams*

This delightful little section examines, with great sensitivity and acuity, a range of everyday hopes and fantasies. Bloch vividly recaptures the dreams of childhood: the secure hiding place, voyages to exotic lands, far-away castles, unlimited power; also the adolescent fantasies of love where the 'street or town in which the loved one lives turns to gold, turns into a party' (p. 26), or the dream of returning home in triumph to the once unfeeling, but now awestruck, parents. Ever-mindful of the experience of fascism, Bloch notes how these early yearnings were often captured, how the 'often invoked streak of blue in the bourgeois sky became ...a streak of blood' (p. 29). With maturity comes the wishful rewriting of history, where the wrong turn is righted and the missed opportunity achieved, and related to this is the dream of revenge. With great personal bitterness Bloch evokes the murderous anti-semitic phantasies of the petit-bourgeois in the Weimar Republic and of their cynical manipulation of the bourgeoisie. He also details the various compensatory sexual phantasies of individuals: 'a dream forest of randy eyes and spread legs' (p. 32), and the visions of financial success and domestic comfort. The inevitable limitations of bourgeois dreaming are emphasised, and most graphically exemplified in the figure of the jaded and bored rich man who has had the misfortune (to use Shaw's phrase) to get his heart's desire. By contrast, what Bloch terms the 'non-bourgeois dreamer' (p. 35) looks beyond the existing range of options to the socialist vision of true equality, freedom, and community.

Inevitably these yearnings are 'considerably less distinct than those which need only reach into the existing window-display' (p. 35); they are, however, of a much higher status, and represent the way forward. This leads on to Bloch's touching and bitter-sweet account of the dreams of old age, where he contrasts the unnecessary hardship of the old under capitalism with the vision of wisdom, evening and rest, of 'authentic life in old age' (p. 41). Throughout this section on little daydreams one is struck by powerful images and evocative phrases: of how for the young visitor to the big city 'the houses, the squares, the stages seem bathed in a utopian light' (p. 28), or of the brutality, malice and repulsiveness of petit-bourgeois dreams 'as pervasive as the smell of urine' (p. 31), or again of this latter class: 'it is also quite happy to put its clenched fist back into its pocket when crime is no longer allowed a free night on the town by those at the top' (p. 31).

## (2) Anticipatory Consciousness

In this section Bloch goes back a stage and seeks to establish the basis of human dreaming, human aspiration, the basis, in other words, of hope. He distinguishes a whole series of inter-linked tendencies within the individual - urging, striving, longing, searching, driving, craving, wishing, and wanting - all of which propel us beyond ourselves. But what is behind these? He rejects the various Freudian explanations of motivation; they are saturated with bourgeois assumptions, they are oriented to the past, ('there is nothing new in the Freudian unconscious' (p. 56)), they incorrectly prioritise the libido, ('it emphasises solely spicey drives' (p. 64)), they disembodify human impulses and consequently ignore basic socio-economic factors, and fail to grasp the historical mutability of human drives. Freud's onetime disciples come in for particular condemnation; Adler's 'will to power' is dismissed as an apology for capitalism, whilst Jung, that 'fascistically frothing psychoanalyst' (p.59), is accused of a racist and irrational primevalism. A much better candidate for a basic drive, Bloch argues, is hunger, 'the drive that is always left out of psychoanalytic theory' (p. 64), and as regards 'complexes', he suggests 'the one which Franziska Reventlov so unmedically called the money complex' (p. 66). Both rest on the only real basic drive - self-preservation - and even this is experienced differently in different environments. Self-preservation however turns into self-extension, as basic appetites are satisfied and give way to ever-more-sophisticated forms; ultimately 'out of economically enlightened hunger comes today the decision to abolish all conditions in which man is an oppressed and long-lost being' (p. 76). Dreaming is an integral part of this process. Bloch is at pains to counter Freud's minimising of the differences between daytime and nighttime dreaming. Although wish-fulfilment occurs in nocturnal dreams, it is an essentially regressive, repressive, and highly distorted form. Daydreams, by contrast, combine clarity, open-endedness, and future orientation. However, even the dreams of the night contain material which can be transformed into a utopian form in waking consciousness. The crucial element in all of this is what he terms the 'Not-Yet-Conscious'. This is a pre-conscious faculty in individuals, from which all novel material is generated: it is 'the psychological birthplace of the New' (p. 116).

The New, however, does not come out of the blue, nor is it pure subjective creation, rather it is drawn from the objective possibilities of the developing real world: 'inspiration ... emerges ... from the meeting of subject and object, from the meeting of its tendency with the objective tendency of the time, and is the flash with which this concordance begins' (p. 125). Only in marxism is there this combination of hope and concreteness. This involves a combination of the 'warm stream' and the 'cold stream' of marxism, where coldness is the rigorous scientific aspect, and warmth its libertarian intent; this is expressed elsewhere as the unity of sobriety and enthusiasm. Again, there is much more in this section than this very bare summary suggests. Throughout, Bloch branches off into all manner of fascinating discussions - from art to folklore, history to religion, philosophy to psychology - in which he deploys a truly awesome erudition (as well, let it be said, as a deal of pomposity and wilful obscurity). This whole section, of nearly three hundred pages, is the theoretical core of Bloch's project. The underlying ideas are attractive.

The concept of Not-Yet-Conscious avoids much of the insulting reductionism present in Freudian psychology. Its image of the individual is not that of the battered and screwed-up end-product of obscure childhood traumas, but of a person endowed with much greater independence and capacity for creative self-development. Instead of brooding on the hidden, and usually base, roots of people's desires and wishes, it focuses on the desirability of the

goals and the beneficial function of the dreams. It also lends itself much more readily to an overall marxist framework, than do attempts to harness Freud to this end. On the other hand, sceptics might reply that this is due to the highly general and abstract nature of the concept 'Not-Yet-Conscious', its reliance on the author's intuition, and on cultural authorities - the fact, in short, that it hasn't deigned to soil its hands with the clinical procedures of the Freudians.



## (3) Wishful Images in the Mirror

This is an exciting, original, and important section. Bloch's achievement is to have uncovered the utopianism in (the often despised) mass or popular culture. He is fully aware of the exploitative nature of this culture, but equally of its link with wish-fulfilment (again, these are not always healthy wishes). As he notes of fashion and display:

people cannot make of themselves what has not already previously begun within them. Equally, in terms of pretty wrappings, gestures and things, they are attracted outside only by what has already existed for a long time in their own wishes, even if only vaguely, and what is therefore quite willingly seduced. Lipstick, make-up, borrowed plumes to help the dream of themselves, as it were, out of the cave. Then they go and pose, pep up the little bit that is really there or falsify it. But not as if it were possible for someone to make themselves completely false; at least their wishing is genuine (p. 339).

The travelling fair and circus also, amidst their tackiness, and exploitation of the not-normal, are said to contain 'a bit of frontier land ... with preserved meanings, with curiously utopian meanings, conserved in brutal show, in vulgar enigmaticness' (p. 366). Bloch shows the influence of his beloved Karl May, in his assertion of the utopian content of adventure tales - a genre which is a 'castle in the air par excellence, but one in good air and, as far as it can be true at all of mere wishing-work: the castle in the air is right' (p. 369). Our author casts his net far and wide for vehicles of wishing as, for example, in travelling, stamp collecting, gardening, delight in wild weather. Dance 'paces out the wish for more beautifully moved being' (p. 394), mime points to another region, as does film. Here, again the double-edged nature of the phenomenon is stressed: Jitterbug and Boogie-Woogie are 'imbecility gone wild' (p. 394), and Hollywood is condemned as 'Dream-factory in the rotten ... sense' (p. 409). But rotten dreams are not the ultimate enemies, rather it is pessimism and nihilism - the absence of dreams:

artificially conditioned optimism ... is nevertheless not so stupid that it does not believe in anything at all.... For this reason there is more possible pleasure in the idea of a converted Nazi than from all cynics and nihilists.... Thus pessimism is paralysis per se, whereas even the most rotten optimism can still be the stupefaction from which

there is an awakening (pp. 445-46).

Socialism therefore, the ultimate goal, can draw upon myriad sources deep in every individual. This is Bloch's great service to this section - he points to a transmission belt between small-scale, apparently mundane concerns, and the grand telos of communism. Where one might fault him is in his rather arbitrary distinctions between authentic and unauthentic, where, for example, adventure stories are placed on a higher footing than 'syrupy stories' in glossy magazines. Partly this was due to an inevitable personal quirkiness, plus the broader influences of the milieu in which he grew up. There does also appear to be in this a strong dose of the anti-Americanism found in many of the 'emigration' generation of Weimar Germany. There is some loss of sensitivity as a result. This, however, is only a minor caveat - the overall perspective is truly impressive.

#### (4) Outlines of a Better World

In the nearly five hundred pages which make up this section, Bloch assembles the conscious attempts to depict a better world - therefore usual meaning of the word 'utopia'. There are the various medical utopias, deeply rooted in perennially human concerns, with their abolition of disease and pain. However, even the perennial is rooted in a particular historical context - 'utopias have their timetable' (p. 479), Bloch insists, and cannot be understood otherwise. We are then treated to an encyclopaedic account of historical utopias. Along with the usual Plato we get Solon, Diogenes, and Aristippus. The Bible is seen as a treasure-house of utopian imagery, Moses is credited with the creation of a liberation God: 'The God he imagines is ... no masters' God... Yahweh begins as a threat to the Pharaoh: the volcanic God of Sinai becomes Moses' god of liberation, of flight from slavery' (p. 496). Jesus is interpreted as the harbinger of a new world: 'the eschatological sermon has precedence for Jesus over the moral one and determines it' (p. 500). Augustine is included, as is the fascinating medieval heretic Joachim of Fiore with his dream of the Third Kingdom. And so on through More and Campanella, Rousseau and Fichte, Owen and Fourier, Cabet and Saint-Simon, past Stirner, Proudhon, and Bakunin, on to Weitling. He includes a rather odd section on women's utopias, which many modern feminists would find patronising and sexist, as they would many of his references to women throughout the work. He claimed that the women's movement 'is at once outmoded, replaced and postponed' (p. 595), in that capitalism is more than willing to extend its worthless equality and class struggle has primacy over sexual struggle. It is however only postponed in that women have a utopian dimension to contribute to future socialist society, a contribution defined in terms of the 'special qualities' of women.

This gives way to a discussion of Zionist visions, 'Zionism flows out into socialism, or it does not flow out at all' (p. 611), then the utopian novels of Bellamy, Morris, Carlyle, and George. The account is seemingly endless: technological utopias, architectural utopias from 'Dreams on the Pompeian wall' (p. 700) to Le Corbusier, geographic utopias 'Eldorado and Eden' (p. 746), wishful landscapes in painting, opera and literature, 'Pieter Brueghel painted his Land of Cockaigne exactly as the poor folk always dreamed it to be' (p. 813) and so on and so on. The erudition and colossal scale are quite breathtaking. It is an absolute gold mine for those interested in utopias. Bloch's purpose, however, is not antiquarian - rather it is both to demonstrate the historical ubiquity of this type of dreaming forward, and to argue for a synthesis of dreaming, stripped of illusion, with a marxism stripped of positivism and empiricism, where 'everything inflamed in the forward dream is thereby removed as is everything mouldy in sobriety' (p. 622). This is the concept of 'concrete utopia'.

#### (5) Wishful Images of the Fulfilled Moment

In this concluding section Bloch presents what he considers to be the most sublime images of existence, the ones which throughout history have possessed an aura of profound otherness. These are the golden seams of human dreaming. They also provide a window on the deepest beliefs and values of Bloch himself. Historically these images have often appeared in contradiction to one another, contradictions which will develop into dialectical syntheses. Thus there will be a life combining the old opposed ideals of danger and happiness, in which courage and adventure prevent enervation and boredom, and felicity prevents brutality, insecurity and emptiness; there is the new tactical ideal of 'neither non-violent hesitation nor cutting abstractness of violence, but violence concretely mediated' (p. 947); and the same is said of the other dualisms - body and soul, action and contemplation, solitude and friendship, individual and collective.

