REVIEWS

FEMINIST FUTURES

Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, London, Virago, 1986.

Lynne Segal, in *Is the Future Female?*, criticises much contemporary feminism as uniformly celebrating difference between the sexes, and thereby downplaying the changes that have taken place, historically, in women's lifes, and the social, psychological and economic variations amongst women. Offering analyses of the practices and writings of some radical feminists, she warns that their project may reinforce ideas of sexual polarity that feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s sought to challenge. Her critique covers a range of views and campaigns, from the writings of Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich and Susan Griffin, and their search for women's harmonious union with her body, to issues like violence against women, porn, radical feminist celebrations of motherhood, and the peace movement. Her discussion, though critical, is tempered by an appreciation of the strength of many of these women and by an awareness of the extent to which many of their campaigns helped to combat inequality. The book, moreover, is informed throughout by a detailed narrative of socialist feminist campaigning and a clear statement of many of the aims of 'women's liberation' in the 1970s. In the 1970s, she argues, we wanted to be in charge of our own lives; this contrasts, she suggests, with today, when the public face of feminism has changed: now feminists are concerned with the special nature of women and their values.

Segal's critique of radical feminist concerns, then, is presented in contrast to socialist feminist campaigns, theory and aims. Her history of socialist feminism, however, whilst headed 'Whatever happened to socialist feminism?', is, unlike some other recent writing in the same camp, by no means wholly pessimistic. She recognises that the power relations between men and women, in Britain in the 1980s, are much as they were in the early 1970s; that most women remain impoverished, isolated and sexually harassed, that most are still in part-time employment, and that the Equal Pay Act failed because it ignored the reality of a workforce already divided by sex. She notes, however, that there have been changes that have given women greater autonomy. More women, for example, now work outside the home; men are more involved in childbirth (80% of fathers now watch the birth of their child); and women have, to a much greater extent than previously, the right to choose whether to become mothers.

Segal emphasises, too, the way in which British socialist feminists have had, themselves, to change as a result of their own recognition of the position of other women. Since the first black women's conference in 1979, she points out, many black feminists have argued that white women succeed at their expense. Black feminists have argued that black families protect against the racism of the British state; they point out, for example, that earlier 'Reclaim the the Night' demonstration had marched directly through black areas. Socialist feminists have been forced to learn from and change their positions as a result of their growing recognition of these past mistakes.

Many features of the book therefore represent a very welcome and positive contribution to feminist debate. There is, however, one aspect of it that I believe is open to challenge. Lynne Segal's book represents, I think, a growing orthodoxy among socialist feminists (if there still exists such a grouping) that it is misleading and wrong to generalise about sex and gender. In a fashion that is reminiscent of Althusser's denunciation of a range of thinkers from Descartes and Hegel through the early Marx as 'empiricist', she labels the writings of Mary Daly, Dale Spender, Andrea Dworkin, and Adrienne Rich, on the one hand, but also those of the French feminists Kristeva and Irigaray, as 'essentialist'. All of these writers, according to Segal, improperly make generalisations about women—about their spirituality, their biology, their language, or their unconscious—that fail to give proper recognition either to the changes in women's lives or to the material, social, racial and class differences amongst women. Essentialist feminism, she believes, downplays collective political struggle in favour of cleaning our heads of 'male ideas' or 'male values'. She contrasts the 'essentialist' project of much contemporary feminism, 'which stresses basic differences between men and women and asserts the moral and spiritual superiority of female experience, values, character and culture...', with a feminism which 'stresses the social and economic disadvantage of women and seeks to change and improve women's immediate circumstances, not just in the area of paid work and family life, but by providing finding for women's cultural projects, including women's safety in the streets, or meeting the needs of particular groups of women (p. 213).

Just as, earlier, I found Althusser's classification of Hegel with Descartes peculiar, because it downplays the significant differences between these philosophers, so too with Segal's use of the label 'essentialist'. Luce Irigaray's mystical, psychoanalytical reading of 'woman's imaginary' is about as

different from Andrea Dworkin's focus on violence as chalk from cheese. But it is Lynne's apparent overall denunciation of generalising feminism that I find disquieting. Contrary to her claim, only if, for example, Cynthia Cockburn's studies of the exclusion of women from print workers' work practices are supplemented by theoretical analyses of class, race and gender is their impact as great as it could be. Without theoretical understanding, the detailed studies would be just that, and would have no general import. In fact, despite appearances, and this is odd, given the strength of her critique of 'essentialist' feminism, Lynne does not outlaw generalising projects altogether. Instead, she says: 'I am not suggesting that the project of understanding sexual difference is the wrong project for feminists, but rather that it can mislead us politically unless we also place it within the historical and political contexts of women's resistance to conditions which confine and exploit us.' This is fine, but there are feminists labelled as 'essentialist' by Segal who have done precisely this: Luce Irigaray's writings, for instance, are full of references to strong or not so strong women—from medieval mysticism through witches to women's critiques of Freud—who have 'resisted' male attempts to appropriate and define them. In fact none of us, including Lynne herself, is exempt from 'essentialism', which it is broadly defined as the attempt to universalise about the position of women.

One of the refreshing things about Lynne's book is her refusal to accept feminist orthodoxies about the past. She re-evaluates the feminist critique of the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s, and says: 'It was my own experience in the sixties, and that of most of my women friends, that we greatly enjoyed being able to live openly in sexual relationships with men, and also enjoyed the more or less frequent forays we chose to make outside our central relationships at any one time' (p. 77). She suggests that feminists were arguing, in the sixties, that sexual satisfaction could give a woman greater confidence in herself and more power in the world—an idea lifted directly from the raunchy Reichian sixties when *The Function of the Orgasm* became a bestseller.

If Lynne is simply describing her own experiences here, and those of a few other women, then it serves as a welcome antidote to the rather puritanical picture of that period we have been given by some recent feminist writing. But surely she intends to do more than this. She wants to paint a more general picture of feminist activity in the 1960s. And here, I think, she is guilty of an 'essentialism' about feminists that masks significant differences amongst us. Some feminists in the sixties did not perceive themselves as attractive to men and did not, therefore, leap in and out of bed with them; some were afraid to do so because they had already suffered an unwanted pregnancy, whilst others were too busy with work, children and irate husbands to have the opportunity for doing so. Many a working-class woman who had begun to be active in her local CR group was unlikely to be able to share in the 'boring' (sic) experience of sleeping with her professor.

If 'essentialism' is defined in the way Lynne does, it seems indeed very difficult to escape from. And there is, I believe, an important and valuable place for theoretical attempts to make generalisations about women. Socialists do not criticise Marx for making generalisations about class; indeed, his analyses are recognised as providing invaluable theoretical underpinning for any detailed empirical study of groups of working-class people. This theorising should not, of course, take place without recognising the differences created by class and race.

The difference between radical and socialist feminists, if such groupings of women exist at all, surely remains that the former see the division between the sexes as fundamental to all oppressions, whilst the latter would regard class and race subordination as being of equal importance to gender. The problems in the socialist feminist project are legion, and Lynne, with her detailed discussion of feminist campaigning, has gone some way towards solving some of them. She does not need, nor is it, in my view, a useful thing to do, to denigrate her feminist opponents as 'essentialist'.

Alison Assiter

SELLING SENSUALITY

W. F. Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, Polity Press, 1986.

Over the past twenty years, the critique of commodity culture has seemed to be the exclusive prerogative of structuralist and semiotic approaches. This first English edition of Haug's work, appearing 16 years after its first German edition, promises the excitement of recovering an alternative, now heterodox tradition: the pursuit of critical theory initiated by the Frankfurt School. Casually dismissed these days as merely an overly-fatalistic variant of mass culture theory, this tradition now appears, through Haug's work, as a crucial corrective, attempting to relate cultural forms and human sensuality to concrete economic processes.

'Commodity aesthetics' comprises not only advertising, but packaging, display, design—all those elements of the product's appearance through which it promises satisfactions. Haug's aim is to theorize its place in 'the fate of sensuality and the development of needs within capitalism' (p. 5). The core of his critique is an attempt to derive this aesthetic from the nature of capitalist exchange relations.

Selling a commodity on the market depends on the buyer's self-acknowledged need for the good in question: use-value is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of sale. Within a capitalist regime of private production, driven by the accumulation of abstract value, use-value—and the buyer's needs and sensual existence—appears to the seller merely as a precondition for exchange, as means to an end. This is the all-permeating 'valorization standpoint' from which 'all human goals, even life itself, matter only as means and pretexts ... in the functioning of the system' (p. 47). Subordinated to the valorization standpoint, sensuality is reduced to a functional role within the process of realization.

