

# REVIEWS



## IN THE PROVINCES

Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club 1893–1923*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1990. 284pp., £35.00, 085967 825 3

Not a lot of people have heard of him, but Alfred Orage is one of the most significant and influential figures in twentieth-century English philosophy. He was born in 1873, and brought up in rural poverty in Fenstanton in Huntingdonshire. He would probably have become an agricultural labourer, if his talents had not been noticed at the village Sunday school. The teacher there was the son of the local squire, and he lent his pupil books by Ruskin, Carlyle, Morris and Arnold, and eventually arranged for him to study at Culham teacher training college. Orage graduated from there in 1893, and so, at the age of twenty, embarked on a career as an elementary school teacher in Leeds, which had one of the largest and most dynamic School Boards in the country.

Orage was not convinced that progressive mass schooling was going to fulfil the hopes which many liberals had pinned on it, however. Despirited by his first year of teaching poor children in classes of up to fifty at various Board Schools in Leeds, he came to the conclusion that 'education has deluded the human race: it is bringing us to the wrong millenium.' Education, he wrote, had 'pointed with prophetic finger to the perfection of man: Utopia was to be reached by easy stages and short cuts. Thus it piped and we have danced ever since: and the dancing is nigh killing us.' The schools that were supposed to be bringing autonomy to ordinary people were having exactly the opposite effect: 'men are no longer their own, they have been bought with the results of the "self-denials" of capitalists.'

So Orage began to look for other activities beyond his work as a teacher. He joined the Independent Labour Party in 1894, and the following year began writing a regular feature under the title 'A Bookish Causerie' for Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*. In 1896 he became an editor of a local socialist free newspaper, *Forward*, which he brought to a print-run of 50,000. Like many others in the ILP, he believed that it was disastrous to reduce socialist values to the vindication of the rights of working people against their capitalist employers. He feared that the labour movement might become so powerful that people would forget that 'socialism was intended for everybody'. There was a danger that labour politicians would replace the dream of a socialist commonwealth with 'a repugnant picture of a community dominated by themselves'. Socialism would then become 'more and more materialistic, more and more gross, more and more sordid and narrow,' and the socialists themselves would surely lose their passion and their verve: 'was it for this, they ask, that we have fought?'

Like many others, Orage supplemented his socialism with mysticism. He professed himself an 'esoteric Buddhist' and joined the Theosophical Society in 1896, speaking and writing for

it no less energetically than for the ILP. He also set up a discussion group (he discussed, it seems, whilst the group listened) called 'Plato Lodge'.

The socialism which Orage espoused in the 1890s was, as he put it much later, 'a cult, with affiliations now quite disowned – with theosophy, arts and crafts, vegetarianism, the "simple life", and almost, one might say, with the musical glasses... My brand of socialism was, therefore, a blend or, let us say, an anthology of all these, to which from my personal predilections and experience I added a good practical knowledge of the working class, a professional interest in economics which led me to master Marx's *Das Kapital* and an idealism fed at the source – namely Plato.'

In 1900, however, Orage's eclectic socialism was to be galvanised by a new influence. By chance, he was accosted in a bookshop by Holbrook Jackson, a lace-merchant and Fabian journalist who had just moved from Liverpool to what he thought would be the political and cultural wasteland of Leeds, and who was delighted with his discovery. Jackson, who was twenty-five years old at the time, introduced Orage to the work of Nietzsche. Henceforth, Orage's collection of socialistic ideas would be bound together by Nietzschean philosophical theory, especially the idea of the superman or 'beyondman'. This, he thought, epitomised the tendency of all great visionary authors, from Plato to William Blake, and of all thinkers who had 'projected human virtues upon the magic screen of futurity'. Nietzsche, for Orage, was not a materialist or a nihilist, but a prophet of idealistic practical values. With Nietzsche's help, Orage was able to formulate a doctrine of 'aristocratic socialism'. The heroes of his Nietzschean master-morality were not masters as opposed to slaves; they were masters as opposed to apprentices – practitioners of useful and beautifying arts and crafts, and teachers who passed on their skills to the younger generation.

Orage's Nietzsche was above all an impudent enemy of Victorian respectability. 'To transcend Morality was, for Nietzsche, to substitute Virtue and a man's own inherent nature for conformity and hypocrisy,' according to Orage. He lectured tirelessly about his new intellectual hero, and in 1906 published two short books (*Friedrich Nietzsche: The Dionysian Spirit of the Age* and *Nietzsche in Outline and Aphorism*), which, together with his dozens of lectures and articles on the same subject, did more than anything else to make Nietzsche famous (and in many eyes, ridiculous too), in England before the First World War. Holbrook Jackson was somewhat regretful when, in 1914, he noted that, thanks to Orage's tireless campaigns, 'the philosopher of aristocracy and exclusiveness has become one of the most familiar "stunts" of the popular Press. People came to talk Nietzsche as M. Jourdain talked prose – without knowing it.'