Two important areas of focus in this section are music and religion. Music, like all phenomena, has an ideological dimension, rooted in its time: 'it extends from the form of the performance right to the characteristic style of the tonal material and its composition, to the expression, the meaning of the content. Handel's oratorios in their festive pride reflect rising imperialist England...' (p. 1063). This does not exhaust its content, in fact 'no art has so much surplus over the respective time and ideology in which it exists' (p. 1063) as music. The complex qualities of music have made it a particularly rich vehicle for the expression of utopian content, and historically it has expressed the most sublime longings of humanity: 'thus music as a whole stands at the frontiers of mankind' (p. 1103). Bloch attempts the (as he would himself admit) impossible task of articulating some of these images of liberation. He also deals with religion - a topic most marxists have avoided. He develops an impressive analysis of the critical and anticipatory elements in the world's religions and argues for the continuing relevance of religion in marxism. The religious impulse stripped of its illusory aspects is thus profoundly revolutionary. This involves:

the elimination of God himself in order that precisely religious mindfulness, with hope in totality, should have open space before it and no ghostly throne of hypostatis. All of which means nothing less than just this paradox: the religious kingdom-intention as such involves atheism, at least properly understood atheism (p. 1199).

or as he pithily put it in another work: 'Only an atheist can be a good Christian, only a Christian can be a good atheist.'

The book throughout displays Bloch's pro-Soviet marxism-leninism. Thus we are informed that 'The Soviet Union faces no question of women's rights any more, because it has solved the question of workers' rights; (p. 595) (and he doesn't mean by abolishing them!), and that the Soviet Union is in the forefront of progress across the board. This was a long-standing theme in Bloch's work. He defended the Moscow Show Trials in a 1937 piece graphically entitled 'A Jubilee for Renegades'. After the war Bloch accepted a university post in East Germany at Leipzig, and for a good few years appears to have found nothing particularly objectionable in the marxist-leninist concept of the communist party. He does appear to have subscribed to the idea of the party as ultimate directional force, guardian of analysis and utopia. On such puny legs therefore did Bloch rest his great edifice. Later he became disillusioned.

This then is The Principle of Hope. Its translation into English has introduced a classic into our language. It is a work to be read slowly, for each page carries a wealth of argument and example. It is not an 'easy' book in any sense - the prose is dense, the argument often obscure or

implicit, and the structure rambling. One can also take issue with his idiosyncratic interpretation of a number of thinkers and his tendency towards class reductionism. This is, however, water off a duck's back, for it's the work's monumental quality and underlying purpose which holds

the reader. We are presented in immense detail the evidence of a utopian impulse in humanity. Any marxism which ignores this is fundamentally barren.

Vincent Geoghegan

# Humanism: Two Reviews

Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism*, London: Hutchinson, 1986. 155pp, £5.95 pb.

This is a remarkable book. It is quite extraordinarily compressed, cutting a trail from Hegel to Derrida, via Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Kojève, Sartre, Althusser, Lacan and Foucault, with a clear-sightedness which though complex is neither forced nor noticeably blurred at the edges. The trail is not, of course, Soper's own invention; it is built around the guiding debates within French philosophy since the 1930s. But by tracing back to Kant and forward to English socialist humanism in the 1980s, Soper has set these debates in a wider context which gives a better idea of their relevance to us and to European thought far from the Left Bank of the Seine. We have, combined together, then: an introduction to numerous continental philosophers; a socialist humanist history of the idea of humanism and its opponents in 19th-century Europe and post-war France, with numerous walk-on parts given a fair, if brief, hearing; and, threading the whole together, suggestive arguments for a modern socialist humanism. In 150 pages, it's good value if it's anything!

After a brief introductory chapter which, by explaining the common ground between diverse meanings of 'humanism', introduces three main versions of humanism, the story proper begins in the second chapter with reactions to Kantian idealism up to Marx. Soper describes how the noumenal human ego in Kant is recaptured as an historical reference point in Fichte, made the object of its own self-realizing thought activity in Hegel, relocated in immediate unity of thought to nature by Feuerbach, and then shown by Marx to have a new kind of historical existence insofar as subjective powers are posited in objective production.

This account involves three significant points about Marx's theory of alienation: it has, according to Soper, absorbed the self-reflexive movement that was the 'brilliant originality' of Hegel's thought; it refers to an aspect of self-objectification that only arises in bourgeois society; and it is by no means discarded in Marx's later thought. To sustain the last of the contentions, Soper points up 'humanist theses' in the *German Ideology*, such as a teleology of history tending towards human emancipation and unmediated relations of individuals to each other. She demonstrates that alienation according to Marx is specific to bourgeois society by rehearsing (p. 36), with no further analysis, the classic argument that capitalist society dissolves personal ties in anonymous money relations.

The humanism in Hegel and Marx now described, the story jumps to the revival of the humanist Marx of the *Manuscripts* in the 1920s, Kojève's 1930s phenomenological Hegel showing the self-production of the human spirit, and the existentialist Sartre's hope of identifying an irreducible human subject. The next chapter explores the existentialist contribution in the hands of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. A political/historical digression in a chapter on political practice then summarises the currents leading up to the embarrassment of anti-Stalinist humanism on the Left in

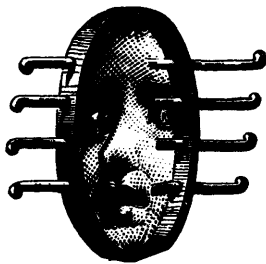
1968. The stage is then set for the triumph of structuralist and post-structuralist anti-humanisms in the 1970s and 1980s.

To my mind, this story of humanism raises three questions, more or less answered in Soper's book: Is the main current of humanism properly found in specifically socialist humanism?; What is the case against anti-humanism overall?; What kind of humanism is being defended and how?

The high status of the specifically socialist humanist thread in the story depends in part upon the typology of humanisms in the first chapter. For it is there that our obvious homegrown contender for the mantle of humanism, the positivist humanism of an Ayer or a Skinner, is distinguished from the original Renaissance celebration of humanity as 'technical fix' humanism - i.e. the sort that subordinates all of nature, and indeed human beings too, to a positivist scientific rationality of ever-increasing production. Thus, positivist humanism is merely going back again and again for another senseless 'technical fix' to solve problems of human society. But it is clear that the status of socialist humanism also depends upon the claim in this chapter that capitalist industrialisation broke the 'unquestioned faith in the harmonisation of human progress with the dictates of nature' (p. 15) because capitalism has obscured subjective human growth in its form of development. But Soper's argument on this crucial point in support of the status of socialist humanism turns implicitly upon that account of the alienation of the human individual self in the *Manuscripts* which we find set out so briefly in Chapter 2. If alienation of the human self is particular to capitalist production, modern non-socialist humanism is accessory to that alienation and has been properly set aside. The way is then clear for Soper to introduce the 'humanism of the phenomenologists and existentialists' (p. 16) which incorporates a critique of modern industrial society. But Soper's own second thoughts about whether the *Manuscript* argument does this satisfactorily are suggested in her remarks (pp. 41-42), following Bahro, that the residue of capitalist production may not be entirely positive even when the social relations involved have been taken away.

Soper's fifth and sixth chapters run through the range of modern French anti-humanists and British Althusserians. A concise summary is in each case followed by critical argument against the anti-humanist position. It is here that we can expect an answer to the question: What is the case against anti-humanism overall? It is present, I think, but not always easy to grasp. Opposition to what is politically or morally 'objectionable' - such as the suppression of individual experience - jostles uncertainly with intermittent critique of anti-humanist positions for being tendentiously put or 'circular'. A skilful brevity excuses this in part; but there are moments, such as the comparison of late Althusser with Ayer fending off Austin (p. 108), when the busy reader may wonder if s/he has to be led quite so thoroughly up all this maze's dead-ends. Yet there is an overall argument about the movement expressed as the 'tendency of anti-humanist argument [like *The German Ideology*] to secrete humanist rhetoric' (p.

128). Soper's view seems to be that a certain distinctively human sensibility - albeit hard to define - is unavoidably pre-supposed by the logic of anti-humanist positions (as it was, in her view consciously entailed, by Marx and Engels). Thus, one criticism of Althusser is that a sense which is broadly moral is presupposed by the ability of human supports (Trager) to adopt any ideological position at all (p. 114). Lacan and Deleuze are challenged (in a similar fashion) with the presence in their thinking of unstateable human categories of original identity and inchoate desire which are necessarily presupposed by the notion of their loss. Again, Foucault is criticised for assuming that if human individuality is constituted within power-soaked discourses, then there is some lost human subjectivity that has become straightforwardly 'subject' to that power. This general line of attack is a telling one, which could furthermore have the virtue of linking Soper's political/moral distaste for anti-humanism with a philosophical attack. For that particularly human sensibility, elided by a logically false argument, is the same that inspires the capacity to make the political and moral commitments which are so offended by anti-humanism's tendency to resign from political struggle. If the claim for a logically prior category of human sensibility is as central as I judge, it is, on the other hand, a pity that Derrida - whose analyses of the logic of looking for origins, coherent all-embracing premises or structures of meaning etc. is worn as the star of strictly philosophical anti-humanism - has only a masterly twenty-line summary plus one page of critique later on.



The attack on anti-humanism leads naturally to the question: What kind of humanism is Soper defending and how? We have an idea of this from the first chapter on; it is socialist because it rejects the rationality of capitalism and the alienation of bourgeois society and it is humanist (in the way the *Manuscripts of 1844* were) in seeking objective self-reflexive movement in human development. But Soper's humanism still has to be fleshed out from the short final, reflective chapter and from the account of Sartre. The final chapter poses, yet holds back from resolving in full, two related issues about the human subject where humanism might hold an answer: Who (if anyone) makes history?; and To what extent is it possible for humanity to be the object of its own understanding? The humanist answer to the first of these (Soper argues) steers a course between posing history as completely objective and leaving the solitary human being with unmitigated responsibility in the face of unwished-for historical constraints. Socialist humanism would have human agents working cooperatively as best they could to alter or by-pass those conditions - even though they may not be fully aware of their own conditioning. Thus humanism according to Soper accommodates to the fact of indeterminate limits to human agents' power. If the pursuit of self-knowledge across the diverse structures never reaches a terminal point, for Soper that is okay: 'if in the end we cannot improve on the ambiguity of the conception of men and women as both "makers" and "made", we may also note that were the question unambiguously resolvable, it would not concern us in the first place...'; neither the assertion 'of the primacy of will over circumstance' nor 'that of circumstance over will ... in

itself is satisfactory; (p. 151). Her humanism can also, it seems, accommodate the anti-humanist demonstrations of the linguistic, psychological and historical shaping of human subjects' own self-knowledge. These various determinations, she argues, have to be discriminated one from another but must not be permitted to lead us to transpose all issues of political or moral choice onto a timeless plane of unassailable, all-enveloping structures.

In spite of the extraordinary range covered, I did not feel that I would have been satisfied with that rather artless defence of humanism at the end of the book, had I not found two other achievements in describing the humanism she favours. One was the logical argument described above to show how an albeit abstract human sensibility is presupposed by anti-humanism. The other is the slant she gives (in Chapter 3) to Sartre's notion of the fused group in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Assigning that work to its proper place in Sartre's journey out of existentialist nihilism, she presents the fused group as the setting of a double dialectic of series and groups that permits groups to have a constant interplay with, on the one hand, the sequence of conditions in which they act and on the other hand, the individuals fusing in the group. How this may issue forth in a humanist subject is suggested by the link to it afforded by Sartre's *What is Literature?*: for Soper points out that according to that work we are able in art to 'recognise ourselves in an object that does not objectify us in the sense of treating us as "mere object"' (p. 68). Creative art, then, appears a key case of indeterminate, non-alienating human self-knowledge; as political action in the fused group is a key case of non-alienated social action. Perhaps that is why, once she has arguments for there being a humanist subject, Soper can be satisfied with the uncertainty of its content. It is also, perhaps, why the last chapter begins with one of Yeats's most mysterious images for the human spirit (as dancer or as dance) and ends with a post-Renaissance poem evoking the cosmic symmetry of the human being. Yet, if creative art and politics, rather than philosophy, are to become the most revealing grounds for humanist self-knowledge, we might do well to return to and re-use some of those anti-humanist analyses of the rhetorical conditions of thought, even if they are shorn of their universal philosophical claims about the human subject.

This book may teach us a lot about the terms in which both our philosophy and our politics could be pursued. Even if the account of capitalist society and the implied ground for philosophy in the future leave unresolved questions, the intricacy of its argument and its history are fertile material.

### Noel Parker

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This book is part of a new and welcome series concentrating on some of the central issues raised by developments in modern European thought. While strands of contemporary, and particularly French, thought have had profound effects in other academic disciplines, philosophy has remained relatively closed to these developments. Too often blanket rejections have taken the place of serious study.

*Humanism and Anti-Humanism* addresses itself to one of the central problems of political philosophy: whether human beings make their own history or whether they are products of that history. In what sense, if any, can it be said that these individuals will and determine events, or are choices determined by circumstances? Does a commitment to the constitutive role of human action result in a view of history as the unravelling of some teleological purpose? Is an essentialist metaphysics a necessary part of the humanist position? These are the types of question Soper is addressing.