However, at the moment of exchange, the commodity is not yet a use-value to the consumer, but a *promise* of certain satisfactions. It is the promise which is sold, and this promise is established through the commodity's appearance. For this reason, the commodity's aesthetic appearance can achieve a certain degree of functional autonomy: the appearance of use-value—the commodity's 'second skin'—can be elaborated independently of the good's material body, and as a specialist function within

the firm. Haug traces the development of this function from its prototype in the sales-talk, through brand names, packaging and finally advertising, relating each to the development of monopoly capitalism and the 'fate of sensuality'.

The 'commodity's aesthetic promise of use-value thus becomes an instrument in accumulating money' (p. 17). In the same moment, sensuality becomes the vehicle of an economic function: The subordination of use-value to exchange-value means that needs—defined in relation to use-values—are mobilized and moulded according to the logic of exchange.

The result is a 'technocracy of sensuality', a 'domination over people that is effected through their fascination with technically produced appearances' (p. 45). Haug valiantly, if not altogether successfully, resists standard manipulation theories. What is clear is that he is arguing the case for the population's willing enticement into commodification: the false dreams are built on real needs.

> An innumerable series of images are forced upon the individual, like mirrors, seemingly empathetic and totally credible, which bring their secrets to the surface and display them there. In these images, people are continually shown the unfulfilled aspects of their existence. The illusion ingratiates itself, promising satisfaction: it reads desires in one's eyes, and brings them to the surface of the commodity (p. 52).

The links with Marcuse are quite clear: real needs are aroused by the promises offered by commodities which cannot possibly satisfy them, which can 'offer only an illusory satisfaction, which does not feed but causes hunger' (p. 56). It is the distance between aesthetic illusion and real need which makes the thirst for commodities insatiable and absorbs the individual through his or her psychic structure deeper into the system.

Haug presents a persuasively coherent portrait of consumer society, and one argued with a political urgency which sadly seems very much of its time. Indeed, Haug's perspective promises two quite fascinating selling points: a direct relation between the structure of economic action and the culture forms through which it is pursued; and the emphasis on psychological processes in addition to the ideological structuring of cultural forms. Unfortunately, neither promise is entirely fulfilled.

In the first place, Haug's insistence on the autonomy of commodity aesthetics seems to undermine much of what he has gained by deriving it from an economic relation. The promise of use-value upon which exchange depends provides the *motive* for producing economically functional appearances, but it also provides the occasion for detaching the production of appearances from economic practices: the production of the commodity's appearance is guided more by psychological than economic calculation. In the very process of deriving commodity aesthetics from economic relations, Haug actually divorces the images of consumer society from the specifically commercial logic through which firms relate products to needs on the basis of specific market interests.

The crucial problem lies in the very abstract level at which Haug characterises the exchange relation. For Haug focuses on the isolated act of exchange: the meeting of buyer and seller and their mutually contradictory interests in exchange value and use-value. This might define the most abstract structure of exchange, but certainly not the social form it takes—buying and selling commodities on *markets*. What is missing from the picture is competition. Markets and market behaviour (such as the use of advertising) are structured by the pattern of interrelated exchanges which renders them competitive. Firms promise different satisfactions not simply to mobilize a fascination but to fit a product into a structure of competing fascinations. Potent images are designed not simply to mobilize a larger aggregate of individuals, but to secure and defend specifically calculated market positions. Marketing is never purely directed at an abstract increase in sales, but at the mobilization of strategic consumer groups identified by their place in long-term competitive goals. That is to say, exchange relations not only provide the motive and occasion for otherwise autonomous images; the production of such images is at all stages ruled over by specifically economic calculations.

Indeed, Haug shares his period's neo-Keynesian belief that advertising and related functions represent the *disappearance* of competition under monopoly capitalism. Advertising was often referred to as 'non-market competition'—fabricated images taking the place of rational calculation. For example, Haug argues that trademarks transform a good into a monopoly commodity: 'Commodities presented in such a fashion hardly compete in terms of use-value with rival products of other firms. Competition has widely shifted on to the level of images: now image fights image...' (p. 31). Commodity aesthetics are seen as the firm's attempt to transcend or escape market competition rather than as arising from the everyday pursuit of commerce. The pervasively instrumental calculation of culture from the valorization standpoint is lost from view.

A second problem area lies in the distinction upon which the whole notion of the functional autonomy of commodity aesthetics is based, the distinction between use-value and the appearance of use-value. Haug's text screams at us—across two decades of Althusser, anti-humanism and semiotics—the language of 'real' needs, 'real' use-value, the 'real' as the point from which ideology is critically engaged.

If commodity aesthetics renders autonomous the appearance of use-value in the form of images, the commodity's use-value itself appears to denote something essential about the object: objective properties of the object which naturally, rationally, or functionally satisfy needs. Similarly, it raises the spectre of an opposition between real (rational or natural) needs and artificial needs called up by the artificial appearance of the object. The very notion of an aesthetics plays upon this juxtaposition of appearance and function, contingent cultural meanings and discoverable technical relations.

At a more practical level, this formulation bears some resemblance to that of Baran and Sweezy: if one could subtract from the capitalist commodity all those elements which are required solely by its commodity-form (here, its aesthetic appearance) then one would be left with a rational, functional use-value which simply fulfills a real human need. The focus of this framework becomes the way in which the autonomy of appearance distances commodity culture from an originary connectedness between properties of the object and autonomous human needs.

In fact, the real function of the use-value/appearance distinction is critical and political. The basis of legitimation of any socioeconomic order is its ability to fill social needs. If—as in much critical theory—these needs are deemed to be determined by the social order itself, then there is no independent critical yard-stick and the system becomes self-legitimating. The ability of the system to define use-values and needs through hypnotic imagery ultimately eradicates critical consciousness through self-fulfilling promises of satisfaction.

The assertion of real needs and real use-values—those untouched by commodity aesthetics—is the assertion of an external critical vantage point: they represent the projection of a current politics either onto a constructed past (natural needs and use-values in the days before production for exchange-value)

or onto a desired future (rational needs and use-values in a society which democratically reconciles social need and social production). As Kate Soper has crucially argued, assertions about what constitutes real need are in reality political agendas—as they should be. They are part of a description of a just society. But precisely as such they are immanent to the society which they critique.

To recognise the political aspirations defined by images of need, and the immanence of such political values to contemporary aspirations, is not to embrace that relativism of need which produces a post-modernist embrace of commodity culture, however ironic that gesture might claim to be. It is rather to recognise consumption as a social force with tendencies and potentials to be politically assessed; it is thus to analyse that social force in all its concreteness and contradiction. Haug has provided a major contribution to this endeavour in his analysis of the valorisation standpoint and in his intention of understanding sensuality and consumption in terms of commodity calculation. That this analysis remains abstract simply prompts the wish that we had seen his valuable book sixteen years earlier.

Don Slater

TALK ABOUT SEX

Sexuality: A Reader, edited by *Feminist Review*, London: Virago, 1987, 378pp., £6.95 pb.

The articles in this collection around issues of sexuality, its politics and its construction, first appeared in *Feminist Review* over a period of seven years to 1986. Seventeen articles in all, many drawn from the 1982 special issue on sexuality, are grouped into five main sections which indicate the general areas of analysis: 'Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality', 'The Construction of Sexual Difference', 'Sexuality and Psychoanalysis', 'Issues around Lesbianism' and 'Pornography and Representation'. The editors' introduction highlights particularly the importance of questions of male sexual violence and pornography, and, in their 1982 editorial from which they quote at length, how crucial the analysis of sexuality to feminism has been, as well as the way in which the unity and certainties of earlier days have given way to fragmentation, complexity and difference. They also discuss the contributions of and attitudes to lesbianism in this context, a question which returns in several of the articles gathered here, to the extent that a strong challenge emerges to the conflation of lesbianism and feminism, and to the position that heterosexuality constitutes collaboration with the enemy, on the grounds that lesbianism is thereby both desexualised and naturalised.

It is hard not to be struck by one aspect of this volume, namely the use of history in what seems like an almost obsessional replaying of the recent past of feminism. This is due not only to the substantive discussion of the heritage of the '60s and '70s in the introduction and the first two articles, but also to the way these articles, which are after all quite recent, are also framed in many cases by short introductions written for this volume to 'set the pieces in their past and present contexts'. We all know history is going very fast, but as the contextualising introduction actually predates in one case the appearance of the article in the *Review*, it seems permissible to speculate whether there is not an unspoken editorial wish to control interpretation operating; especially given the relative difficulty, in several cases, of working out when an article was originally published. History seems to be given with one hand and taken away with the other.