By that time, Orage himself had moved on. He had become a

philosophical celebrity, interested, as George Bernard Shaw said, 'in everything except vulgarity'. He even changed the pronunciation of his name, which had originally rhymed with *porridge*, so that it would sound less plebeian. He rhymed it now with *slow barge*, which gave it a frenchified sound, and connotations of wild weather. He gave up teaching in 1905, moved to London, and, with financial backing from George Bernard Shaw, became editor of an independent socialist cultural journal, the *New Age*, in 1907. He held together a wonderful mixture of guild socialism, syndicalism and cultural avant-gardism (especially in the form of T. E. Hulme's apocalyptic 'anti-humanism'), and a brilliant roster of authors including Shaw, Chesterton, Belloc, Katherine Mansfield, Ezra Pound, and Walter Sickert. Orage took the circulation of *New Age* up to a peak of 22,000, and it was the evident popularity of his approach – especially his disdain for constructive discussions of practical political reform – that provoked Sidney and Beatrice Webb to set up the *New Statesman* in 1913. Orage moved with the times, and, as the prestige of German culture collapsed with the First World War, he began promoting Bergson instead of Nietzsche: – 'biting the hand that fed him,' as it seemed to Jackson.

Like the medieval masters whom he admired, Orage trained up a young man to take over his work. This was Herbert Read, who had been formed in the bohemian cultural atmosphere of Leeds that Orage did much to create. Orage had copied out a quotation from Kipling: 'any fool can write but it takes a god-given genius to be an editor,' and having had enough of editing for the time being, he moved to Gurdjieff's mystical community at Fontainebleau in 1922, leaving Read to take over the editorial desk of the *New Age*. He eventually came back to England to edit the *New English Weekly*, and died in 1934.

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The story of Orage's life and work is one of the main themes of Tom Steele's important and original book. Steele's principal topic, however, is the Leeds Arts Club, which was founded by Orage and Holbrook Jackson in 1903. It was dedicated to raising the cultural level of Leeds by advocating an elevated idea of citizenship, together with feminism, suffragism and an individualistic, aristocratic socialism, and avant garde art: the Celtic revival, Ibsen, Strindberg, Wagner, Hugo Wolf, decorative art and French impressionism. The Leeds Arts Club, in short, was a front for Orage's Nietzsche. As Jackson put it, the club took up 'a strong position of thorough opposition to financially inspired arts of the day,' and its 'ostensible but not admitted object was to reduce Leeds to Nietzscheism.' Membership was by election only, and it was not cheap. The club began with 45 members, and never had more than 90. Still, public lectures were organised, with speakers like Chesterton, Shaw, Yeats and Edward Carpenter, as well as local celebrities (notably Orage and Jackson themselves). Other achievements included an influential exhibition of modern art in 1905, with works by Whistler, Rodin, Conder and many others, and a visit from Yeats, Synge and the newly-formed Irish National Theatre company, who performed for the club on two evenings in 1906.

'I hope great things of Leeds as I hope great things of Russia,' Jackson said in 1911. 'Leeds like Russia is a thoroughly barbaric place! There is an element of wildness about Leeds that appeals to me very much.' He looked forward to a new Leeds, with 'resplendent streets, great libraries and art galleries, a fine musical centre and a great theatre.' But these would not be imitations of high culture elsewhere: 'these temples of the arts will be the expression of local life; not of the ideas of London, Germany or any other place, but simply of Leeds and Yorkshire.'

This is not quite what happened, however. From 1911 onwards, Leeds Arts Club began to lose the cheeky freshness of its early years. It no longer had an active membership, except in its subsidiary organisation, the Playgoers' Society. Intellectual leadership now came chiefly from Michael Sadler, Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, and Frank Rutter, Curator of Leeds City Art Gallery. Together, they concentrated on exhibiting and collecting contemporary French and English artists, together with Kandinsky, whose mystical writings corresponded to the early theosophical tendencies of the Club. Their main event was a 'Post Impressionist' exhibition in 1913, with works by Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, Serusier, Kandinsky and others. It was a fine achievement, no doubt, but it is hard to detect much of a subversive political impulse behind it. The club lost its momentum, and finally folded in 1923.