In the process, she attempts to defend a humanism without essentialism:

We need to distinguish, therefore, between two levels of humanist argument - between the assertion of the constitutive role of individuals in the making of history, and the assertion that history itself is the working out of an immanent human purpose. One can be a humanist in the first sense without being committed to a teleological view of history or to the idea that there is a particular social grouping 'destined' to realize humanity's essential 'being' or historic purpose (p. 21).

Essentialism has to be rejected because it raises 'Man' to an abstract level, thereby losing sight of the fact that it is 'real individuals in definite historical conditions' (p. 38) that make history. Soper therefore supports a humanist position within an open-ended view of history. Individuals can be said to make history in a meaningful way, but there is no final goal to that process; the outcome depends on human choices.

... people are conscious agents whose political options could be other than they are, and whose actions have real impact upon their conditions of existence. But these conditions are not themselves freely chosen (p. 147).

Soper is seeking to defend a socialist humanist position, derived from Marx, that persons make history, but not in conditions of their own choosing, a position she argues to be reformulated in the 20th century in some of the works of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

This work also offers a critical exploration of the recent anti-humanist trend in French thought. Soper argues that the anti-humanists collapse the two senses of humanism she has distinguished, with a resulting total rejection of human agency in the making of history. Taken to its logical conclusions, anti-humanism is held to result in political pessimism and history as a series of meaningless events:

... if it is mistaken to assess the course of history in humanist terms, then it becomes absurd to attempt to evaluate historical outcomes at all; history is simply a series of occurrences without end or meaning (p. 123).

The work of the structuralists and particularly the post-structuralists has unsatisfactory political consequences and has to be rejected.

This brings me to a central problem of this book, the assumption of the correctness of a certain political

position. Anti-humanism is rejected because it results in a history without meaning. However, what of those who support an open-ended humanism? If history is given meaning, doesn't this necessarily involve an essentialist metaphysics? If history is open-ended, what superiority is there to one course of action rather than another? Socialist options are Soper's option, but why should we support her? Soper, like so many socialists, assumes the obvious superiority of socialist values, but it is precisely that obviousness which the anti-humanists question. One cannot legitimately reject that position simply because it does not accept the assumptions of one's own. Independent reasons have to be established. Soper does not really provide them.

However, this is understandable to a certain extent. I have presented the thrust of Soper's argument in the book. This argument weaves its way through a series of snapshots of many of the major thinkers' positions on the issues of humanism. Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Heidegger, Althusser, Foucault and many others are all introduced and their positions outlined. This is in line with the editorial policy of this series: 'Each book will focus on one concept, providing a brief history and a detailed discussion of its current meaning closely based on specific texts.' The problem is that a brief history results in a series of dense and concise outlines in which what is wrong with the various positions is explained, but why it is wrong remains unclear: unless we assume Soper's political position, of course. The reasons for defending a non-essentialist humanism need to be clearly articulated and defended.

However, this is linked to a further problem in a text of this nature. 'The book assumes no previous knowledge of continental philosophy and is ideal for students looking for an accessible introduction to humanism.' In fact, the text falls between two stools. It is neither an introduction which would satisfy the uninitiated, nor sufficiently argued to interest the initiated. For the uninitiated, the exegesis is too dense with an insufficient clarification of the issues. For the initiated, there is far too much assertion and insufficient argument. The text therefore neither fulfills its functions as an introduction, nor gives substantial reasons for supporting the point of view of the author. Socialist humanism remains theoretically problematic.

**Richard Edwards**

## A Gender-Free Science

Evelyn Fox Keller, Reflections on Gender and Science, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. 193pp, £9.95 pb

Reflections on Gender and Science explores the personal, emotional and sexual aspects of science and our ideas about science. It is a complex and sensitive work and an excellent corrective to radical critiques that confine themselves to public and economic factors. The book is divided into three parts. The first and third are very readable and provide persuasive and concrete examples of male bias in science. Most of the essays would be excellent tools for stimulating classroom discussion. Part II is an attempt to articulate and advance the psychoanalytic tradition of object relations theory.

Fox-Keller analyzes science as a historically developed set of day-to-day activities molded by, but also reproducing, the hierarchies of power that condition its direction. Knowledge is viewed as a social formation and even its object, nature, is not a pre-existent given that presents itself for neutral inspection but a reality

reconstructed by our own action, constituted both for us and by us. The book argues that to fully understand the nature and development of science, gender relations must be accounted for. Science becomes male-oriented when values, goals, problems and ways of thinking associated with women are rejected. The social construction of science is masculinized when standards of rationality exclude the feminine and when knowledge formation is represented as the masculine pursuit of a female nature. Fox-Keller shows that metaphors bespeaking masculinity are intrinsic to our conception of what science is, as illustrated in the connections among objectivity, scientific truth, and thinking and acting 'like a man'. She tries to ground these metaphors and provide an explanation of male dominance by an appeal to psychoanalytic theory.

Pointing out that sex is the most typical frame of reference in Western thought for discussing the connection between knower and known (p. 18), Fox-Keller provides an interesting contrast between the views of Plato, the hermetic philosophers, and Bacon. Chapter One speaks to the relevance of Plato's erotic philosophy for fully



understanding the transcendence of the relation between mind and form. In a fashion typical of the pederastic standards of his day, but reformative, Plato proposes a kind of male homosexuality that is more liberatory, mutual and less dominating than his predecessors.

In her analysis of Bacon's philosophy, Fox-Keller argues that gendered images are frequent in methodological writings where he discusses the goals of science and the relation to be sought between knower and known. Nature will serve 'man's' purposes by being bound to him through the institution of patriarchal marriage, for Bacon recommends a 'chaste and lawful marriage' between mind and nature. Fox-Keller is able to capture the subtlety, complexity and contradiction present in Bacon's thought. Her account is thus more dialectical than Carolyn Merchant's, whose *Death of Nature* (San Francisco, 1980) over-emphasizes images suggestive of rape and the torture of witches. Keller argues that though nature is conceived in female terms, she is not to be violently raped, according to Bacon, but 'aggressively seduced'. Ambiguity becomes contradiction, in Keller's approach, since 'science is to be aggressive yet responsive, powerful yet benign, masterful yet subservient, shrewd yet innocent...' (p. 37). In this light, it is not surprising that metaphors from the relation between men and women are used so often in the history of science, given the complicated, ambiguous tensions commonly found in patriarchal heterosexual associations.

Fox-Keller argues convincingly that the institutionalization of experimental and mechanical philosophy took place in a cultural context in which sex roles and the nature of sexuality were hotly debated. Echoing Bacon's recommendation that genuine science be 'the masculine birth of time', the men of the Royal Society insisted that their approach would be sufficiently virile to dominate nature. Gender clearly functions in their ideology as a persuasive device to argue for their point of view and discredit their competitors' stance by associating it with women.



This account of Baconian philosophy and the rise of mechanism is one of the best aspects of the book. Fox-Keller's discussion of the relevance of the witch hunts is a bit brief, however, so her work would be nicely supplemented by Brian Easlea's important *Witch-hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy* (Sussex, 1980). Indeed, Easlea and Fox-Keller's methodology is very similar, and a fuller discussion of the differences between them would have been helpful to this reader. Also, given the variety of heterosexual allusions in the history of science, it might have been interesting to hear more about metaphors suggesting the disrobing or uncovering of nature. (See L. J. Jordanova, 'Natural Facts: a historical perspective on science and sexuality' in McCormack and Strathern, *Nature, Culture and Gender*, Cambridge, 1980.)

In Part III Fox-Keller turns from a historical approach to a critique of contemporary science. In contrasting standard interpretations of quantum mechanics, she suggests that upholding a belief in the knowability and objectivity of nature is a form of cognitive repression. This belief should be replaced by a view of the relation between humans and nature which is more 'humble and mature', in which the 'boundaries between subject and object are acknowledged to be never quite rigid and in which knowledge of any sort is never quite total' (pp. 148-49). If knowledge were total, according to Fox-Keller, there would be a 'one-to-one correspondence' between science and nature (p. 142). She is right in saying that this

definition of the knowledge relation must be rejected. She is wrong to say, however, that 'the tenet of nature's knowability must be relinquished' (p. 149). Knowledge must be redefined along fallibilist, not positivist or scepticist, lines. In a different but related context, Fox-Keller's upholding of the idea that science is self-correcting needs more argumentation since it is reminiscent of a positivist belief in the automatic progress of an autonomous science. In future work, it would be helpful for her to clarify her account of the nature and possibility of knowledge. This book is a compilation of essays, some new, some published previously, a fact which makes it difficult to put together the various, at times conflicting and differently based, analyses of knowability and objectivity. (Keller is aware of that possibility - p. 13.)

Chapter 9 is an excellent capsule of Fox-Keller's work on Barbara McClintock's discovery of genetic transposition (see *A Feeling for the Organism*, New York, 1983). She sees McClintock's philosophical approach and scientific method as inspiration for an orientation to nature different from the oppressive one of classical, masculinist science. According to Fox-Keller, scientists should appreciate the complexity and difference found in nature's orderliness and 'listen' to organisms so intently one virtually identifies with them. Nature is to be viewed as a vital subject in its own right - one that we must act to preserve - rather than a passive object to be manipulated for our own ends. A new scientific methodology must center around developing 'affection, kinship and empathy' (p. 164) with nature, rather than seeking domination over a passive object defined as separate and distant from human life.

Fox-Keller sees science as pluralistic, and she does not indict all male scientists for seeking a misogynist relation with nature. Her view is more abstract and subtle. She admits that there are examples of both men and women who use acceptable methods and philosophies. She proposes an interesting thesis, however, in response to the question 'What difference would it make if more women were scientists?' Including women would change science because they would be less apt than men to see their work as replicating a patriarchal relation to nature. A chaste and lawful marriage in Bacon's style would involve them in a loss of authenticity. Ultimately, Fox-Keller recommends a 'gender-free' science, one that does not require that rationality exclude the affective domain so often associated with women. This proposal is important and valuable. It would be interesting, however, to see these recommendations for reform supplemented by a revolutionary critique that highlights the need to free science from its alliance with capitalism and militarism.

Fox-Keller's discussion of the ease with which developmental biologists accepted the pacemaker concept in explanations of differentiation in cellular slime mold and her criticism of the central dogma of genetics for assuming DNA to be the 'executive governor of cellular organization' (p. 169) are fine examples of ideological intrusions in scientific theorizing. Hierarchy seems to be taken for granted and interactive models of nature are precluded. Though her analysis of 'master-molecule theories' is very insightful, her failure to fully treat the connections among gender, race and class hierarchies here illustrates the book's general tendency to emphasize gender at the expense of race and class. She does mention the relevance of corporate structure (e.g., p. 171) and she does agree that the institutionalization of modern science was bound up with a polarization of masculine and feminine required for the public, private split of industrial capitalism, but she does not carry through the implications of that thesis and show the importance of science 'ministering to the needs of capital' (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I). Surely the term 'master' cries out for a discussion of racial domination especially since Fox-Keller comments that science has been developed 'almost

entirely by white, middle-class men' (p. 7). One of the most exciting developments in recent feminist work has been the commitment to use methodologies that fully integrate an understanding of gender, race and class oppression. It would be crucial for Fox-Keller to adopt this method more strenuously.

At the book's core is an attempt to use a neo-Freudian approach to object relations theory as an explanation for why scientists seek to dominate nature in a misogynist fashion as well as explain why so few women choose science as a career. Briefly, the genderization of science is founded on human psychosexual development because the practice of having infant care dominated by mothers produces males who tend to see themselves as ontologically separated from others and females whose self-identity is bound up with being connected to others. The objectivity associated with science is defined according to stereotypes of masculinity because a split between subject and object is characteristic of male psychological development. 'A science that advertises itself as revealing a reality in which subject and object are unmistakably distinct may perhaps offer special comfort to those who, as individuals (be they male or female), retain particular anxiety about the loss of autonomy' (pp. 89-90). Science can be liberated by disconnecting it from masculine orientations and redefining its relation to nature in ways more loving and interactive, values associated with the feminine.

Though I do not share Fox-Keller's enthusiasm for object relations theory, I found her treatment of it one of the most sensitive I have read. She recognizes that many of the characterizations of infant development are painted with too broad a brush and that the model needs conceptual revision and greater empirical verification. Her suggestions for internal reform are interesting. 'Others' need to be seen as subjects rather than objects, especially the mother, and the theory's central concept, autonomy, needs to be disentangled from a masculine concern with being disconnected from others. The latter, static approach to defining autonomy must be replaced with a dynamic one, showing that connection to others is unavoidable and that our subjective experience is valuable, not harmful, for increasing objectivity (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Fox-Keller claims that philosophical and sociological studies of science have failed to investigate sufficiently the connection between masculinity and objectivity. This

is true. But Fox-Keller seems to go too far in the other direction, towards a psychological approach that fails to tie in materialist explanations from anthropology and sociology. Perhaps her move is critically necessary at this time. We do not need to choose, however, between biological determinism and object relations theory, as she suggests on page 80. What is needed is a theory of ideology formation that combines the personal and the political and is sensitive to changes in divisions of labor, including the sexual division of labor.