However, I do not wish to imply these various returns to the past are not useful, for in sociological terms there is much interesting discussion of the late '60s and early '70s. The story of the theoretical developments, as related in the introduction, is in my opinion rather flimsier and disappointing. It relies very heavily on received opinions as to structuralism's discovery of the ideological over the natural, with psychoanalysis and linguistics as the keys to understanding why notions of false consciousness would no longer do. To anyone who knows Beauvoir's work, this version of feminist theory born of Althusser and Lacan, which made possible 'certain crucial advances', and notably that of challenging 'the "taken for granted" nature of sexual difference', gives the unfortunate impression of performing the theoretical equivalent of reinventing the wheel. It is not a little ironic in a feminist volume which places such stress on the recent past that Simone de Beauvoir merits no more than three passing mentions. Unwittingly or not, this can only perpetuate the myth that questions of sexuality in a modern frame date from the late '60s. Furthermore, while the social, psychoanalytical and ideological modalities of the construction of sexual identity do indeed form the burden of the book, it is nonetheless true that in many of the articles that particular 'structuralist' framework is just not operating. And even when it is, attempts to debate its validity seem silently undermined. The section on psychoanalysis is given over to articles questioning and defending its value for feminism, yet a psychoanalytic discussion of jealousy and sexual difference is placed in the sexual difference section, its methodology unchallenged and thus indirectly authorised. This is not to pronounce either way on either psychoanalysis or the structuralist heritage, but just to point to some of the constraints at work here, and to suggest that even in 1982, even more so in 1987, a more critical evaluation of where our theories of sexuality and sexual difference come from would have been welcome.

But overall this is undoubtedly a useful volume which will admirably fulfill its pedagogic aims of making a range of very interesting material accessible. Worthy rather than exciting, perhaps, not quite shaking off that uncertain unreadability that can bedevil collections of articles, it is less fun than the book which now appears like a sister volume, the American *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* which Virago published in 1984 and which at least has a lot to say about sex; that British discussion of sexuality tends not to include sex is both lamented and on the whole perpetuated in the volume under review. I found the section 'Issues around Lesbianism' the most interesting, partly because of the variety, Wendy Clark's stylish writing, and the compelling narrative of the dramas at the London Gay and Lesbian Centre, but mainly because it is in this section that the crucial questions of the whole volume about the nature of sexual identity, its intersection with gender, class and race, and the politics that emerges from all that, are most cogently and comprehensively put.

Margaret Atack

SEEING RED

Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary* (edited by Gary Smith), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986, 150pp., £7.50 pb

Walter Benjamin spent two months in Moscow, from 6 December 1926 to the end of January 1927. He planned to write an account of Moscow and its inhabitants, rendering what he saw as a 'physiognomy' of the city. This newly-translated diary represents Benjamin's longest extant autobiographical document, providing a fascinating insight into his compositional practices: tangential remarks and brief reports prefigure later, separate essays (such as his 'Moscow' piece for Martin Buber's *Die Kreatur*). One can discern three essential themes: Benjamin's attempt to establish contact with Russian literary figures, his deliberations as to whether or not he should join the German Communist Party, and his relationship with the Latvian Marxist Asja Lacis ('one of the most remarkable women I have ever bet'). Reflections fall and touch like snowflakes as one reads through the entries, containing some of the most personal inflections found in critical theory.

Benjamin is made to dedicate his thoughts to us, as his alienation from the milieu is both great and debilitating. We are often placed in an evidently voyeuristic position as Benjamin reflects upon his inability to express his feelings to Lacis and his incomprehension of the Russian language: he faces silence, he turns and faces us. The central autobiographical motif of the trip is his relationship with Lacis and her companion, Bernhard Reich. The two men try to discuss ideas together whilst they struggle to control their passion for the same woman. This tension brings out some of Benjamin's most moving and measured comments, particularly concerning the self and society. Discussing his feeling of solitude he describes it as: 'basically a reflexive phenomenon that only strikes us when emitted back to us by people we know, and most often by people we love, whenever they enjoy themselves socially without us.' The one important theme which, frustratingly, is left undeveloped is Benjamin's concern for his son, Stefan, mentioned briefly and then excluded from the text. Nonetheless, for anyone interested in critical theory and its combination of sociological knowledge and a belief in authenticity, Benjamin's *Diary* is invaluable.

Benjamin had dedicated *One-Way Street* to Lacis: 'the engineer who laid it through the author'. Her presence was, for Benjamin, very provocative, obliging him to avoid being caught off-guard by her gaze—'For had she touched me with the match of her eyes, I might have gone up like a magazine'. When he arrives in Moscow, he finds Lacis hospitalized in a sanatorium; for all but the final few days of his stay, Benjamin had to spend his rare and precious moments with her accompanied either by Reich or with various anonymous inmates. Reich, at least in Benjamin's account, seems largely unaware of his guest's anxiety: he regularly arrives with lists of places to visit, launches into passionage analyses of Goethe, Stanislavky and Meyerheld, whilst Benjamin lies on his bed in a dark, depressed heap ('I am often too tired to listen to with both ears...'). The diary charts a growing confusion within Benjamin which sometimes seems to blind him to Reich's competitiveness: when the three companions set off for the theatre, 'Asja was not feeling well enough, so I went on my own, while she and Reich went to my room'. What does become painfully clear is Benjamin's infatuation with Lacis: 'I barely hear what she is saying because I am examining her so intently.'

There is one particular passage in which the reader is invited to conspire with the author. Benjamin says he will record some observations concerning his relationship with Lacis, 'even though Reich is sitting right next to me'. Everything that follows sounds in the mind like a whispered report from a friend. He confesses that, when Lacis is recovered and living again with Reich, 'it will only be with a considerable amount of pain that I will be able to come up against the boundaries of our relationship. I still don't know if I will be able to disengage myself from it.' Despite what he sees as her 'astonishing hardness', he says: 'The thing I would prefer most would be the bond a child might create between us.' This hope (never more than a desperate fancy) moves him to seize on every suggestion of warmth or love on Lacis's part, yet her ability to hurt him deeply and frequently makes him eventually too wary to respond to her: 'I was like a vase with a slender neck into which liquid was being poured from a pail. Little by little I had so deliberately closed myself off that I was almost no longer receptive to the full power of external impressions.'

One of Benjamin's professed concerns was with 'the enigma of being alive'. His very openness to the curious and the threatening, his *vulnerability* in the face of alien hostile powers, makes one empathise with him more than is usual for social theorists. Perhaps this apparent 'weakness' in Benjamin is part of his attractiveness. One is reminded of the passage in *One-Way Street* he reads to lacis, concerning the way the wrinkles of the lover only serve to enhance our love: 'And no passer-by would guess that it is just here, in what is defective and censurable, that the fleeting darts of adoration nestle.' His vulnerability is bound up with every critical insight, now sounding with especial poignancy after the suicide of the writer and the barbaric treatment of his Jewish colleagues. Adorno survived to reflect on the absurdity of writing after Auschwitz, and he attracts respect rather than admiration. Benjamin, on the other hand, is a victim, a man ascribed the tenderness of the wronged, and we seem to identify with his anxiety in the face of immanent catastrophe.

Benjamin had noted the inevitable opaqueness of language, the difficulty that confronts the writer because each language communicates only itself, only its own essence. Harrassed by foresight, writing against a sense of future disaster, he brushed his speech against the grain of the conventional ensemble of words, signs, grammars—raising his voice above the babble of the quotidian. As Adorno says in *Negative Dialectics*, 'To say something out loud is to put some distance between oneself and the immediacy of suffering, just as screaming helps mitigate great pain.' Thus Benjamin's style is both a therapy for him and an intimation of some latent sense of moral goodness. Throughout the *Diary*, we find his 'micrological thinking' (compressing the particular until the universal bursts forth from within) weaving a subtle, sensitive text wherein Moscow is exposed for reflection: Benjamin's charming descriptions of the toys he has collected—intricately carved puppets, dolls, tiny figures which emit faint noises when squeezed, various musical boxes—also contain some superb allusions to later, more sociological remarks about Russia.

Although Benjamin's involvement with Lacis continues to act as the pulse of the narrative, his interest in Moscow is soon little more than academic in its attentiveness. He writes:

> For me, Moscow is now a fortress; the harsh climate which is wearing me down, no matter how healthy it might be for me, my ignorance of the language, Reich's presence, Asja's utterly circumscribed mode of existence all constitute so many bastions...

His dependence upon Reich and Lacis—as interpreters, guides and companions—begins to drive him into a depression. He finds himself in the ironic role of the subservient reader of a language he can neither speak nor understand and a relationship he cannot bear either to end or to endure. Towards the completion of his stay, his helplessness is both comic and heartrending: 'I wanted to order soup and they brought me two small slices of cheese.'