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In the theoretical sections which open and close his book, Tom Steele connects the story of Orage, Nietzsche and the Leeds Arts Club to some venerable debates about modernism, provincialism, and the peculiarities of the English. How do the historical episodes which he has reconstructed fit in with the Bloomsbury and *New Left Review* idea of the backwardness of 'the national culture' in the United Kingdom? There is no doubt that part of the idea behind the Club was, as Steele puts it, 'to modernise the local culture with Europeanism,' and Steele's assessment is that England could only stomach modernist vanguards or avantgardes so long as it could give them a romantic twist. It rejected the classicism of 'a modernism which relied on structural discontinuity' and settled complacently for a feeble, domesticated version based on 'expressive essentialism'. This, he believes, is the key to twentieth-century UK political history: instead of overthrowing commercialism and Victorianism, the modernists allowed exhausted traditions to stagger on in the form of 'a modernised medieval corporation complete with feudal apparatus of monarchy and the House of Lords'. He concludes that the 'national provincial culture ... has found great difficulty in coping with the modernisms of social justice, democracy, and race and gender equality-indifference.

This scheme seems to me rather unconvincing. For a start, the causalities connecting high culture with social and political change are far more elusive than it supposes. Certain twentieth-century writers and artists may have imagined that the concepts of progress and revolution applied in exactly the same way to their own work as to mass politics; and no doubt they liked to think of themselves as fighting in history's front line. But historians ought not to take this self-image at face value; they need not lean uncritically on the language of 'provincialism' versus 'progress', and they should not conceal the differences between socialist political goals and those stipulated by a grandiose aesthetic theory by lumping all of them together and referring to them as 'modernisms'.

And Steele has to distort his evidence to make it fit into his scheme. For a start, the fact that William Rothenstein (who had founded the Bradford Arts Club in 1902, a year before Orage and Jackson started their own in Leeds) had aimed to reverse 'the progressive concentration of civilisation in London' and that Jackson himself wanted his 'temples of the arts' to express 'local life' casts doubt on Steele's claim that the movement he has documented was opposed to 'regionalism'. It depends, of course, what you mean by regionalism. For Orage and Jackson and, I suppose, all who liked to think of themselves as modernists, the apparently geographical description is actually a way of making a cultural value judgement (just like the apparently chronological

term 'modern'): the further you are from the metropolitan centre (wherever that might be) the more out of date you are, and the less important anything you may do.

Steele might have placed more distance between himself and this a priori normative geography. When he comes to measuring the effectiveness of the Leeds Arts Club, he tests it against the condition of what he calls, in a stale but extremely unclear phrase, 'the national culture'. He gets a bit too excited, perhaps, when celebrities of 'international' modernism come within the ambit of the Leeds Club and its members: Yeats, for example and, with some strain, T. S. Eliot and Kandinsky, and with a great deal of forcing, D. H. Lawrence too. When Leeds itself produces an 'international' artist in Henry Moore, he seems to feel that the Leeds Arts Club has at last achieved a real triumph. Steele criticises English modernism (typified, for him, by Eliot) for having 'embraced hierarchy'; but his own historical methods seem to have been embraced by it too. The question that guides his whole inquiry into Nietzscheism and the Leeds Arts Club is: 'Could this be considered an avant-garde movement?' A more illuminating question might have been: what were the effects of the would-be avant-gardism of figures like Orage and Jackson, not on 'the national culture' but on ordinary people in, for example, Leeds?

These are not entirely antiquarian questions. Linkages between progressive politics and the importation of recent foreign philosophy, preoccupations with contingency or 'the blessedness of chance' (to quote the title of Orage's last lecture to the Club, in 1908), disappointment with the working class for failing to live up to the responsibilities attributed to it by the intelligentsia (to use

a word popularised in Orage's *New Age*): these did not die out with the closure of the Leeds Arts Club. Nor did the search for alternative social movements to assume the responsibilities of history. Nor did the idea that literature, art and philosophy ought above all to try to keep 'the national culture' up to date, and 'post-' the past; nor indeed did a certain flippancy if these routes were called in question. When Tommy Lamb, secretary of the Club at the time of the Post-Impressionist exhibition, was asked if Kandinsky was part of the new school, he replied (so he recalled), that 'he's generally looked upon as an Evening Post-Impressionist'.

But perhaps the most striking similarity is in a characteristic which Steele himself draws attention to: dogmatism. Dogmatism, he says, is a quality that is found particularly in a genre in which Orage specialised: the 'placing essay', as Steele calls it, centred on 'decisively authoritative judgements'. In the placing essay, 'no justification was offered and no tentativeness allowed: the style was the authority.' When Shaw had lectured at the Club in 1905, he too had made a jesting boast about this bossy manner. 'I dogmatically assert things,' he said: 'it saves a great deal of trouble, and is the only way you can really carry conviction.' And when Orage passed the fruits of his experience as an editor on to Herbert Read, he told him always to 'be dogmatic, concern yourself with solutions rather than problems' and to 'announce a new critique of which the living should stand in awe'. The dogmatic style did not die with the Leeds Arts Club, and one of the many rewards of Tom Steele's fascinating book is that it shows us a fragment of its archaeology.