A theory which accounts for human psychosexual development must be cross-cultural and historical. Those scholars working on object relations theory base their account on white, middle-class European and North American contemporary experience in the nuclear family and then respond to criticisms that the theory tends to over-generalize by saying it is only fully appropriate to a subset of people and does not apply to others' lives. This strikes me as circular. What does Fox-Keller mean when she says the theory is 'quasi-universal'? (p. 87). What difference does it make when children are not primarily raised by their mothers, but are cared for by fathers, uncles, grandparents and even siblings, as anthropologists have shown? Furthermore, many psychoanalytic assumptions about infant life seem problematic. Do children really long for their mothers more than other people and do they find experiences with their mothers more important than those they have individually with their environment? Why is the child's growing independence from the mother fraught with pain and anxiety rather than excitement, challenge and reward? Is the theory's emphasis on the seeking of pleasure and avoidance of pain a form of classical liberal utilitarianism? These questions and others need to be addressed before the psychoanalytic approach to emotional life can be seen as more convincing than alternative accounts.

Despite these problems, *Reflections on Gender and Science* should be read by anyone seriously dedicated to understanding the nature of scientific discovery and growth. It is a challenging work, one which will shake the confidence of those who feel feminist material can be neglected. Fox-Keller's demonstration of masculine bias in science is convincing and insightful.

**Kathryn Russell**

## Hegel In School

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller, edited by Michael George and Andrew Vincent, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 175pp, £25.00 hb

Surprising as it may seem, Hegel was a school teacher for many years. From 1808 to 1817, he was Rector of the Nuremberg Gymnasium (classical secondary school), where he taught philosophy to boys aged 14-20. After his death, his teaching notes were found among his papers, and first published in 1840 in a version edited by Rosenkranz. Since then, other German editions have appeared. This is the first full English version, although some passages were translated in the 1860s by W. T. Harris [1], and these have been used as a basis for the present edition.

Hegel never intended these notes for publication. As with his other lecture notes, there are overlapping sets from different years. Consequently, the editors were faced with the choice of whether to produce a complete scholarly version or whether to eliminate repetitions and overlaps with the aim of creating a more coherent and

readable text. Wisely, I think, they have chosen the latter course. They have succeeded well. The result gives a good idea of how Hegel set about the task of teaching philosophy at secondary school level.

It is an intriguing question. For Hegel is surely among the least likely of school teachers. His style is so abstruse, his philosophy so lofty and abstract, that it is difficult to imagine him descending to the required level. From these notes, it seems clear that the pupils had to meet him halfway.

There is little concession on Hegel's part to his audience. What he taught was merely a pared-down version of the philosophical system he presents elsewhere, surprisingly little adapted or modified - except by way of simplification - to the special needs of school boys. Evidently he thought they were just as much, or as little, likely to benefit from Absolute Knowledge as a more adult audience. (What they thought is not recorded.)

Hegel himself was somewhat sceptical about the value of teaching philosophy in school. In letters to his friend



and patron Niethammer, he wonders whether the same material might not be taught more effectively and successfully through the classics. However, he stops short of arguing himself out of his job; and in it, by contrast, his attitude seems to have been something like 'in for a penny, in for a pound.'

The syllabus he followed was demanding. As a slight sugaring of the pill, in the lowest class (14 year olds), Hegel starts with the 'Science of law, morality and religion', rather than with logic as his system properly demands. His notes for these introductory classes are the fullest, but also the least philosophical. For Hegel starts off by presenting this material in a quite straightforward, empirical, descriptive, and what he would no doubt have regarded as unphilosophical, way. However, the course then moves into higher gear with an introduction to logic - Hegelian logic. The middle class (15-18 year olds) were taken through the early stages of the Phenomenology; and then some more logic, which Hegel taught at all levels. Finally, the top class were taken at a gallop through the whole of Hegel's Encyclopaedia system.

In their introduction, the editors give a useful brief account of Hegel's views on education and the place of philosophy in it. Hegel was no libertarian in the classroom. He believed in the value of discipline in education, and he defends the need for rote learning, on the grounds that the mind must acquire some techniques and have 'something to work with' before it can achieve anything (p. xiv). At the same time, however, he insists that education involves more than mere passive acquisition: its ultimate aim is self-development and freedom. 'It is not the receiving, but the self-activity of comprehension and the power to use it again, that first makes knowledge our possession' (quoted p. xvi). For example, although his pupils would have been in no doubt about Hegel's extremely conventional and conservative attitudes to law, morality and religion, his first year classes on these topics are relatively free of preaching, which, in any case, he never regarded as part of the purpose of philosophy [2].

So what we have here is a simplified, skeleton outline of some parts of Hegel's philosophical system, particularly the Logic, and the first part of the Phenomenology. The text, however, is spare and minimal. As with the Encyclopaedia, it consists of notes and condensed summaries that Hegel would expand upon extemporarily in class. Here, however, unlike the Encyclopaedia, there are no 'Zusatze' or additional material from students' notes, which help to make the Encyclopaedia so rich and rewarding. Indeed, in many places, the notes are barely comprehensible on their own. The suggestion in the blurb that they might serve as an introduction and starting point for students new to Hegel is misleading. The editors give better advice in their 'Introduction' when they suggest that the present work is best read in conjunction with Hegel's other writings. Indeed, it is very valuable in this role: for it provides a wealth of important and interesting new material for the student of Hegel's philosophy. A table is provided which shows how the material of the Propaedeutic relates to Hegel's other works (this could perhaps have been done in more detail).

There is a useful introductory essay by the editors. After outlining Hegel's ideas about school education and the place of philosophy in it, it goes on to give brief accounts of some of the central concepts of Hegel's philosophy in a style reminiscent of Knox's introduction to Philosophy of Right, though less successful. Miller's translation is up to his usual excellent standards: clear, fluent and workmanlike. Finally, the book is handsomely produced. It is a most welcome addition to the growing corpus of Hegel's work in English translation, though at £25 a rather pricey one.

## Notes

[1] Harris's translations are to be found in Hegel, Selections, (ed.) J. Loewenberg, Scribners, New York, 1929.

[2] Cf. the famous passage, in the 'Preface' to the Philosophy of Right, where Hegel says that philosophy 'must be poles apart from an attempt to construct a state as it ought to be... To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy.'

Sean Sayers

# The Third Programme

Dick Howard, From Marx to Kant, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. 300pp, £39.50 hb, £14.95 pb.

In this book it is argued that the fundamental weakness of Marxism is its inability to 'articulate the proper place and function of the political' (p. 238). Dick Howard attempts, in this major theoretical work, to persuade us that Marxist theory and practice is impoverished because of its dependence on 'economism'. Howard defines politics in republican terms as 'the public dialogue of society developing its own identity' (p. 96). The 'political', it is argued, should not be construed as being simply a reactive reflection of existent economic conditions, and yet, the author maintains, this is precisely the role the political plays in Marx's writings. It is contended that Marx's politics is dependent on a pre-given and external economic infrastructure which he never radically questioned, and which suggests that we can paraphrase Lenin and say that 'Marxist revolution would be only the highest stage of capitalism'. The problem, argues Howard, is that 'a revolution founded on the economic civil society to which Marx reduces politics could only realise what is implicit already in the capitalist relations on which it depends'. This leads to the central contention of the book, that: 'The Kantian republican politics is more adequate to the conditions of modernity than either the Hegelian normative state or the Marxian revolution' (p. 9). Howard is provocative: he is arguing that, despite their dialectical claims, neither Hegel nor Marx could overcome the givenness of civil society. Hegel, it is argued, dissolves revolution into historicism while Marx dissolves it into economism, and thus revolutionary praxis is rendered either impossible or irrational. The fundamental contention of this book is that Marxism is inadequate to its own tasks. While Hegel and Marx impose a 'closure' on civil society and its possibilities, it is Kant who succeeds in keeping things 'open'. Only Kant, it is argued, 'preserves the independence of the political' (p. 181). The author attempts to substantiate his thesis through a detailed and fascinating reading of Kant - in particular, Kant's historical and political writings and the third Critique, the Critique of Judgement. Through the reading of various key texts of Kant's, Hegel's, and Marx's, Howard succeeds in revealing some of the central problems that have bedevilled what he regards as the radical philosophical project of modernity (Marxism). His main achievement, I would argue, lies in showing the importance of the third Critique for an understanding of the theoretical context and framework of Marxism.

The book is heavily theoretical. It is the kind of work to which, if one was to be derogatory, the label 'theoretician' would not be inappropriate. In my opinion this is unfortunate and will work against the book having the kind of impact it deserves. Howard has certainly written a provocative and contentious, if not ultimately convincing, piece of work. I am sceptical of his claim that the theoretical return he proposes ('back to Kant') will lead to a Marxism that is more adequate to face the challenge of the 'continuing crisis of capitalism', as the blurb on the back of the book has it. I think Howard overlooks important aspects of Marx's so-called

economism. I would argue that Marx is as much committed to the 'political' as the author is - Marx clearly shares Aristotle's belief that man is a 'political' animal - but that the kind of political freedom Marx envisaged is not possible except on the basis of a total human emancipation, and which is an emancipation that is only possible through a radical social and economic revolution of capitalist relations of production (see The German Ideology, C. J. Arthur, pp. 94-95). It is precisely here that Marx departs from Aristotle and becomes modern. I would suggest that Howard must either accept this fact and then greatly modify his criticism of Marx's economism, or he must abandon his pretensions to be espousing a recognisable Marxist philosophy of freedom. Marx without economism is simply not Marx, and for the fundamental and very important reason I have stated.

**Keith Ansell-Pearson**

## Hammers And Nuts

Hilary Lawson, Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament, London: Hutchinson, 1985. 132pp, £5.50 pb  
 The Second of January Group, After Truth: A Post-Modern Manifesto, London: Inventions, 1986. 31pp, £1.50 pb

Reflexivity purports to be an exploration of the post-modern crisis inaugurated by the appearance of reflexivity at the centre of the philosophical stage, by the realization that, for instance, to recognize the importance of language is to do so within language, and so on. Yet within this world without certainties, without absolutes, one thing at least is certain: the existence of the Great Tradition exemplified by the holy trinity of deconstructionism. One of the characteristics of Traditions great and otherwise is that their exemplars are amenable to exposition, and Lawson accordingly presents concise accounts of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, though the portrayal of the latter is unlikely to replace that given in Norris's Deconstruction (Methuen, 1982). In other words, the alleged destructive talents or potential of the trinity does not prevent them from being elevated in their turn to the status of philosophical masters. Lawson follows the example of the masters by over-indulging in would-be paradoxes, at least one of which falls into the classic trap. Thus, it is very difficult to read the inaugural claim that the book 'does not seek to present a fixed and final account'. Its claims, including this one, are not intended to be held, they do not attempt to stand without thinking of Freud's magisterial interpretation of the pronouncement: 'You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's not my mother.' Orthodoxies which deny their own name remain orthodoxies.

The 'Second of January Group' - the significance of the date remains unspecified and escapes me completely - plough the same furrow to produce a manifesto without a



programme and without principles, a call for active nihilism. The same picture of the progression from relativism to reflexivity and nihilism is presented in rather more aphoristic style, culminating in the cry 'The rationalists have only interpreted the world, the point is to invent it.' Presumably the call to action will not reverberate far beyond the walls of the seminar room. Once again, revolt turns into style. Nietzsche called upon his disciples to become philosophers with hammers. In May '68, it was possible to dream of the appearance of a philosopher with an Armalite. The Second of January Group promise only that of a philosopher who denies that he is a philosopher. The hammers and the Armalite have become mere stylistic devices.

**David Macey**

## Angst

Norman Jacobson, Pride and Solace: the Functions and Limits of Political Theory, New York and London: Methuen, 1986. 166pp, £4.95 pb

Pride and solace: the terms may not be familiar, but the ideas will be. For they are used here to present a version of existentialism that has a positively dated feel about it. We fear freedom; we crave certainty and the assurance of truth in politics. The pride of the philosopher is his or her belief that he possesses the truth; and the reader, searching for fixed points in a world of doubt, finds solace in such theories. The book begins with accounts of the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau. However, the main argument emerges only when we move on to the contrasting work of a group of modern writers: Orwell, Arendt and Camus. These three, according to Jacobson, refuse the comfort of easy answers; they have the courage to try to construct political theories 'without solace'.