What Benjamin's *Diary* entries contain is a kind of *productive vulnerability*: one feels that the very *humanity* of the writer instills the work with an urgency and a sincere moral anxiety that still affects the reader today. His reflections on the role of the writer vis-a-vis political organisation are as pertinent now as they were then. The texture of his language precedes and inflects the contours of his argument—reflexive, allusive, locating its subject by indirection. Indeed, the very description he gives of his thoughts on the Communist Party betokens his unsuitability to the enforced humility of political orthodoxy: he admits a weakness for the 'seductiveness of the role of outrider', and explains one of his more determined arguments in favour of his admission by saying: 'For precisely because membership in the party may very well only be an episode for me, it is not advisable to put it off any longer.' It is striking how each issue is treated by Benjamin in such a way as to simultaneously inspire one's own interpretations whilst showing the indecisiveness in his own mind.

Moscow Diary is a fascinating fragment recording a very 'damaged life'. A brilliant representative of radical humanism, spending most of his career on the boundaries of his professional and political communities, Benjamin committed suicide on the Franco-Spanish border. The few literary friends he mentions from Moscow eventually met their deaths as victims of Stalin's attack on those who resisted. Many of his German colleagues perished in concentration camps or, like Benjamin, killed themselves before the Gestapo could reach them to obliterate what was still left of their dignity. Benjamin ends the *Diary* with everything unresolved: his position concerning Party membership, his attitude to the Russian programme of reconstruction, and, most poignantly, his love for Asja Lacis. Although all is unresolved, there is a terrible sense of foreboding hanging over the final few lines which leaves one with a renewed feeling of loss:

> ... I once again drew her hand to my lips, right in the middle of the street. She stood there a long time, waving. I waved back from the sleigh. At first she seemed to turn around as she walked away, then I lost sight of her. Holding my large suitcase on my knees, I rode through the twilit streets to the station in tears.

Graham McCann

NEW OBJECTIVITY

Paul A. Komesaroff, *Objectivity, Science and Society*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, 454pp., £30 hb.

Komesaroff's project of identifying social determinants of the sciences resembles that of the Lockean underlabourer—the clearing away of intellectual undergrowth prior to epistemological construction. He starts from a critique of a theory of science, *objectivism*, which has been dominant, especially through its links with classical mechanics. This view of scientific methodology holds that a body of theory and the objects it describes are self-sufficient transhistorical entities. Such entities owe nothing to the historically-based activity of social subjects. Further, objectivism entails that bodies of theory circumscribe an objectivity which is ultimately beyond knowledge—theory can only approximate to truth about an object which cannot be known as it is 'in itself'.

Komesaroff wishes to preserve one aspect of objectivism, namely, that science is founded on concrete data, but his stance also recognises the cultural determination of science. The reduction of data to formal relationships in Husserl's phenomenology is seen as a way of satisfying both these conditions.

Komesaroff's search for an adequate explanation for the culturally determinant moment of scientific activity takes him on a guided tour of cultural theory, with visits to the later writings of Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas's more Kantian Frankfurt Marxism, structuralist and Mertonian theory of science, but also the incipient phenomenology of the early Lukacs's commodity fetishism paradigm. Husserl receives great emphasis in Komesaroff's positive project of a phenomenology of science. This is perhaps ironic in a work that aims to build from a critique of objectivism; for as Habermas noted in his essay 'Knowledge and Interest', although Husserl is critical of objectivism, his own strategy is vulnerable to similar objections due to its positing a relationship between asocial cognitive subjects and historically unconditioned data.

The writings of Descartes and Kant—establishing a subjectivity which overlaps with and is reflected in the object of knowledge—inform Komesaroff's slant on the Popper-Kuhn debate and much else. We learn that the principle of empirical knowledge being (in some sense) relative to the subject is taken on board by the sciences with the advent of Relativity Theory. Thus objectivism is undermined first in philosophy and then in science's reflections on its own activity. Komesaroff goes on to argue (illicitly) from this that scientific practice is constituted through theoretical self-reflection, that is, through historically determinate forms of ontological speculation. This turns out to

be a key tenet of the book, but its implication of circularity seems to conflict with another argument, namely, that objectivism lacks evidential support!

This latter thread of the discussion is illustrated by the difficulties encountered in theorists' attempts to appropriate quantum mechanics for either classical mechanics or relativity theory. Hence Komesaroff argues for pluralism in modern science; quantum mechanics constitutes its own object domain, it refers to objects that cannot be thought within the 'classical paradigm'. However, the argument runs, it is the structure of the social life world today that guarantees the development of scientific pluralism and the truth of its claims about science. In the past a theoretical ideology promoting one grand explanatory framework dominated and presumably legitimated the classical paradigm. Within this schema theories and their objects shade off into theoretical ideologies and are denied any logical independence from historical conditions of their production.

One weakness of the general argument is that the history of science shows that difficulties encountered in assimilating new theoretical developments within existing paradigms, which for the text suggest a *new* pluralism, characterised the development of past knowledge too. What is specific to modern theory of science, as Komesaroff senses, is the hegemonic crisis of the 'one true theory' approach, the objectivist theoretical monomania. Because of his theoretical stance Komesaroff fails to differentiate this kind of reflexivity about science from diversity in scientific paradigms, which, as Canguilhem notes, is nothing new.

Perhaps it would have been productive for Komesaroff to have investigated the ramifications of the objectivist crisis for *social* theory. Much sociologising is of Weberian inspiration, positing the growth of an instrumental or objectivist attitude in the social practices of modern capitalism. In fact the book does mention Habermas's critique of objectivism, but notes that his 'categorical' approach to the social life world legislates scientific self-reflexion in the same positivistic mode, rather than viewing meta-science as historically determinate.

Programmatically, Komesaroff gestures in the direction of Habermas's theory of communicative action and also Wittgensteinian 'language-games', but, he says, this 'strategy ... like the others ... is subject to deep problems and contains substantial lacunae'. Consequently, there is nothing we can take as a definitive methodological statement if a vague 'social construction of reality' and a diffuse aim to trace the crisis of objectivism within the sciences are excluded.

Perhaps because of the conflation of science and theory of science there is no sense of the latter's historical limits in Komesaroff's critique of objectivism—its resonance with the instrumental rationality of modern capitalism, for instance, or the features within the present period of capitalist development promoting a contradictory pluralistic sensibility. It would seem then that Komesaroff's kind of discourse really is interminable. Its piecemeal, empiricist attitude to theory development and its failure to theorise its object concretely suggest that it remains enmired in the conceptual habits of the objectivism it critiques.

Science, Objectivity and Society remains polarised between an energetic and detailed examination of candidates for a paradigm inscribing the socio-historical founding of science and a sense of the question's ultimate undecidability. Komesaroff seems to lose his way in the welter of detail; there are so many supporting references and side issues in this lengthy project and they are deployed as if to plug a great void or 'lack', a counterpoint or supplement to the constitutive uncertainty of the text. In this way it is a veritable intellectual brantub of resumés of theories and debates in the history and philosophy of science.

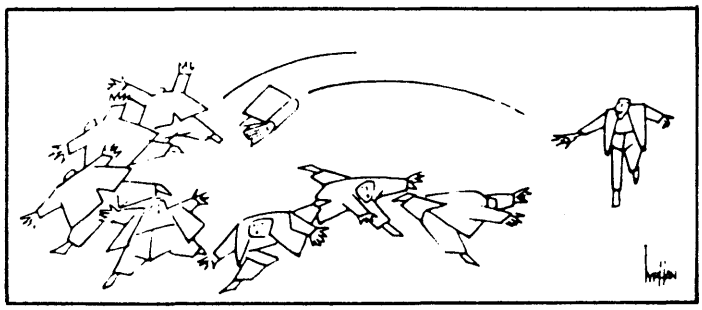
Howard Feather

AVANT LA LETTRE

Norman Geras, *Literature of Revolution: Essays on Marxism*, London: Verso/NLB, 1986, 271pp, £18.50 hb, £6.95 pb.

Analytical Marxism, in the shape of the writings of G. A. Cohen, Jon Elster, John Roemer and others, has established itself in the 1980s as a major theoretical tendency, its appearance having recently received the formal recognition conferred by a survey in *New Left Review*. But if by 'Analytical Marxism' is simply meant the close reading of theoretical texts combined with a concern for clarity of presentation and consistency of argument, then, as these essays, written over fifteen years, bear witness, Norman Geras can claim to have been an analytical Marxist *avant la lettre*.

