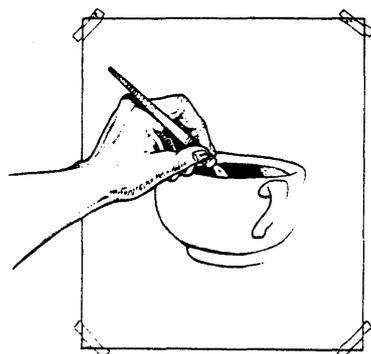


# EDITORIAL



It can be unsettling to consider how the theoretical ground we choose to stand on shifts across the different layers – intellectual, political, professional and personal – of our lives. No debate illustrates that more vividly, or more significantly, than the enquiry which surrounds the moral subject. ‘Consider this and in our time’, began Auden in his invitation to us to survey a moral and political landscape, ‘As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman: / The clouds rift suddenly –’

Such a carefree approach towards perspective would not pass muster in a philosophical context densely cluttered with argument and theory which challenges that and related conceptions of the subject. As Ross Poole writes, interpreting Nietzsche in an article in this issue of *Radical Philosophy*, ‘there is no one perspective which can make good the claim to provide a privileged account of what the world is like.’ Yet whatever account we may give, few of us refuse the strength of our lived experience, or hesitate over our own rendition of what the world is, and should be, like. We may wrestle with existential conundrums about the (our?) self, and carefully consider, sceptically or otherwise, the possibility of critical perspective, and yet routinely try to live lives that are structured and given meaning through moral and political reflection, reason and responsibility. This is not to make a claim for sacred truths and static explanations which are impervious and impermeable, and it is certainly not to set up some complacent opposition between theory and action, but rather to share a hope that we may endeavour to better articulate these spheres of our experience, and to restate a resistance to the isolation of philosophy from pressing political concerns. This has to be of urgent concern: though each generation may emphasise the singularity of their political responsibility, the onus currently carried – the very tenancy of the planet – would seem to be unusually daunting. Part of the value of the articles we are publishing in *Radical Philosophy* 54 lies in their capacity to enlighten and enliven such debate.

Ross Poole’s ‘Nietzsche: The Subject of Morality’ is a thorough and systematic exposition of Nietzsche on the fiction of the freely willing moral subject. The author explains how any perspective is a particular structure of knowledge, and therefore a structure of ignorance too. Poole argues that, contrary to the claims of many of his critics, Nietzsche’s rejection of morality and of truth is internally consistent and coherent, and does not conflict with his advocacy of positive nihilism as an alternative.

‘Nietzsche: A Radical Challenge to Political Theory’ by Keith Ansell-Pearson is an analysis of two recent contributions (by Connolly and Warren) to what the author calls ‘the modernity vs postmodernity debate in political theory’. This

article places the current Nietzsche literature within the context of the political problems inherited from the liberal and democratic traditions of Western political theory. ‘The decisive question Nietzsche raises,’ states the author, ‘concerns the basis on which sovereign individuals, emancipated from the morality of custom, are to enter into social relationships and construct ethical and political identities.’

Timothy O’Hagan’s article ‘Searching for Ancestors’ charts the evolution of Alasdair MacIntyre’s ideas over the past twenty-five years. From his starting point in relativism – an apparently cheerful recognition of the failure of post-Enlightenment moral systems to attain the objectivity of theism – O’Hagan explores the development of MacIntyre’s thought towards his current commitment to Augustinian Christianity. In the process O’Hagan raises two important issues: one concerns MacIntyre’s failure to consider the context which made Augustine’s thought possible; in the other O’Hagan seeks to reopen the defence of liberalism – despite all that may be wrong with it – against MacIntyre’s attack.

In ‘Boundaries versus Binaries In/Against the History of Ideas’, Graham Pechey provides a detailed analysis of the political positions and strategies immanent in Bakhtin’s work. Pechey argues that Bakhtin’s emphasis on the dialogic nature of discourse is an implicit critique of all conceptual syntheses, including that of the Hegelian dialectic, which work to produce identity out of difference. Focussing particularly on *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art*, Pechey suggests that in this book Bakhtin proposed ‘a definition of dialogism is “a dialogue of personalities”’. This emphasis on personality is not, Pechey claims, a return to the subjectivism of bourgeois individualism or humanist essentialism; rather, it provides the basis for a ‘real politics of popular sovereignty’, a ‘polyphonic’ politics whose contemporary expression is to be found in the transgressive narratives of decolonization of, latterly, Frantz Fanon and, more recently, of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal.

Finally, when Gayatri Spivak travelled to England from the United States to speak at the 1988 Radical Philosophy conference we took the opportunity to interview her about deconstruction and politics, and we are pleased to publish this as the second in our current series of interviews.

Nadine Cartner