There are occasional flashes of interest and insight in the chapters on the classical theories; but at the same time there is a great deal in them that is questionable. The style does not help. It is pretentious and rhetorical; too often concerned more with literary effect than with clarity or precision of expression. And then there is the whole tedious air of drama which is, it seems, an inescapable part of the mise en scene of existentialism. We are living 'the crisis of modernity; - 'the universe seems out of joint'. Do we have 'the strength to endure our freedom?' (pp. 13-15). Most of us, it seems, do not. We are 'utterly alone' and we seek the solace of certainty. And so: 'the theoretician who saw in the nations of Southeast Asia a row of dominoes ... knew everything, and killed everything he could. The revolutionary knows everything ... and plants his bombs' (p. 154).

Our three heroes are different. They are the 'champions of a political theory free of solace' (p. 131). Of them, Camus is given the fullest treatment. 'The whole thrust of his work, and his life,' we are told 'is towards existing within messiness, learning to live in the absence of the assurance that one is right and one's opponent wrong' (p. 145). With courage and integrity he holds a middle way; with passionate reasonableness he shuns the extremes of both right and left. The whole thing is becoming quite SDPish, until, with a fashionable final twist, Jacobson reminds us that it is impossible to avoid commitment. For, as the existentialists are fond of pointing out, 'even our deepest silence is a social stance' (p. 153). And so the idea of a politics 'without solace' is itself revealed as a form of solace.

Jacobson ends up by toying with these paradoxes, but he does not seem to realize how deep they go. The problems are well known. The existentialist principle of living 'without solace' - without 'bad faith' - is a purely formal one. As such, it is incapable of generating or justifying

any particular commitment, either to the mean or to an extreme. Mere good will or good faith are not enough; and the assumption that only political moderates are troubled by doubts is surely a piece of supreme complacency. Angst is not a liberal monopoly. It is quite possible to be a troubled extremist - a fascist or a communist in good faith, with all the doubts and hesitations which, for Jacobson, are the marks of the political theorist facing the world without certainty and without solace. In short, it is hard to give much credence to this picture of politics, or gain much solace from it.

Sean Sayers

## Pride's Purge

Gabriele Taylor, Pride, Shame and Guilt; Emotions of Self-Assessment, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. £17.50 hb

The emotions have had a rough time in the history of philosophy, with little to stand in between their drastic systematisation in Spinoza's Ethics and Hume's more equable, but often reductive discussions. Taylor's target falls short of a complete theory of the emotions, but the fundamentally descriptive methodology employed commits her to some substantive theses about how they are to be understood.

The book's twofold achievement lies in making the emotions, as features of our lives that have, sentimentally speaking, every claim to philosophical attention, tractable and rewarding objects of analysis, dispelling any illusions that they are insufficiently hard-edged items to bear much weight; and in drawing our attention, through the selection of those particular emotions that figure in the book's title, to the existence and importance of reflexive attitudes that can only be focussed through emotions.

Guilt, shame and remorse are shown not to be adequately described by being branded as 'the moral emotions', and only to take on moral content through the pre-existence of a structure in which the subject takes itself as an object for evaluation. This structure, explored in the last chapter on integrity, is suggested to be a perspective that is peculiar to an individualist culture such as our own which has dispensed with theologically based modes of evaluation or the schemes that operate in honour-cultures. Emotion is linked, through belief, with social forms, in a way that is reminiscent of Alasdair Macintyre's attempts to relativise moral and personal concepts.

Taylor's procedure takes its cue from a paper of Davidson's on Hume's theory of pride, and consists in listing and cataloguing the beliefs that form the matrix of an emotion, in the sense of making it identifiable as guilt rather than shame or remorse as opposed to regret, and as explaining what causes that emotion. The practice of looking for such beliefs to some degree successfully demystifies emotions, contradicting Hume's view that they are atomic impressions. However, it is at the point where this project gets completed that the hot questions resurface. What more is involved in having an emotion than having certain beliefs? Is the extra of a rational or an irrational nature?

Taylor has some qualifications to make to Davidson's theory, but does little to temper his general assimilation of having an emotion to reasoning. One very good reason for doubting that this is the right principle of mental functioning on which to model emotions is this: some of the elements that form the background to emotions (thoughts of, Taylor herself notes, the self as deformed or whole) and which are crucial to their identity, are of a sort and of an obscurity that cry out for psychoanalytic

interpretation. Similarly, the treatment of Sartre's account of shame identifies the presence of an audience-structure that is absent in the case of guilt, but leaves out any account of what could motivate or account for that structure. Explanation seems to run out too soon.

If Taylor's method eventually offends against our intuitive sense of the irrationality of emotions, it at least prepares the way for better answers to the other, intriguing questions.

Sebastian Gerdner

## Reich Cuttings

Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and Bela Grunberger, Freud or Reich? Psychoanalysis and Illusion (trans. Claire Pajaczowska), London: Free Association Books, 1986. 252pp, £20.00 hb, £8.50 pb.

Wilhelm Reich had the dubious, if not unique, distinction of being expelled from both the International Psychoanalytic Association and the German Communist Party. Understandably, neither the Marxist nor the psychoanalytic tradition is comfortable with his work, although the early Character Analysis is still quite widely respected in analytic circles. It is, however, difficult to take his later work, with all the talk of bions and orgone, at all seriously, despite the cult status it acquired in the sixties.

Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger provide a brief and not inaccurate account of Reich's work and of his singularly unfortunate life, which ended with a decline into an unmistakably paranoid state. Their account is, however, infuriatingly incomplete and often grossly anachronistic. One example will suffice. In Character Analysis, Reich mentions the threat of jail which hangs over those who practise incest or homosexuality; the authors compacently note that in the West, 'homosexuality is rarely a crime in itself'. Reich was writing in the thirties, when homosexuality was quite definitely a crime in Britain. Within years, the pink triangle was to become a badge of death, but history simply does not impinge upon the authors' awareness.

There are many better accounts of Reich than this, but one senses that Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger are concerned less with presenting a reasoned critique than with condemning any departure from an orthodox acceptance of Freud's cultural theories. Marcuse, Deleuze and Guattari, and libertarian educationalists all come under attack, and the underlying argument is always the same. Radicalism of any kind represents a failure on the part of the individual to master his or her internal conflicts. Psychic conflicts are then projected outwards on to an external and threatening world, which is seen as the source of conflict and unhappiness. The radical simply wishes to recover a lost unity. The belief that it is possible to achieve that unity is rather curiously termed 'ideology'. Whilst it is probably true that radical movements of all kinds do attract at least their fair share of neurotics and even psychotics, the logical implication of this argument is that all protests against unemployment are the expression of a maladjusted libidinal economy. Political complacency characterizes the entire book; of course the libertarian theories and practices of education which flourished briefly after 1968 left much to be desired. But the account of those trends given here could have been culled from any tabloid newspaper. The authors' silences also imply that they would have us believe that all was well in the world of conventional education.

Psychoanalysts have good reason to criticise Reich. He does depart from Freud over a number of issues. He does reduce sexuality to genitality, thus destroying one of

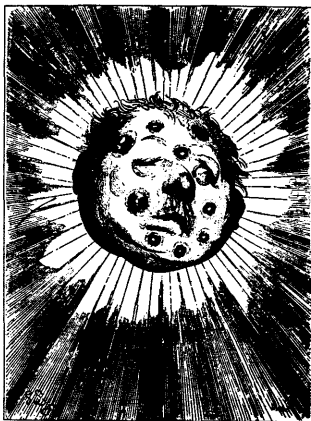
Freud's greatest advances. Criticism is one thing; the unfounded generalizations and extrapolations made here are a very different thing. In short, this is the kind of argument which gives psychoanalysis a bad name. Both Freud and the unfortunate Reich deserve better than this.

David Macey

## Interactions

Susan Oyama, *The Ontogeny of Information: Developmental Systems and Information*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 206pp, £22.50 hb, £8.95 pb

In recent years there has been an important resurgence of arguments combatting, in sophisticated ways, the 'neo-Darwinian synthesis'. This synthesis, owing a great deal to the barrier strictly erected by August Weismann between heredity and environment, seeks to lay down a fundamental explanatory circle between random variations, selective survival and reproductive success. It has a curious status in biology. Ostensibly, no-one quite believes it. Yet as many critics have shown, within a great deal of the very work that denies it are found its fundamental assumptions. One of the most important of these is genetic determinism.



Apart from worries that many have expressed about the political significance of clinging to notions of 'inherited nature', 'competitive survival' and the like, there is also a more straightforwardly scientific argument about such concepts. Perhaps an important reason for the continued survival of simplistic nature-nurture, gene-environment, or inheritance-learning oppositions has been the weakness of many attempts at formulating the alternatives. Many have declared themselves interactionists; few have managed to do more than make the declaration.

With Oyama's very important book, a lot of the power of this excuse is henceforth removed. This is the most thorough, systematic and level-headed contribution to the interactionist resurgence that I have read. It draws with confidence and competence on a wide range of biological, psychological, ethological and anthropological sources, and is philosophically sophisticated as well. The sheer range of her materials, and her command of them, makes the book successively daunting and a delight. But don't be put off - it is worth the effort.

Oyama carries through a careful dissection of the many apparent escapes from genetic determinism. She shows, for example, the unsatisfactory nature of explanations that appeal to genetic 'influences', 'limits', 'basic patterns' or 'canalisations'. Each of these, as she deftly demonstrates, is still premised on the assumption that it makes sense to think of genetic inputs as more basic and 'given' than non-genetic factors. They also make unargued assumptions

such as that to explain relative constancy in organisms we have to introduce some fixed 'essences' like genes, assuming that environments are too variable.

The positive position that underlies her critique, if I dare to state so shortly a complex argument, is that development is to be taken seriously. This is because, in the first place, 'there is no intelligible distinction between inherited (biological, genetically based) and acquired (environmentally mediated) characteristics' (p. 122). Instead, she argues, we have to learn to talk of, and to develop ways of investigating 'systems with histories', where our task is to study patterns of interaction and mutual determination. (In arguing this, she avoids not only determinist traps, but also naive structuralist ones. For there is no need to presume universal structuring principles. When an organism contributes to the determination of its environmental niche, but at the same time many elements in its environment contribute to the organism's form, development and behaviour, that is true contingent system-determination.)

This is a very judicious book, critically evaluating a host of other works in a way that is often surprisingly unhostile, given Oyama's clear rejection of the politics emergent from the works of people like Richard Dawkins. But she is as gentle and thoughtful about his work as she is about those who have moved a long way away from any form of genetic determinism, if not as fully into an alternative conceptualisation as she wants. I am not sure if this surpassing courtesy is connected with my one major reservation about her argument; I was disappointed at the way her customary precision falls away when she discusses the reasons for the persistence of the nature-nurture opposition. We are offered some very soft-edged speculations that perhaps it is in large measure due to the 'Western tradition' of Subject/Object oppositions.

This is not the heart of the book, the acute and original critique and replacement of determinisms. I rarely think it, but in this case I think this book so important that it could 'run and run'. I am quite certain that it deserves to.

Martin Barker

## Premods

John A. Hall (ed.), *Rediscoveries: Some Neglected Modern European Political Thinkers*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. £19.50 hb, £8.95 pb

There is a growing interest in the task of rescuing social thinkers who have been relegated to walk-off parts as the triumvirate of founding fathers - Marx, Durkheim and Weber - have assumed centre stage in the great drama of modernist theoretical encounters. This collection of retrievals is drawn from a series of articles published in the journal *Government and Opposition*. To mix metaphors further, it represents a St. John's Ambulance service in which various cultural casualties are patched up and presented for inspection. The motivation may be well meaning, and the individual cases deserving; but as a coherent endeavour, this *ad hoc* operation fails badly. There is no overall intellectual direction and too many obvious difficulties go unaddressed. The responsibility for this must fall largely on the editor.

For one thing, no sense is conveyed that some of these modern theorists (in fact, premodern might be a better term for many of them), only begin to look good again in the light of the post-modern climate. In a way, they have to be pushed out of the casualty tent to make way for the assorted Marxists, rationalists and fathers who are pouring in for emergency treatment. Yet in his introduction, Hall questionably describes Marx, Weber and Durkheim as constituting a dominant and in-place 'paradigm' in political theory. There is no hint of the analysis along

postmodernist lines which could just conceivably render such an oversimplification plausible. He seems to mean merely that the triumvirate are still read and written about a lot.