One could indeed go further, since the longest and most recent of the essays, 'The Controversy about Marx and Justice', concerns an issue on which Cohen, Elster, and Roemer have all written. Geras's contribution, however, displays him at his best, painstakingly exploring both Marx's scattered and inconsistent *obiter dicta*, and the already enormous, and rapidly proliferating literature on the subject, to arrive at a conclusion which, to my mind, should settle the argument, viz.—'Marx did think capitalism unjust but he did not think that he thought so' (p. 36). Not only does this proposal resolve the difficulties presented by the textual evidence for Marx's views on justice, but it allows Geras to discuss questions of great substantive importance—for example, the nature of communist abundance, a crucial issue in current debates about socialism and the market.



Geras's impatience with those socialists who follow Marx in denying the ethical commitments involved in his theories recalls an earlier essay, *Marx and Human Nature* (1983). This robust polemic disposed of the idea to which many of those influenced by Althusser adhered (myself included, I must confess to my embarrassment), that historical materialism is somehow inconsistent with the notion of a common and enduring nature shared by all human beings. In both cases Marx's own ambiguities (in the case of human nature on the *Theses on Feuerbach*) misled his followers about the nature of his own theory.

Both essays also bear witness to Geras's resistance to the 'theoretical anti-humanism' which Paris made fashionable in the 1970s, as does his classic critique of Althusser, reprinted here. Geras's own position, however, is no abstract humanism. The 'positive core' of Marx's rejection of morality, he writes, 'is the conviction that ideals alone are an insufficient tool of human liberation and the consequent dedication to trying to

grasp the material preconditions of this ... and the social agencies capable of bringing it about' (p. 56).

One such agency is of decisive importance, the working class. 'Marxism and Proletarian Self-Emancipation', first published in *Radical Philosophy*, spells out Marx's belief that it is through their own self-activity, through participation in the class struggle, that workers develop the consciousness, confidence, and organization necessary to overthrow capitalism. This doctrine forms the central strand of the classical Marxist tradition with which Geras firmly identifies himself in these essays.

Within this tradition's approach to working-class self-emancipation there has always been a tension between two poles—on the one hand, the spontaneous surge of mass activity from below, on the other, the conscious intervention of revolutionary organization. Geras's first book was devoted to Rosa Luxemburg, in whose thought the first element was allowed to overwhelm the second. In the essays reprinted here, however, he focuses on Trotsky, whose views on the relationship between the revolutionary party and the working class evolved from a position very similar to Luxemburg's to an acceptance, in 1917 and after, of Lenin's conception of the party as a vanguard organization. Two essays of the 1970s, 'Political Participation in the Thought of Leon Trotsky', and 'Lenin, Trotsky, and the Party', involve characteristically clear, judicious, by no means uncritical appraisals of these three great revolutionaries' views on party and class.

The position Geras arrived at in these essays amounted to an endorsement of the later Trotsky's Leninism. However, in a more recent essay, 'Classical Marxism and Proletarian Emancipation', he displays a greater sympathy for Luxemburg and the young Trotsky. He extracts from their opposition to Lenin, and their belief that the 'reformist tendencies' they rejected were 'nevertheless a legitimate part of the workers' movement' 'a pluralist principle' (pp. 205-06). However, Luxemburg and Trotsky did not go far enough, continuing to adhere to the 'monolithic' notion of a single party representing the proletariat. Socialist pluralism, Geras contends, requires challenging 'the association of a vanguard role with a single political tendency or organization', and conceiving the vanguard as 'political diverse', a multi-tendency organization or even 'different parties in a united front' (pp. 211-12).

Whether or not Geras is right now to prefer the young Trotsky, suitably modified, to the old cannot, of course, be settled here. Much is likely to turn on one's appraisal of historical experience. The attractions of pluralism depend heavily on the belief that the Bolsheviks' alleged 'monolithism' was one of the chief causes of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Such an explanation involves playing down the significance of other factors—above all the international isolation of the Soviet regime and consequent economic disintegration of the Russian working class. A critical part was played in this process by the failure of the German Revolution of 1918-19 to produce another workers' republic. But *that* experience hardly bears witness to the virtues of a multi-tendency organization, since one wing of the old united German Social Democracy, headed by Ebert and Scheidemann, presided over the physical liquidation of another, led by Luxemburg. Her efforts to provide a political focus to the radicalization of the time were hampered by the absence of any organization with the kind of political traditions and practical unity which allowed the Bolsheviks to come to the fore after the February Revolution in Russia.

Resolving the issues raised by Geras's shifting views on revolutionary organization would require more than the careful conceptual analysis which is his greatest strength. Nevertheless these essays amply demonstrate how fruitful this skill can be, when combined with a firm refusal to be swayed by political and intellectual fashion.

Alex Callinicos

EXPLAINING THE GAME

Len Doyal and Roger Harris, *Empiricism, Explanation and Rationality*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. 200pp., £7.95 pb.

This book would like to be an introduction to philosophy of science, though its dense and complex argument maybe stops it being quite that. It has the great merit of perceiving the connection of theoretical issues in social science with philosophical questions elsewhere and being prepared to deal with complex and difficult positions. This is, perhaps, most evident in the links made between discussion of cross-cultural standards of rationality and recent work in the philosophy of language.

Doyal and Harris adopt a view of social science which is firmly anti-positivist, not only in its rejection of empiricism, but in its conception of the explanatory task of the discipline. Crucially they reject the claim that social scientists are concerned with the investigation of causal links and the pursuit of their supporting laws and generalisations. This anti-causal stance derives for them from the fact that human beings form the subject matter of social science and their actions are explicable in terms of reasons. For the authors such reasons cannot be causes, for they require actual or reconstructable deliberation and freedom of choice, and have a justificatory and evaluative dimension necessarily attached to them. The investigation of such reasons is a social matter. Actions are identified in terms of social rules and customs, which also provide their rationale and criteria of assessment. Our ability to act and with it our humanity is dependent on our social relations.

The social scientist, however, is not concerned only with individual acts. Doyal and Harris recognise social structures which have an existence over and above sets of such acts, on which they are nonetheless dependent. Such social structures are identified and, it appears, explained in terms of their function of satisfying basic needs. Thus, despite problems of interpretation, cross-cultural comparisons are possible, for such need satisfaction is found in all societies. The basic needs on which the authors concentrate are those of health and autonomy, required if people are to realise a humanity which is constituted out of their ability to act freely. Once social structures are individuated it is a further task to make explicit their dependence on individual acts, a dependence which is frequently opaque to the agents.

A consequence of this conception of social science is that the social scientist is unable to adopt the position of ethical neutrality considered possible for the natural scientist. In uncovering the dependency of social structures on individual acts they make clear to themselves and others the possibility of the structures being different. Moreover a process of evaluation of such structures is implicit in their mode of identification, much as, for these authors, standards of evaluation are built into the individuation of action.

Such a picture of social scientists as necessarily ethically committed may appear an attractive one. But the anti-causal stance adopted in the book sets severe limitations on the role they could play in the promotion of social change. It is not

sufficient to inform us that change is within our collective power. We also need information on how this change is to be brought about. The knowledge we need is causal knowledge, but Doyal and Harris reject the pursuit of this as a legitimate part of the social scientist's task. Social structures are individuated by their functional role, but it is quite unclear how such functions can explain how such structures come to exist or persist. (This is, of course, a problem with functionalism in general.) It might be argued that such causal knowledge is unavailable at the level of social structure. However, similar problems are found within the account offered of the explanation of action. Attention to social rules and norms may provide a characterisation of an action, once performed, and a basis for evaluating it, but does not provide us with the conditions which brought it about. It is not enough to recognise, as they do in their discussion of ideology, that forms of behaviour found in a society may be contrary to the interests of many of its members. We also want to know the conditions which produce such ideological distortions, and those in which they would be lifted. Without that kind of knowledge the changes in actions necessary for changes in social structure remain at the mercy of individual existential choice.

Doyal's and Harris's objection to social science being concerned with causal links is that this would constitute a refusal to recognise the distinctive nature of its subject matter. If human action is caused, they argue, we are no different from robots. But this is too quick. There are differences between different kinds of causation. Causal links which rest on an agent's recognition of reason-giving relations are quite compatible with a proper account of the distinctive nature of intentionality, indeed, they can be constitutive of it.

The thesis put forward in this book then, while regarding social scientists as necessarily involved in the making of value judgements, also threatens to confine them to doing only that. If we refuse to allow them a role in seeking causal links, and concomitant generalisations, then they may provide a critique of our society but can offer us no signposts for the route out. (It is always worth remembering that it was a Tory minister who wished to deny social science the status of a science at all!).

Kathleen Lennon

GOING SOLO

Richard Lindley, *Autonomy*, London: Macmillan, 1986. 198pp., £20 hb, £6.95 pb.