A second problem lies in the fact that nothing much is shown to unite the perspectives on the great neglected. It is true that Hall suggests we should see the chapters as forming two distinct clusters, dealing with, respectively, those genuinely important writers who deserve better reputations, and those who can best be seen as throwing light on their intellectual and political times. In the first group stand Emile Masqueray, Moysey Ostragorski, Elie Halevy, and Guglielmo Ferrero. In the second, amongst others, are Thomas Carlyle, Arthur de Gobineau, and Karl Kautsky. But both the division along these lines, and the allocation of authors to one or other type is unsatisfactory. Kautsky and Burkhardt are made to seem bigger theoretical personae than the classification warrants, and on this evidence (sometimes there isn't enough for us to tell) Halevy and Ferrero do not look like lumbering giants. Other figures do not fit either group.

In any case, the supposed division is challengeable. It appears to correspond to a difference in the commentators' treatment of their subjects. The neglected-but-great can perhaps be handled (the editor reasons) in an analytical fashion, whilst the neglected-but-historically-interesting should be regarded in the rigorously non-judgemental mode of Quentin Skinner. For the latter, the elaboration of intellectual context is in itself a primary goal of political theory. But this suggestion barely reflects what happens. David Miller is philosophically stringent with the central dilemmas which knock back Kropotkin's claims to genius, whilst Sorel and Robineau - who certainly illuminate their contexts - are also treated as genuine claimants to theoretical status. Moreover, alternative divisions could have been aired which raise wider questions. There are those amongst the neglected who are basically appalled at the prospect of modernity, whereas others firmly endorse it - if only with a view to its transformation. Within the premodernists too there are important distinctions to be made. Carlyle looks set to stay neglected because his incoherent and undialectical ideas are neither systematically nor self-consciously geared to take on the central tenets of what is to come. Charles Peguy, though, despite his dislikeable bouts of angry mysticism, seems to have latched on to the core dogmas of the modernist world view and opposed them with dogged consistency. A postmodernist, on this showing.

In partial recognition of the lack of an organizing framework for the book and a head-on approach to the implicit issues behind such a collection, Hall, rather embarrassed, encourages us to get what we can out of the individual pen portraits. Some of these are light, others more interesting and substantial. But the essays have gained little by being gathered into a theoretically evasive miscellany. As with much British academic political science, its tame and piecemeal profile might have been offset by solid scholarship; but the number of serious and distracting errors in proofing disqualifies *Rediscoveries* from that saving grace.

**Gregor McLennan**

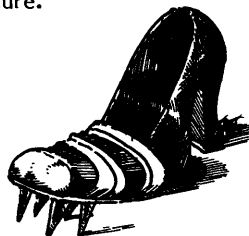
## Cartesian Sex

Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1986. 248pp, £22.50 hb, £6.95 pb.

Polity's 'Feminist Perspectives' series has already set a high standard for itself to sustain, with a succession of wide-ranging and pertinent publications. The Williams Report in Britain and the Minnesota Ordinance in the United States have recently returned the issue of

pornography to the centre of public debate. The recent film *9½ Weeks* has succeeded in circulating sexism within the cultural channels, and a serious response to such spectacles has never been more timely. *The Pornography of Representation* develops a feminist perspective on the difficult questions posed by current discussions of pornography. 'The traditional debate,' argues Kappeler, 'has focused on "porn" at the expense of "graphy"' (p. 2). She contends that pornography should be regarded as one consequence of the way that women are positioned as 'object' in Western culture. Her analysis is thus concerned with representational practices as opposed to sexual practices.

Kappeler divides the book into 'problems' rather than chapters, facilitating an approach which seeks to deconstruct the established, man-made modes of debate. Only by directing the discussion on to the level of representation - the level at which sexuality and violence are delineated and deployed in the cultural forms which prevail in Western societies - can the feminist critic successfully counter the bid to rescue pornography as 'art'. Kappeler develops and defends her position with admirable skill and style; the weaknesses in the text are perhaps inevitable in a book which is strongly non-conformist in nature.



'The concept of "aesthetics",' claims Kappeler, 'is fundamentally incompatible with feminist politics; (p. 221). In her quite justified attack on the 'aestheticist' strategy - whereby all that is sordid melts into air and artistic grace is bestowed on the Hefner haven - she seems to endorse a radical scepticism whereby any sense of beauty or pleasure is seen as sinister. Kappeler's lucid expository style makes what she is saying seem less contentious than it is: nothing is ambiguous or confusing for Kappeler, all is crystal clear. Aesthetic appreciation, we are told, is 'disinterested observation' - Kant is quoted as proof, and we are encouraged to leave behind such an ill-conceived concept. It is a pity that Kappeler did not deem it worthwhile to confront the sociologically-informed aesthetics of critical theory, Wollheim, Morawski or Bourdieu.

Not only does Kappeler's critique of (Kantian) aesthetics work in a space precariously close to sociologism, it also has an overly 'literary' bias which leaves her treatment of the visual arts somewhat underdeveloped. It would be grossly unfair to make too much of the 'negative' quality of the argument, for obviously there is a positive cornucopia of practices to be 'negative' about. Kappeler is very persuasive when she demands a feminist cultural practice which is 'in the interest of communication, not representation ... dialogic, multilogic, an end to the pornologic' (p. 222).

This provocative and often perceptive work will help to redefine the parameters of the pornography problem. Kappeler's primary aim, I believe, is to open up a debate which was in grave danger of premature closure, and in this respect *The Pornography of Representation* is an indubitable success. Kappeler is clearly a writer whose work will always reward careful reading. Although she may in places pass into polemic, she generally shows a sophistication which has hitherto been sadly lacking in this area of research. This book will be of immense value to those involved in social theory, feminism, and media studies.

**Graham McCann**

# Collected Ideologies

Frank O'Gorman, British Conservatism: Conservative Thought from Burke to Thatcher, London and New York: Longman, 1986. 255pp, £5.50 pb  
Robert Eccleshall, British Liberalism: Liberal Thought from the 1640s to the 1980s, London and New York: Longman, 1986. 255pp, £5.50 pb

In historical terms, it is not so long since people were talking confidently of the end of ideology. Events have, however, proved them wrong, as Mrs Thatcher swept to power in 1979 on a wave of ideological indignation at the collectivist excesses of the post-war consensus. This, indeed, is one of the stories told in Frank O'Gorman's collection, British Conservatism. One consequence of this revival of ideology has been a spate of essays, articles and books, defining and discussing the forms of thought which have comprised the backdrop to political life since the French Revolution. Longman, to their credit, have taken this revival seriously, and are in the middle of producing a very useful series entitled 'Documents in Political Ideas'. Each contribution takes the form of a collection of extracts from primary sources, illustrating the development and character of the ideology in question, and prefaced by an authoritative introduction by the compiler.

Collecting texts of this sort for this purpose may appear a mug's game because it seems impossible to satisfy everyone - someone or some theme will inevitably be left out. Not so in these cases. Of course everyone will have their own favourites, a particular cast of minor characters who follow the lead given by the principals, but a generous reading of both these compilations reveals - as far as I can see - no major lacunae. The solid performers are all there: Burke and Disraeli for the Conservatives, Mill, Locke and Keynes for the Liberals, and both compilers have made interesting choices for the supporting players - among others, O'Gorman has chosen Wordsworth and Walter Scott, while Eccleshall has lighted upon John Milton and Edward Miall. One minor point is that Eccleshall, in his introduction, whets our appetite with the mention of the profusion of tracts and pamphlets which appeared during the Civil War, and which played an important part in breaking down the rigidity of social thought, thus laying the foundations for liberalism, but includes no example from them. Turning up the page, one finds only an extract from the relatively familiar Levellers constitutional programme of 1649.

Minor complaints aside, however, it is a rare treat to see both editors making sense through their collections of the two ideologies most often open to the charge of raggedness and incoherence. The threads become evident as one reads, and it is fascinating to see the common line of descent from Keith Joseph's tortuous reflections on the social values of the New Right, through Quentin Hogg's organicist conception of society, to Lord Salisbury's rearguard action against the 1867 Second Reform Bill, claiming that he was prepared to go within 'twenty-four hours of revolution' for the sake of his 'dearest interests and sincere convictions' (p. 160).

Robert Eccleshall, for his part, has chosen a collection which is particularly enlightening on that central question for liberalism - how much State? He shows how utilitarianism paved the way for acceptance of an enlarged role for the state, and emphasises the pivotal role played by R. B. Haldane and T. H. Green whose notions of a community of interests dragged liberalism away from an exaggeration of individualism and thus back into the ideological front-line. He is, however, careful to show in his introduction that it has not always seemed so

cut and dried, and illustrates the point with mention of Herbert Spencer's spirited defence of laissez-faire and the minimal state - an extract from Spencer in the main body of the text would have been helpful here. In any case, Eccleshall is reading history forwards rather than backwards, and our understanding is all the better for it.

Of course, no compilation would be complete without its gems and moments of surprise, and both O'Gorman and Eccleshall have dug up the requisite titbits, from John Stuart Mill's fascinating defence of a no-growth economy in the interests of a calmer, less materialistic population, to Margaret Thatcher's 1977 homily which rings a little hollow nearly ten years on: 'What worries Jack Jones is that the leaders of his party are living too well. What worries us is that ordinary people are not living well enough' (p. 221).

Extracts aside, both editors have produced lengthy introductions to their compilations, the main strength of which is that they make laudable efforts to contextualise the changes that were taking place within their respective ideologies. All too often, ideologies are treated as if apart from history rather than as a part of it, and there seems no doubt that a more comprehensive understanding is reached if they are historicised. One final grouse, however: why is it that books which one assumes are intended primarily for reference have no index?

## Andy Dobson

(Andy Dobson is an E.S.R.C. Postdoctoral Fellowship holder)

# Postmods

Postmodernism, ICA Documents 4/5, 1986, n.p.

'Postmodernism' is hard to escape from just now, and this cool slim pack from an ICA gathering last year is one of several collections on the syndrome recently published. For the sceptic, there is an irony to be savoured in the way that the cultural studies buffs - newly liberated from those boring old 'grand narratives' - are irresistably drawn to the new noises. After all, the postmodern condition refers to the climate in social and political thought of diversity, counter-finality, fragmentation and hesitancy. Yet the very term and its associated argot have quickly developed into a new orthodoxy, with attendant gestalt, telos, and canon.

This irony has not been lost on some of the more astute founders of the current, and as the A train of rationalism and totality slowly pulls out of town, a few unlikely figures are found taking a late and discreet hop on to the footplates of the Idea of Reason as it chugs off into the night. Thus in the cracks of this mixed and insubstantial volume, Derrida is to be found defending the underlabourer conception of philosophy and the rational core of the Enlightenment, while Lyotard corrects Eagleton on Marx on labour power and admits that the basic idea behind the postmodernist surge (that little confidence can be placed in 'progress') is a relatively trivial insight.

The sceptical note, though salutary and necessary in its place, is not adequate, however. Insofar as the postmodern trend represents mere iconoclasm - the cavalier and outright dismissal of, for example, 'logocentrism', the Enlightenment, epistemology, and History tout court - then certainly it deserves systematic critique. The celebration of indeterminism and the dramatic relegation of the cognitive component of human practice in favour of its (variously) playful, irrational, mixed-up or performative dimensions finds a fitting and dangerous culmination in the rightism of the French nouveaux philosophes. The most useful and satisfying



piece in this collection is Peter Dews's outline of Habermas's counter-perspective on the fate of modernity, and both the colossus and his intermediary (Dews has become the most surefooted mediator of this kind of debate) are persuasive advocates of the undogmatic rationalist project.

And yet, something is going on in postmodernist discourse which is not reducible to rightist antics and which evades the progressivist caricature. If we take the postmodern as referring to a series of reflexive questions rather than as a particular stance, its pertinence for theory and practice is hard to deny. The 'big' theories are now irrevocably in process of deconstruction or reconstruction. The extent to which action can be securely guided by cognitive claims about an entire social order or historical epoch seems at times gropingly minimal. The performative and rhetorical aspects of theoretical postures have been significantly underplayed. The idea of representation (whether scientific or aesthetic) is almost completely open ended. Above all, the notion that significant theoretical or political choices can be given decisive epistemological or moral foundations has been deeply punctured. Moreover, the standard rationalist counter-move - to lay the charge of relativism and nihilism at the door of the post-structuralists and their postmodern heirs - has been hard to sustain against intelligent critics of our obsession with objectivity and universality. The debate seems to have reached a more nuanced stage, and it is to be hoped that soon a more sustained, single-voiced engagement of the issues will replace the useful but limited introductory roundtables.

Gregor McLennan

## Human Agency

C. Taylor, Philosophical Papers, 2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, Vol. 1: Human Agency and Language, 294pp, £25 hb, £7.95 pb; Vol. 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences, 340pp, £25 hb, £7.95 pb.

These two volumes comprise 22 separate pieces of writing grouped into five sections and written between 1967 and 1984. Although many topics are discussed there are in fact two central and related themes which dominate both volumes. The first, and critical theme, is an unremitting attack on naturalism and the damage arguments and models derived from the natural sciences have done in the fields of social science and philosophy. The second, and positive theme, is to advance an alternative to naturalism based on an extended account of what is constitutive of human agency; and the implications of an adequate account of human agency for disciplines as diverse as psychology and political theory.

Human Agency and Language is divided into three sections: the first deals with the nature of human agency; the second, philosophy and psychology of the mind; and the third, the philosophy of language. For Taylor human agency rests crucially on the capacity to use language and reflect upon its meanings in a way that amounts to self-interpretation - not just on a few occasions but as a regular part of living as a human being. Where the argument Taylor puts is particularly interesting is in his contention that such self-interpretation is fundamentally focussed on matters of moral correctness, in his words the 'qualitative worth of different desires' (vol. 1, p. 16, see also, for example, vol. 1, p. 102); yet while this self-interpretation is concerned with normative goods it is also in an important way rational and open to revision. In other words Taylor is distancing himself from the view that rational discourse can only have a minimal role when it comes to comparing alternative value positions. Instead

he argues that it is constitutive of human agency that individuals make 'strong evaluations' that go beyond a concern with desires and outcomes to a concern with motivations and what is worthy.

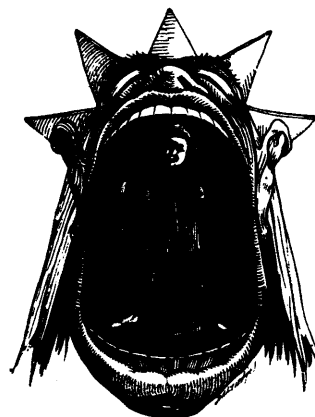
It is difficult to convey in a short review the subtlety and force of Taylor's arguments, but central to his position is the view that the very process of comparison between different values (in moral, aesthetic and normative matters - indeed in any comparison of things valued) allows humans to 'develop a language in which to express the superiority of one alternative' (p. 24). Put differently, 'the strong evaluator can articulate superiority just because he has a language of "contrastive characterization"' (p. 24). This view of human agency and the self constitution, at least in part, of our identity through strong evaluation is formidably impressive and infuses much of the writing in both volumes.

If Taylor's position, or anything much like it, is accepted, then there are major ramifications for the social sciences and political philosophy. Philosophy and the Human Sciences deals with some of these. It contains twelve essays and is divided into two sections, 'Philosophy and Social Sciences' and 'Political Philosophy'. Some of the contents, such as the essays 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man' and 'Neutrality in Political Science', are well known, some much less so. The two essays just referred to are rightly famous but it is worth pointing out that they were both written more than a decade ago and, more importantly, developed their position partly by analysis of political scientific works from the early and mid 1960s. Even the excellent essay on the problems of assessment and verification in political theory and the social sciences entitled 'Social Theory as Practice' and written in 1983 manages to include a reference to works of David Easton written in 1953 and 1965. Political science, indeed the social sciences generally, have moved on a long way since the 1950s and early 1960s, and it is therefore left to the reader to decide how Taylor's arguments apply to current methodologies of particular social sciences, particularly political science.

Besides the three essays mentioned above section one contains essays on understanding and ethnocentricity, rationality, and Foucault. The second section contains six essays on a number of perennial topics such as distributive justice, negative liberty and legitimation but all broadly sharing the themes stated at the outset of this review.

The material these two volumes contain would be of value not just for courses in these areas but also for any course concerned with the nature and diversity of political knowledge; or with conceptual studies on the nature of rationality. Further the material on human agency would enliven reading lists concerned with the questions of free will and rationality in moral debate. A point very much in Taylor's favour is that when his writing is complex and demanding it is because the subject demands it and for no other reasons.

Peter Vipond

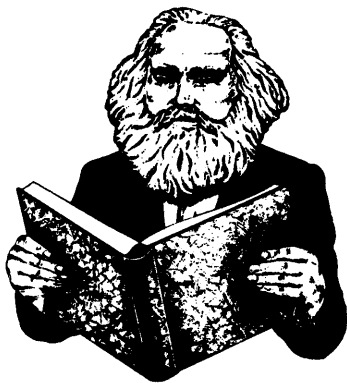


# Marx Matters

W. A. Suchting, Marx and Philosophy, London: Macmillan, 1986. 133pp, £25 hb

Wal Suchting gives us here three linked studies, on knowledge, on materialism, and on contradiction. He brings a considerable weight of scholarship to bear on the Hegel and Marx texts, with lots of discussion of German terms and notes to the French, English and German literature. The result is sometimes indigestible. But this is the kind of philosophical work that repays further study. In trying to get a grip on the general position the key category is that of material practice.

Thus, in dealing with the problem of knowledge Suchting suggests that it is necessary to abandon the traditional idea of pre-constituted epistemological subjects and objects, and to grasp them as moments of a practical relation. Here he appeals for textual support to an analysis of the Theses on Feuerbach. He then goes on to speak of a 'mode of theoretical production'. Interestingly, he objects that Althusser precisely failed to press the analogy with economic production. Althusser works with the concept of the labour process, but he does not bring in as well the social relations of production and the embedding of production in the wider social context. In developing the discussion in this direction, Suchting returns to the question of truth and has some interesting things to say about coherence and correspondence criteria. The solution lies in understanding the practical context in which different sciences work. This is not especially a philosophical task. Marxist philosophy today has primarily a negative job: 'to remove obstacles from the path of inquiry, to keep open what traditional epistemologies work to close.'



The chapter on the concept of materialism again seeks to divert attention from formulations in the texts suggestive of traditional ontological debates and to characterize Marxism as 'practical materialism'. He appeals once again to the Theses and also to Engels and Lenin. From his point of view 'philosophical materialism' is interpreted as a 'policy' which guides science while refusing to identify materialism with the concept of matter in any particular scientific theory.

The policy itself Suchting seeks to legitimate politically - in terms of emancipatory interests. Probably many will find this controversial. Having failed to specify Marx's materialism as 'dialectical' in the second paper, Suchting explains in the third that he considers Marx does use a dialectical method and, in particular employs a concept of 'contradiction'. Drawing on materials from Marx's critique of economics, he finds several ways in which it is used: 'anomaly', 'real

conflict', 'real unity of opposites'. The main effort is devoted to separating Marx and Hegel on this last. In this Suchting makes good points about idealism, and seeks to show that in Marx unity is conditioned by a material-social process. It is a virtue of the discussion that it is tied to particular cases. He holds that, in general, dialectical inquiry depends on the specificity of the subject matter.

In sum, there is plenty of food for thought here - although at eighteen pence a page starving researchers might prefer to copy it!

C. J. Arthur

## 1986 Protests

J. G. Merquior, From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Thought, London: Verso, 1986. 286pp, £18.95 hb, £6.95 pb

Few would deny that the period of high structuralism is well and truly over. The masters are either dead or silent, and the dream of scientificity has faded. Heideggerean phenomenology and Nietzschean nihilism, modishly disguised as deconstructionism, take their revenge. Merquior provides a clear and informative account of the transition from structuralism to post-structuralism, a guide to the road from Jakobson's Prague to Derrida's Paris and to the Derridean outposts at Yale. The account focuses on Levi-Strauss, Barthes and Derrida, but it does also encompass a more general description of the sea-change that has occurred. No pretence at objectivity is made, and the author's distaste for Derrida and his lingering admiration for Levi-Strauss is apparent throughout. The polemic is perfectly justifiable, but at times the author does protest too much: the deliberate irreverence begins to sound forced and become simply tiresome.

At the level of exposition, Merquior is at his best on Levi-Strauss. As a former participant in the anthropologist's seminar, he is well placed to give a full and extremely clear account of both the work and the controversies surrounding it. The discussion of Barthes - seen, along with Lacan, as a pivotal figure in the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism - is rather less satisfactory, particularly as it at times comes down to an endorsement of Thody's 'conservative estimate'. One of Merquior's complaints is that Barthes never discusses such major novelists as Kundera and Solzhenitsyn (sic). Similar arguments can, *mutatis mutandis*, be levelled against any given critic or theorist, but they are rarely convincing. There are, for instance, many valid criticisms to be made of Leavis, on both literary and political grounds: that he does not discuss Mallarmé is surely not one of them. More seriously, Merquior underestimates the extent to which Barthes (in both his structuralist and hedonist incarnations) represents a serious and exciting challenge to the dreary orthodoxies that still prevail in many a department of literary studies.

The attack on the 'dismal unscience' of deconstruction is both lively and welcome in that it helps to undermine the whole enterprise by revealing its feet of clay: the arrogant dismissal of existing scholarship, the trivial punning and reliance upon shaky etymologies, and the circularity of many of the arguments deployed by Derrida and his acolytes. Unfortunately, the overall argument tends, however, to be lost in a welter of bibliographical references as Merquior attempts to explore the whole post-structuralist field rather than concentrating his attack on leading figures. One senses a desire to return to

a broader, humanist vision and a definite admiration for Todorov's recent renunciation of the orthodoxies of the last two or three decades. One also senses that the real hero of Merquior's intellectual history is Benveniste, the rather underrated linguist who combined the undoubted insights of structuralism with a wealth of more traditional learning and with a healthy scepticism as to the desirability of extending a linguistic model to anything and everything.

David Macey

## Class Interests

Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism*, London: Verso, 1986. 200pp, £6.95 pb

Ellen Meiksins Wood here provides a critique of some of the recent trends in socialist theory from a 'traditional' Marxist stance. The basis for her position is the attack on 'true' socialism developed by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*. 'True' socialists are argued to perceive socialism as a rational and harmonious social order rather than the fulfilment of the interests of the working class, i.e. the abolition of classes. This is held to result from an acceptance of certain aspects of bourgeois ideology and in the reproduction of capitalist relations of domination.

Wood argues that many of the recent trends in socialist theory have produced a new 'true' socialism with an abandoning of the centrality of working-class interests to the goal of socialism. To prove this point, she provides an analysis of the 1984/5 British miners' strike. She argues that its strength lay in the organising of persons around the class interests of the miners while its weaknesses stemmed from the failure to extend the strike, the responsibility for which she places in the hands of the new 'true' socialists.

New 'true' socialism is traced back to the work of Althusser and particularly the notion of relative autonomy, in which the non-correspondence of the political to the economic as a direct relation is formulated. She traces the development of this trend through the various writings of Poulantzas, Laclau and Mouffe, Steadman Jones, Hirst and Hindess to the moderate political stances of Bowles and Kitching. She argues that non-correspondence has resulted in complete autonomy being given to the political and ideological over the economic, with the resulting rejection of class interests as central to the achievement of socialism: This division of the political from the economic is taken to be an acceptance of bourgeois ideology and the mystification of capitalist relations of production.

In this development the role of discourse has become central to the organising of political groupings seeking majority support for the achievement of their goals. Wood argues that this has produced an electoral and elitist politics aimed towards an extension of liberal democracy rather than the abolition of classes. This she takes to be anti-Marxist and an abandoning of socialism.

While there is much in Wood's analysis that demands attention, there are also fundamental questions which she does not address. The argument that new 'true' socialist theory has resulted in the abandoning of socialism as a goal and suggestions of betrayal of class interests can be stood on its head. From this perspective, recent developments have attempted to reflect the changing situation that socialists are confronted with. These include an apparent lack of interest in socialism among large elements of the working class, the limits of socialism in practice and the major impact of the women's,

peace and anti-racist movements on the contemporary political scene. Wood's stance would seem to suggest that it is due to the failure to organise around class interests that the current political situation of a more self-confident capitalism has been engendered. This is surely far too simplistic, even if we do accept that many of the recent trends in socialist theory are not fully adequate. At least the attempt is being made to grasp the complexities of the contemporary world.

The question which is centrally at stake in this book is whether as socialists we should subordinate non-class political forces because they do not fit into the mould of a previously determined theoretical stance, or attempt ongoing reformulations of our socialism in the light of these changes. While the former may be more comforting, the latter is a challenge which socialists cannot ignore. Therefore, while a legitimate challenge to some of the trends in recent socialist theory, Wood's book does not do away with the need for such developments and offers no positive advances on classical Marxist formulations.