Richard Lindley's book is one of a new series, *Issues in Political Theory*, which aims to combine an introduction to a fundamental political issue with an original contribution to the debate. This joint aim obviously presents hazards in pitching the argument. Lindley negotiates these with style in a book which is lucid and witty.

The discussion divides neatly into three parts: 'Conceptions', 'Principles' and 'Practices'. 'Conceptions' sketches notions of autonomy derived from three liberal philosophers, Kant, Hume and Mill and constructs from these, and from some more recent accounts, what Lindley claims to be 'an adequate liberal conception of autonomy'. By treating the conceptions he discusses as general derived positions ('Kantian' rather than Kant) he deals with the introductory aspects vigorously, avoiding academicism. Thus, what is basic to his argument about the Kantian position is its association of autonomy with the rational will and with the capacity to act contrary to inclination. However, the tendency towards an extreme rationalist view—seeing autonomy and rationality as co-extensive—is, he shows, not just a peculiarity of Kant's thought, but something liable to arise from this *general* way of thinking about autonomy as 'self-governance'. This criticism leads him to consider a 'Humean' conception of autonomy, focussed on the denial of any standpoint of 'pure reason' legislating over non-rational inclinations. To be autonomous thus requires rationally willed action, but reason itself gives us no buyer's guide to the desires that are the grounds of such action. This is an introduction but not a Cook's Tour: the Humean position is there to clarify a difficulty with the Kantian, and so on. Each position is presented succinctly, with references to related debates in current Anglo-American philosophy, and lots of inventive illustration—for example, deciding whether to repair the brake pipes on the presidential limousine as an illustration of the Humean insistence that its inclination, rather than deliberation, that is the final grounding of motive.

Autonomy, Lindley says, is rather like baldness: generally not perfect, rather a matter of degree. Understandably, he goes for a negative conception, characterising ways of failing to be autonomous. We can be heteronomous *cognitively*, through a failure of our theoretical rationality or through simple false beliefs. We can also be heteronous *conatively*, 'through domination by lower order desires ... or through weakness of will'. The second is psychologically more interesting. Lindley presents an argument for the possibility of conative autonomy (i.e. relative absence of heteronomy) based on Harry Frankfurt's notion of personhood as the possession of 'second order volitions'—desires about desires.

Whilst recognising the cogency of his argument, I have to admit to a general unease with its terms. It seems to me that the problem is not Lindley's particular application of analytic philosophy, but the inherent limitations of this tradition in addressing some crucial psychological issues. Briefly, Lindley's claim to 'an adequate liberal conception of autonomy', persuasive as it is within its philosophical context, is restricted by that context. Analytic philosophy, it can be argued, stands in a broader 'liberal-humanist' tradition which takes ideas like that of the 'constitutive subject' as apodictic, indeed as *grounds* for its entire rationalist discourse. The self-understanding of this philosophy thus actually precludes suspicions about its fundamental understanding of autonomy as, at least, relating to an unproblematised notion of the coherent subject. This is because such suspicions are simultaneously subversive of some of its own conceptual foundations.

This would not be too troubling (one could be plausibly contextualist about matters and forbid movement of the goalposts) were it not that analytic philosophy's approach to the complexities of subjectivity seem, in general, fairly complacent. I would expect, and sympathise with, a student response to Frankfurt's idea of personhood of the 'Is that it?' variety. Of course, the obscurer grappling with subjectivity which takes place within the post-structuralist literature might be said to exchange complacency for abstruseness. Yet this does chime with a general intuition that the relationship between our 'selves' and our 'desires' is much more complex than it can be made to sound. As such, it simply may not yield to the conceptual elegance which is an attraction, but also a limitation of the analytic style.

Yet the great advantage of the liberal conception of autonomy which Lindley aims for is that it can be turned to a critique of 'liberal' political practices. The final part of the book does this with clear, if restrained, relish. In chapters dealing with the political status of children and the 'mentally disor-

dered', Lindley shows not only how badly liberal democracies fail against their own standards, but how *radical*, taken seriously, these standards may be. In the final chapter, a radical re-appropriation of liberal respect for autonomy suggests one way of thinking beyond the problem of paternalism which dogs the 'radical' critique of 'false consciousness'.

While clearly liberal in spirit, Lindley's book is also a valuable contribution to a growing body of radical political philosophy. As such, it should prove very useful for students trying to sort out, for example, the claims of Critical Theory. I *do* have reservations about the capacity of this style of philosophy to get to the heart of the psychological (and thus perhaps also the political) issue of autonomy; but Lindley shows here how sustained clear thinking can offer surprising critical insights into the 'official values' of capitalist democracies.

John Tomlinson

WRITING THE BODY

Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (translated by Betsy Wing, introduction by Sandra M. Gilbert), Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987. xviii + 169pp., £26.50 hb, £6.95 pb.

La Jeune Née, which first appeared in 1975, is one of the classic texts of French feminist theory; together with *La Venue a l'Écriture*, it brought to a wide public the idea of a new kind of relationship between women and writing, using Lacan and his concept of the Symbolic, Lévi-Strauss and Derrida, to argue that women are constituted as marginal to society and culture. Although phrases such as 'writing the body', 'écriture féminine' are now very familiar through extracts, articles, and the controversy which surrounds the whole question of their possibly essentialist character, its publication in English is nonetheless to be welcomed, since extracts almost inevitably give a misleading impression. Certainly, Cixous's piece 'Sorties' is much more accessible than the poetic and elliptical example in *New French Feminism* would suggest.

The work is divided into three parts. In 'The Guilty One', Catherine Clément sets out to tell the history of how, at a mythic level, our cultural notions of masculinity and femininity have been shaped. She focusses on the figures of the sorceress and the hysteric as particular examples of the institutional exclusion of women, though she also quotes many others such as clowns for example. Their place at the margins is a place of paradox, a disruptive force outside the norms, but also, she argues, the place where symbolic systems are locked together; a paradox which bears particularly upon women who are both 'rule' and 'non-rule' (playing on the French term 'règles' for period), central to the social and yet none of it, governed by a different periodicity, of nature and so anti-culture. The sorceress and the hysteric are therefore (culturally) marked as outside culture, on the side of animality and desire, women possessed whose bodies are spectacular arenas of that possession, to be exorcised, but also objects of fascinating display for the male doctors, priests, psychoanalysts. The philosophical framework which informs this reflection on the cultural and social representation of woman derives primarily from anthropology and psychoanalysis; there is lengthy discussion of Michelet, and Sartre on Flaubert is also an important reference. Hélène Cixous's essay concentrates on the disruption through writing of the binary hierarchies mediating the cultural process and the exclusion of women, not as part of the system, as Clément would have it, but in order that the system be constituted as such. The dominant themes of this essay which, with its many echoes of Beauvoir, Irigaray and Kristeva, now has an inescapable historical interest, are the mechanisms of phallogocentrism which assimilate being and man, constituting women as the repressed of the system; the complexity of relations with the other (recognition, exclusion, antagonism etc.) where she also includes autobiographical considerations on being Algerian and Jewish; and the exploration of women and writing. At an analytical level, the essay has its contradictions. In the attempt to criticise the power of the Father, the voluntarism of 'the child deciding to recognize' sits uneasily with earlier discussion of processes supposedly constitutive of consciousness and individuality as such: 'as men have always known, the "father" is never anything but the name of the father.... The father is always dependent on the child, who decides whether to recognize or reject him' (p. 111). And the well-known use of Derrida is also not consistent, given the emphasis placed on women's voice, women speaking, regaining what can only be an original purity prior to the distorting mediations of the Law: 'The Voice sings from a time before the law, before the Symbolic took one's breath away and reappropriated it into language' (p. 93). One has sympathy for Clément when, in the final exchange, she finds she can only make sense of Cixous's views 'poetically' (p. 158), and in fact throughout Clément emerges as much more concerned to relate her analyses to social processes and realities, more suspicious of abstract global entities. Other differences also come into focus in the final section, 'Exchange', in relation to the potential for social disruption inherent in women's marginal position, and to the attitude to take towards the discourse of mastery (i.e. illusory pretentions to Truth and Knowledge and the concomitant effacement of the enunciating subject). For Clément it is important that women have access to the positions of power the transmission of knowledge confers, whereas for Cixous knowledge as such signifies elitism and a power to be rejected. In her own writing she is seeking to break down divisions between theory and creativity, to dramatise the writing process. Equally interesting is the way 'Exchange' serves to create a volume where discourse itself is dramatised as process, both in the use of quotations juxtaposed to the dialogue and in the reverberations of that dialogue on the preceding essays.

Margaret Atack

NIETZSCHE THE TEACHER

Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, London: Harvard University Press, 1986, 261pp, £14.95 hb.