Richard Edwards

## De Reader's Digest

Christopher Norris, *Contest of Faculties: Philosophy and Theory after Deconstruction*, London and New York: Methuen, 1985. 247pp, £16 hb, £6.95 pb

Norris is turning into one of deconstruction's more notable apologists, and he works hard here to dispel some of the more insistent criticisms that tend to be levelled at Derrida and his disciples. Taking as a central issue the problem of 'how theory can justify its claims when faced with various forms of sceptical or relativist argument', Norris proceeds to contextualise deconstruction within the modern analytical tradition such that Derrida can be seen as a legitimate, if extreme, response to an established discourse with a set of apparently theory-resistant problems: 'Deconstruction is preoccupied with the central questions of meaning, reference and truth, as addressed by analytical philosophers from Frege to Putnam and Davidson.' The aim is to leave us with a picture of deconstruction as 'a rigorous thinking-through of precisely those issues that are pushed out of sight by other, more accommodating versions of cultural critique'. It will be the theory which reaches the parts other theories cannot reach.

A series of such 'accommodating versions' are analysed in this text, and Norris reveals a considerable flair for *Ideologiekritik* as he engages with the likes of Rorty, Lyotard, Quine, Scruton and Empson. There are also lengthy excursions into the truth-conditional semantics of Frege and Davidson, which are seen to provide possible correctives to recent theory's slide into extreme relativism and 'referential agnosticism'. Behind it all lies a desire to pare away the excesses of deconstruction and suggest ways of revitalising the basic theory.

Norris is careful to differentiate between Derrida and his followers. The master is rigorous, but his followers (Paul de Man excepted) are less inclined to be so, and American literary deconstructionists like Geoffrey Hartman and J. Hillis Miller are criticised as being part of a 'deconstructive activity which - for all its new-found sophistication - still looks increasingly like 'old' New Criticism under a different rhetorical guise'. This hives off the relativists (or 'vulgar-deconstructionists' as Norris dubs them) and leaves us with Derrida, de Man and a philosophically-respectable critique of meaning, logic and truth whose roots lie in such nineteenth-century

figures as Hegel and Nietzsche. While admitting that deconstruction has relativist overtones Norris feels these can be alleviated by an appropriate dosage of Fregean or Davidsonian truth-conditional semantics. In this manner we can 'turn back the more unwelcome effects of this widespread relativist drift'.

This amounts to a very positive reading of Derrida and it has some point (Hartman's ghastly, pun-saturated style begs to be singled out as an example of all that is worst in deconstruction). Yet it fails to explain exactly where in Derrida we find the rigour; as Norris himself revealingly admits, 'it is notoriously difficult to define what should count as argumentative "rigour" in the context of deconstruction.' The logical consequence of Derrida's anti-logocentricist crusade certainly appears to be a licence for anarchic free-play, and Derrida, no less than Hartman, is quite capable of indulging in it. For Norris to claim that vulgar-deconstructionism arises from an unfortunate, and philosophically-unwarranted, enthusiasm for the essay 'Structure, Sign and Play', looks suspiciously like special pleading on behalf of a sanitised deconstruction: a deconstruction from which all taint of hermeneutical freedom has been removed.

Norris clearly distrusts hermeneutical freedom - those 'ecstasies of liberated signifying practice' as he somewhat puritanically describes it - but that does not mean it is not a crucial, even central, part of the deconstructionist enterprise. Hartman, god help us, might just have got it right. *Contest of Faculties* is a well-organised and researched book by a lucid and accessible writer. Part of him is drawn to deconstruction, dangers and all, and part of him negates this attraction by the very act of his careful and reasoned response. Perhaps this is a necessary part of the process of cultural absorption, perhaps it is a failure of nerve. It means no disrespect to Norris to say that Derrida so often seems to leave his apologists in this awkward position.

Stuart Sim

## Shorter Reviews

Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Foreword by Wlad Godzich. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986. 276pp, £27.50 hb, £9.50 hb

*Heterologies* brings together sixteen essays and articles written from 1969 to 1983 and covering an almost bewildering range of subjects. In a startling display of erudition, De Certeau moves from the history of psychoanalysis to Montaigne's essay on cannibals, from the language of mysticism to the travel fiction of Jules Verne. He writes within the tradition of Bataille, Blanchot and Derrida, but mercifully we are spared the latter's over-indulgence in wordplay and typographical eccentricities. Certain of the pieces anthologized here are primarily of interest to specialists; the mysticism of Surin, for instance, is surely a rather arcane topic for most readers, fascinating as De Certeau's readings of his poems may be. Other pieces suffer from a certain absence of context. Thus, an essay on Alexandre Dumas's historical dramas is almost meaningless if one has no knowledge of the plays themselves. Reading it is rather like reading a preface to a text one cannot obtain, always a frustrating experience.

For most readers, the essays on Foucault and those on

psychoanalysis are likely to be the most attractive of the material published here. De Certeau's readings of Foucault are sympathetic and illuminating, and concentrate on the irony inherent in his attempt to subvert panoptic strategies of discipline by providing a panoptic survey of the same strategies. In terms of psychoanalysis, De Certeau performs the useful task of tracing the not inconsiderable strand of mysticism in Lacan, picking up the theological echoes in his work with sensitivity and finesse.

*Heterologies* is, then, a collection of erudite explorations in intellectual history. Given that the author is not a household name in Britain, a modicum of biographical and bibliographical information from the editors would have been welcome. Nor has De Certeau been particularly well served by his translators. Massumi's translations are at times leaden, adding a ponderous feel to texts which are in themselves already quite weighty. Marie-Rose Logan's translation of the piece on Lacan and the Ethics of Speech, on the other hand, is positively lame.

David Macey

Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume II*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 208pp, £18.96 hb

The first volume of Ricoeur's great study of *Time and Narrative* was published in French in 1983, and an English translation came out the following year. A second volume was intended to complete the work, but when Volume Two appeared in 1984, the conclusion was postponed to a third volume, which was published in 1985.

This excellent translation of Volume Two therefore makes available the middle portion of a strongly-integrated work. Its readers need to know how Ricoeur argued, in Volume One, that 'stories' (or 'narratives' - Ricoeur upsets some theorists by using the two terms interchangeably) are much more than literary inventions: they are the fundamental form of all human experience. Ricoeur then applied this idea to the understanding of history. Here in Volume Two, Ricoeur deals specifically with narrative fiction (which he believes to be categorially different from historiography). He provides a marvellously concise and informative survey of recent theories of narrative in German, French, and English; but his main concern is to contest the idea that modernist theory and practice have dispensed with stories altogether. On the contrary, says Ricoeur, they elaborate them and extend their scope by staging a dialectic or 'game' between the time of a story and the time of its narration. To prove it, Ricoeur offers some fine explanations of the 'fictive experience of time' in three 'tales about time': Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Mann's *Magic Mountain*, and Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*.

The full significance of these analyses is not to be revealed until Volume Three, however. This discusses the contribution which audiences make to the realization of stories, and proposes a comprehensive phenomenological theory of the indelible temporality of human existence. It is good news that the translation of the final volume, which is even better than the other two, is due to be published in the middle of 1987.

Jonathan Ree

Bob Fine, *Democracy and the Rule of Law*, London: Pluto Press, 1984. 231pp, £7.95 pb

This lively treatise sets out from a discontent with two polar versions of Marxism. On the one side socialism is presented as no more than an extension of liberal ideas about democracy and the rule of law; it is only a question of realizing them fully by tackling existing inequalities. On the other side Marxism sometimes appears as no more

than a negation of liberalism, contenting itself with denunciation of existing institutions as frauds designed to disguise the reality of class rule. Fine treads a middle path - the rule of law and democratic forms are historically progressive but ultimately limited because of their foundation in bourgeois social forms.

After a review of the achievements of 'classical jurisprudence', several chapters are devoted to Marx's own thought. These chapters demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the texts and a sharp eye for the inadequacies of Marx's formulations at every stage of his development. Then Fine sketches his own critique of juridical forms, modelled (perhaps too closely) on Marx's critique of political economy. A final chapter has trenchant comments on Althusser, E. P. Thompson and Foucault.

My only real criticism is that the term 'natural law' is handled somewhat oddly in the first chapter. The discussion of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Smith culminates in the claim that Hegel supported 'positive' against 'natural' law. One would never guess from this that the subtitle of Hegel's book is 'Natural Law and Political Science in Outline', nor that he says it is a gross misunderstanding to pervert the difference between 'natural' and 'positive' law into an opposition. There are some textual errors, e.g. p. 84 line 6, 'political being' should read 'partial being'. But, overall, this is an original and accessible contribution to the debate and must be taken into account by anyone engaged in it.

### C. J. Arthur

Fred d'Agostino, *Chomsky's System of Ideas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. 226pp, £19.50 hb

D'Agostino's survey is a study for the philosopher rather than for the practical linguist, and concentrates primarily on the philosophical and ontological premisses informing Chomsky's revolutionary work on language. By strategically refuting certain of the philosophical criticisms that have been addressed to Chomsky, he demonstrates that the premisses do in fact form a stable and coherent metaphysical system. For Chomsky, linguistics is in effect a sub-field of psychology; language is both a social institution and a grammar supplying rules which facilitate the expression of human creativity. Implicit within this view is a theory of human nature and of the innate capabilities of the human mind. D'Agostino rightly relates this to Chomsky's libertarian social views in a brief discussion which is all the more welcome in that Chomsky's overt political concerns are often ignored in debates as to the rectitude or otherwise of his linguistics. The politics are not a moral afterthought, but the logical expression of the linguistics. D'Agostino succeeds in presenting Chomsky's work as a coherent system of ideas, but the cogency of his argument is seriously marred by his remarkable aridity of style and by his plethoric use of the suffix *ism*. The organization of the book into chapters headed 'individualism', 'mentalism and rationalism', 'intellectualism' and 'limitationism' is to say the least off-putting. As a discipline, linguistics has produced remarkably few stylists, but this is simply barbarism.

### David Macey

David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1985. 319pp, £25 hb.

David Frisby has produced a very interesting, very scholarly book on modernity. At first sight its focus

seems hopelessly narrow for such a huge subject. Frisby concentrates on the theories of modernity in the writings of Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin. It shows the theories to be penetrating in their own right, and also to connect up in striking and illuminating ways with the present-day debate on modernity and post-modernity.

Frisby argues that the episodic and the discontinuous are central in the experience of modernity. Everything, as Baudelaire puts it, appears to be 'transitory, fleeting and fortuitous'. Things seem broken in the world and their relation to each other is experienced as random, arbitrary and unstable. The experience of modernity is, precisely, a fragmentary experience. The proposition is the main common theme linking the writings of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin. An understanding of modernity is to be gained by examining the small, broken things in social life, the fragments: photographs, hotel waiting rooms, a shop window, the latest fashion, a wall poster, the plot of a detective novel. In these mundane features of everyday life modernity is said to be most vibrant. Benjamin called Kracauer a 'ragpicker', a forager through the humble, quotidian scraps of modern culture. The term might be equally well applied to Benjamin's own work, certainly in respect of the 'Arcades Project', and perhaps also to many of Simmel's essays.

The scraps of modern culture are most profuse in modern urban life. Frisby shows that Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin are not so much sociologists of modern society, as sociologists of geographically specific modern cities which are said to pulsate with modernity. For Simmel, it was Berlin at the turn of the century; for Kracauer Paris and, above all, Weimar Berlin; for Benjamin, decidedly and perhaps also decisively, it was the Paris of the high bourgeois period, the mid-nineteenth century. Here, in the metropolis, the modern use of social space (work space, amusement space, commercial areas, vacant lots) is most clearly defined. Here also the crowd, a key metaphor in modernist thought, surges and ebbs through the day. Simmel's 'reading' of turn-of-the-century Berlin shows a hectic, fraught juxtaposition of 'anonymous' individuals which stretch modern nerves and sensibilities to breaking point. Of all the tendencies in modern metropolitan life which he unravels it is perhaps the tendency to neurasthenia ('feelings of tension, expectation and unreleased intense desire') which is predominant. For his part, Kracauer emphasizes the tendencies of impersonality and the ceaseless manufacture of 'dream-like expressive images'. And Benjamin finds in his metropolis, peeling fragments of past life and the true face of modernity in the 'ever same'. Frisby shows that these haunting observations of the 'real' character of modernity are more than isolated insights. Each is part of a distinctive theory which explains modern experience. In Simmel's work, as Frisby has shown at length elsewhere, modernity is traced to the mature money economy and the exchange relations which it requires. In the work of Kracauer, the experience of modernity is located in the process of capitalist rationalization. Benjamin, on the other hand, sees the roots of 'the transitory, the fleeting, the fortuitous' in the circulation of commodities and commodity fetishism.

This is a challenging and subtle analysis of modernity which concludes that it is 'premature' to speak of 'post modernity'. Frisby has drawn on an impressive array of primary sources which are not available in English translation. It throws much needed light on an important and rather neglected area of German cultural thought. The publishers would do well to produce a paperback version of this excellent study to widen its marketability.

### Chris Rojek