At every philosophical street corner these days, you will find huddles of people haggling about Nietzsche. A relativist or a realist? Fascist? Crypto-feminist? Revolutionary? Metaphysician, or philosophy's executioner? In any case, Nietzsche seems uncannily up-to-date, timely.

The joke is that Nietzsche would have repudiated this kind of interest in his work. He believed, or rather knew, that the interpretation and evaluation of a philosopher has little to do with the acceptability of theories. As he said in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', a philosopher needs to be 'a real human being' and not 'merely a great thinker'; a paragon, showing us how to 'take a deep breath' as if we were 'entering a high forest'; a

teacher, inspiring us to be '*simple* and *honest* in thought and life, that is to say to be untimely'.

Alexander Nehamas's cogent and well-composed book marks its distance both from dominant Anglo-American interpretations of Nietzsche (Kaufmann and Danto in particular) and from supposedly radical, Continental ones (Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Kofman). He goes far beyond the standard repertory of best-loved quotations, demonstrating that Nietzsche's loathing for all traditional moralities, together with their philosophies, myths, and histories, is positively earnest, not negatively ironical. For Nehamas's Nietzsche, every doctrine is only an interpretation, of course, and you must never assume that different people ought to have the same attitude to it; no interpretation is the best of all, for all, to all; still, some are definitely better than others. But Nietzsche was more a poet than a preacher, and the essence of his style, as Nehamas shows, is not his much-discussed use of aphorism, but his persistent flaunting of different, maybe inconsistent, hyperboles, in order to make it 'impossible to get used to his presence'.

That is all in the first half of the book, subtitled 'The World'. The second half—'The Self'—begins with a stern dismissal of literal-minded readings of Nietzsche's remarks about Eternal Return: Nietzsche was not contending that actually everything happens over and over again, says Nehamas; he was proposing that, as a test of your philosophical nerve, you should try to accept the idea that it might, without panic, excuses, whinging or embarrassment. The point about Nietzsche's heroes (Goethe, Shakespeare, Homer and Napoleon, for example) was that they don't take sides: they neither grudge nor judge. This is not immoralism though, according to Nehamas; it is just a repudication of (as Nietzsche said) 'the moral hypocrisy of those in command' who 'pose as the executors of more ancient or higher commands' (*Beyond Good and Evil*, para. 199). Nehamas admits that if Nietzsche was offering a moral philosophy commensurable with others, then it is a 'banal', 'vague','inconsistent' and 'incoherent' one. But in a deftly moving conclusion, he affirms that this defect is really Nietzsche's splendour: Nietzsche's writings are his life, and it is through his superbly realized example, rather than any accumulation of doctrines, that Nietzsche teaches. This life is not the anguished, petty one revealed by gossipy biographers, but the make-believe life of the Free Spirit who pretends to be the author of Nietzsche's books. Nehamas says that this raises a big problem for his own interpretation: is there any justification for 'generalizing from the literary case to life itself?' Thankfully, he does not stay for an answer.

Jonathan Rée

Christopher J. Berry, *Human Nature*, London: Methuen, 1986, 162pp., £20 hb, £6.95 pb.

This book comes definitely into my category of 'dull but worthy'. It is purportedly an expression of the 'new wave' of political theory, after its recovery from that period when theory in politics was declared dead. If this is a reliable specimen, I fear for the patient.

Berry's task is a useful one. He wants to show that political theory cannot do away with theories of human nature, that of necessity they continuously re-express themselves even, or perhaps especially, in political theories that try to prove their freedom from values and commitments. They do so, he argues, because all political theories contain implicit accounts as to what counts as politics, as to people's 'natural tendencies', needs and desires in relation to politics. They also contain, he suggests, implicit recommendations as to what shall count as a 'good society' towards which political activity ought to be taking us.

All of which is good, and I suspect commonplace to most readers of *Radical Philosophy*—though perhaps not to many students of politics. Thus far then, the book is useful. It is the *way he goes to these places* that is so dull. For example, he wants to show that certain antinomies, and commitments in them, are cornerstones for political thinking. These are: Humans as either essentially individualist, or communitarian; essentially rational or a-rational; politically interested or disinterested; and perfectible or not. Well, OK. But how much will we learn, I wonder, by approaching such 'founding concepts' through, in the first case, a confrontation of Locke and Marx, in the second, Aristotle and Mill, the third, Hegel and Hobbes, and the fourth Godwin and St Augustine. It is, sadly, once more the timeless battle of ideas which have lost all sense of their location, and the problems their authors were trying to solve.

The one point at which the book escapes this, interestingly, is in his discussion of biological theories and their political implications. Here, for the first time, it seems to me, we begin to really 'bite' on the theories, because he develops an argument as to the kinds of political practice that will flow from the differing theories. Otherwise, the book is marked by a sublimely intellectualist feel.

Take his discussion of Marx's view of human nature, used as an exemplar of an approach which wants to talk of 'human capacities'. I have always thought Marx worked with this notion as part of his critique of the 'dehumanising' tendency of capitalism; it was out of his perception of unrealised and damaged needs that he expressed his loathing of capital's system. I was evidently wrong:

> The point of having recourse to capacities or potential when discussing human nature is to undercut theories that conceive of human nature in terms of immutable givens—like the genetic basis of human behaviour—and yet avoid relativism (p. 114).

There is, perhaps despite the author's intentions, a definite tendency for theories of human nature to become a kind of logical game—and they are evaluated, often, with the same game-like moves. So, for example, when he discusses the challenge to theories of human nature posed by such as Sartre, the discussion effectively ends at the point when he has 'demonstrated' that, despite his denials, there *is* in Sartre's thinking still some recognition of universal elements common to all human beings.

I am being very hard on the book. It does have some useful discussions and arguments in it. But the framework surrounding them is so much a reflection of a sad state of debate in a certain style of political theory, that the good bits are easily forgettable. The book concludes with two principles: that theories of human nature are 'indispensable', but also 'contentious' in that there are no neutral grounds for settling disputes between them. We may have, perhaps, a few criteria with which to adjudicate between them. First, is internal consistency; then there is their ability to accommodate 'the facts'. At this stage, to ask 'Which "facts"?' and 'How generated?' risks a charge of churlishness. Still, at least it will leave us plenty to have good arguments about.

As I said, worthy—but dull.

Martin Barker

Christopher Caudwell, *Scenes and Actions* (edited by Jean Deparc and David Margolies), London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, 241pp, £6.95 pb.

Christopher St. John Sprigg, under his pseudonym of Christopher Caudwell, was Britain's most notable pre-war Marxist, writing *Illusion and Reality* (1937) and *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938), works full of suggestive insights concerning the social functions of literature. His premature death in 1937, fighting in the Spanish Civil War, left his theories in a sufficiently ambiguous state to allow multiple interpretations to develop. Self-taught, a disenchanted bourgeois, Caudwell seized upon a Marxism which, he felt, offered certainty and strength. His political arguments still strike one with their mixture of conviction and stylistic forcefulness.

Scenes and Actions collects together previously unpublished material and sheds some light on Caudwell's literary development. Arranged more or less to the order of composition, the selections reveal the author working hard to extricate himself from a medley of fragmentary scraps of knowledge in order to formulate a coherent theory within the perspective of historical materialism. 'The Wisdom of Gautama' is a self-consciously archaic meditation on spirit and its embodiment (possibly inspired by the recent translation of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathrustra*). 'Heaviside' is an excerpt from a satirical novel which sets British institutions among the lighter-than-air creatures of the 'Kennelly-Heaviside' layer of the ionosphere. Notable short stories include 'Lodgings for the Night' and 'The Device', both suffused with biographical references. 'Verse and Mathematics' was a kind of laboratory where Caudwell experimented with ideas which crystallized in *Illusion and Reality*; the discussion of the social production of 'private phantasy' is made fairly obtuse by Caudwell's slipshod anthropomorphic vocabulary ('wills of living matter', and 'the communist synthesis' of 'organism and environment'). These passages are interesting primarily for those concerned to chart the intellectual history of Caudwell's major texts. For the reader motivated by a desire to comprehend Caudwell's character, it is a relief to find a good selection of private correspondence full of individual charm and urgent social commentary.

Evident in these writings is Caudwell's sense of the decay of his society and his attendant rejection of the new forms of mass entertainment (dance music, American movies, detective novels) together with modernist trends in the arts. Like so many of his British colleagues and successors (Orwell, Williams), Caudwell struggles to combine moral sincerity with social acuity. Theatricality and stylistic playfulness have never been welcomed by the British radical culture critics, and Caudwell (again like Orwell) is acutely uncomfortable on those rare occasions when he tries to express subtle feelings of love or anxiety. He is at home on hard ground, pronouncing some view or attacking some idea, favouring the 'colder' styles of satire and burlesque. This 'toughness' in Caudwell is significantly absent in his (near-obsessive) concern with death and the dead: in several of the pieces here he lapses into a faintly offensive romanticism as he anticipates the glories of fighting for liberation. When the desire to practise one's theory overwhelms one's desire to discover its truth-value, such romanticism is perhaps the inevitable form of self-protection. Certainly, Caudwell's commitment to making theory participate in everyday struggles sits uneasily on his jejune musings on mortality and faith.

Scenes and Actions works well as a collection, for the contradictions and sense of incompleteness seem to reflect the approach of a writer never respectful of scholarly order. In isolated passages (particularly in his letters) one can experience the vigorous, searching style of Caudwell at his most impassioned. The frustrating feature remains the political activist's distrust of pleasure, Caudwell's call for 'fleshiness' and 'masculinity' in writing—a desire to pin down pleasure in the service of political practice. *Scenes and Actions* presents this desire at its most insistent.

Graham McCann

Edinburgh Review 74, Edinburgh, Polygon, 1986, 176pp., £2.95 pb.

This issue of *Edinburgh Review* devotes fifty-eight of its pages to what it terms 'the distinctive tradition of Scottish philosophy', represented through three main items: J. F. Ferrier's lectures on Adam Smith (published here for the first time), George Davie's essay on the Ideologue, Victor Cousin's relations with Scots philosophers, and Robert Calder's account of John Anderson. Each of these items conveys its own interest, though the cohesion of 'Scottish philosophy' mooted in the title only emerges in selective and less than obvious ways.

Anderson, an ex-patriate Scot working this century in Australia demonstrated a concern with philosophy in relation to educational issues which can be seen as continuous with the preoccupations of William Hamilton and James Ferrier in the 19th century, though Anderson's realism seems to have derived as much from his attempts to produce an alternative to Russell's logical atomism, as from his membership of a self-conscious and self-extending Scottish tradition.

Ferrier's account of Smith's ethical system is wonderfully economical and lucid, and is beneficially critical in its insistence on the idea of self as acquired through other-directed interaction. This stress on subjectivity, which Ferrier pursued in linguistic and epistemological as well as moral terms, is the most interesting feature of his work. It allies him more closely than most mid-Victorian British philosophers with Continental, especially Fichtean and Hegelian trends. It also calls in question the supposed novelty of contemporary French Marxist-psychoanalytic accounts of subject-formation. What Ferrier elaborated was something approaching a social phenomenology of the subject. This highlighted the relational acquisition of moral selfhood, saw the basis of cognitive selfhood in a kind of dialectical negativity with the external Other, and denied any strict or straightforward subject-object distinctions. Given appropriate extended treatment, Ferrier would appear the most original philosopher of subjectivity in 19th-century Britain, and one whose concerns march closely with the philosophical preoccupations of our own contemporary bourgeois radicalism. George Davie's essay on Cousin and the Scots brings out many of these and other substantial points in a clear and engaged way, as well as chronicling the fascinating and complex intellectual politics which finally ensured Ferrier's failure to follow Hamilton in the Edinburgh academic succession. Davie's essay is exemplary in its simultaneous engagement with core philosophical issues, sympathetic interpretation of past philosophy in its context, and grasp of the larger dimension of such issues in the problematic furtherance of a national culture.

'... No granting of a privileged position in reality to gods, men or molecules, with conflict everywhere and nothing above the battle,' wrote John Anderson in fine Heraklitean vein. The 'battle' has some other and more immediate presences in this *Edinburgh Review*: the Lothian District Women's Group ac-

counts of the Miners' Strike, for example, or else, on linguistic territory, Brian Holton's rendition into Scots of the Chinese classic *The Water Margin* (Men o' the Mossflow). Besides these, it is difficult for philosophy not to appear disjunct, however egalitarian its rationality or engaged its exegesis.

J. R. R. Christie

Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's 'Critique of Dialectical Reason' (Volume 1: Theory of Practical Ensembles)*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 282pp., £35.50 hb, £14.25 pb.

This is very much a book for the Sartre specialist and, as befits its status as a commentary, fullest benefit can only be derived from it if it is read with Sartre's *Critique* alongside. The vast bulk of the work constitutes a detailed exegesis of the *Critique*, prefaced by a very short (18-page) contextualising introduction and a longer (31-page) commentary on the *Critique*'s sister-work, *Search for a Method*. One of the major difficulties with the *Critique* is its terminology, and in this respect Catalano's commentary will be heavy going for the uninitiated because he slips straight into the vernacular without any prefatory smoothing of the way. Serious Sartre students will find this book most useful as a work of reference, to be used for clues when the going gets tough, and Catalano's division of the text to correspond with the standard English translation makes passage-finding very easy.

I have never really understood, however, the general reluctance of Sartre scholars to stress the political nature of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. The tendency to deal with it as a 'work of philosophy' is, I think, a function of Sartre's oft-quoted remark that he was 'thinking against himself' when he wrote it. This is true, but he was not thinking in a vacuum. By 1960 (when the *Critique* was published) Sartre was an entirely political animal, and the *Critique* cannot be read sensibly without understanding that the attempt to found dialectical reason was a political project. Catalano notes this at the appropriate point in the *Critique*, but gives no indication in his Introduction of the essential importance of Sartre's politics to his philosophy. In my opinion, the *Critique*'s themes of dialectical reason, history, alienation and the anthropology of groups have to be placed in the context of Sartre's political life for them to be fully understood. This, though, would have required far more than the commentary with which Catalano has provided us, and would have taken him beyond his self-imposed rubric. The lesson, I think, is that commentaries on texts will always tell something less than half the story, and that a text speaks of the life within which it was written. Only the life makes the text truly comprehensible, and in this sense Catalano's commentary needs to be read not just with the *Critique* alongside, but also in the light of a clear knowledge of the context in which it was written.

Andy Dobson

David Oldroyd, *The Arch of Knowledge, an Introductory Study of the History of the Philosophy and Methodology of Science*, Methuen, 1986, 413pp., £9.95 pb.

This introductory text gives a clear, concise chronological summary of scientific and metascientific ideas from Aristotle through the medievalists to Popper, Kuhn and the Sociology of Knowledge. There are chapters on 17th-century science, 19th-century positivism, logical empiricism and on the dynamics of science.

Oldroyd defends scientific realism against the relativist social construction of knowledge trend whilst admitting the influence of historical context on the character of ontological speculation accompanying theory production. He nevertheless defends the view that relationships discovered by scientists have a validity quite apart from any significance conferred by cultural specifics.

The book is scholarly and up-do-date in its use of source material. It shows, for instance, that Galileo's sense of *ex suppositione* (argument from hypothesis) points towards an Aristotelian influence on his methodology rather than the hypothetico-deductive approach which his mathematization of problems might suggest. There are inevitably some gaps in a work of such compression. One of importance, I think, is the failure to contextualise the conflict Oldroyd recognises between Locke's empiricism and materialism.

Although the work remains broadly within an 'Anglo-Saxon' discourse the contribution of Bachelard is recognised and the question of relations of power and ideology is addressed through discussion of the legimatory influence of philosophy on scientific paradigms.

For anyone looking for a way into this subject area Oldroyd must be near the top of the booklist.

Howard Feather

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Jena System, 1804-5: Logic and Metaphysics*(translated and edited by John W. Burbidge and George di Giovanni, introduction by H. S. Harris), Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986, £25 hb

In his lectures at the University of Jena from 1801-6, Hegel worked out his first system of philosophy, comprising a logic and metaphysics, a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit. The Jena system is probably the most important work of Hegel's early (pre-*Phenomenology*) period. The present volume contains a translation of the first part of this system. It covers some of the same ground as the later *Science of Logic* and Encyclopedia *Logic*; and contains material of great importance for understanding the early development of Hegel's philosophy. However, potential readers should also be warned that these lectures are ferociously abstract and difficult. They have none of the concrete reference and detail which occasionally enliven the discussion of social and moral issues in the philosophy of spirit. Moreover, they were assembled from Hegel's notes after his death and, unfortunately, there are a number of crucial gaps in the text. As with much of Hegel's early work, they are likely to be of interest only to scholars of Hegel's development and perhaps to a few of his most ardent devotees.

Nevertheless, it is good to have this material available at last in English. The translation is the work of a group of Canadian scholars. The text is adequately, if not generously, supplied with introductory notes and commentary (by H. S. Harris). There is a helpful glossary of the English words which have been used to translate some of Hegel's major terms—a practice which could usefully be copied in other Hegel translations. The book is handsomely produced and altogether most welcome.

Sean Sayers