Jonathan Rée

## MEDICINE AS ETHICS

K. W. M. Fulford, *Moral Theory and Medical Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1900. xxi + 311pp., £12.50 pb, £35.00 hb, 0521 38869 pb, 0521 25915 hb.

This is one of those rare books where you feel that the author's enthusiasm for the subject, and painstaking research into its central concerns, stems from authentic personal commitment as well as scholarly interest. K. M. W. Fulford's aim is to move some way towards a resolution of the many 'non-empirical dilemmas' which arise in medical practice, and more specifically in the practice of psychological medicine.

He begins with a detailed analysis of some concepts central to medicine, such as *disease*, *illness* and *dysfunction*. On the conventional view, dysfunction is the basic concept, in the sense that disease is seen as a case of dysfunction, and illness as a rather hazily defined, unscientific idea that subjectively attempts to describe dysfunction, usually from the patient's, rather than the doctor's point of view. Here dysfunction is supposedly a value-free, more-or-less scientific concept, whereas disease and illness are less so. On the conventional view, dysfunction is the concept most useful, and widely used, in clinical practice. Symptoms can be identified and diagnoses made according to the clinician's account of the nature and incidence of bodily dysfunction. Indeed Fulford suggests that this is one reason why doctors can lose sight of their patients as people; the patient is objectified as a dysfunctioning organism. The illness that brings patients to seek help in the first place, with its attendant range of feelings,

emotions, thwarted wishes and desires, is in this sense pushed to one side.

With admirable clarity, Fulford illustrates the inadequacies of this conventional view. First, in an imagined dialogue between a descriptivist and a non-descriptivist moral philosopher, he argues that even dysfunction is not a value-free concept. For instance, in the case of dysfunctioning organs, it may involve value-laden criteria like 'waste'. Then he shows how, in the clinical diagnosis of physical disease, doctors attend not just to the symptoms of dysfunction, but listen to the patients describing their illness in evaluative as well as factual terms. So the doctor may diagnose a kidney complaint as a disease caused by dysfunction of the organ; it is not fulfilling its special purpose. But neither 'disease' nor 'dysfunction' capture the complete diagnosis, whereas 'illness' can, with its recognition of how the patient feels, in evaluative as well as factual terms. So it is illness, not dysfunction, that is the 'root concept' in medical science. Once this 'reverse view' is accepted, Fulford argues, a more fruitful comparison becomes possible between physical and mental illness.

The debate about mental illness, resting as it has on the conventional view, has compared mental *illness* with physical *disease*, so Fulford finds it unsurprising that conclusions have been drawn about the relatively unscientific, non-objective nature of the term 'mental illness', as compared with the physical variety. His 'reverse view', in making illness the core concept, points to similarities, as well as differences, between mental and bodily illnesses. Both have evaluative as well as factual elements,



and rightly so. But, as he freely admits, the evaluative constituents of mental illness, such as anxiety, are much less easily identifiable than those of physical illness, like pain.

So far so good. Now comes the really interesting bit. Fulford argues that the true meaning of the concept of illness is to be found in the notion of 'action failure'; or the failure to act according to one's intentions. Thus if I have a broken leg, or lung cancer (both meant here as bodily illnesses describable in terms of dysfunction and disease, as well as feeling ill) I am unable to act in the way that I would normally. This is a failure of what Fulford calls 'ordinary action' but, as we might expect, this is an even more complex argument. Here Fulford examines in detail the concepts of *delusion* and *psychosis* in mental illness diagnosis, and concludes that a psychotic patient has 'defective intentions' because these may be based on unrealistic, or even deluded reasons for action.

A paradigm case, that of Mr A.B., acts as a kind of benchmark at stages throughout the book. A patient with a history of severe depression who has attempted suicide in the past, Mr A.B. is sent to a casualty department by his GP to have the severe head and facial pains that he complains of investigated. On interviewing Mr A.B. the casualty doctor finds that the patient is convinced he has advanced brain cancer, and will die, so life isn't worth living. Tests confirm that Mr A.B.'s physical health is in fact fine, with absolutely no sign of cancer, but nothing will convince him of this. On the basis of all this, plus the patient's history and concern expressed by his wife, the casualty doctor takes the necessary steps to have Mr A.B. compulsorily admitted to hospital for anti-depressant treatment. This is a case where Fulford claims there is 'intuitive approval' of compulsory treatment on grounds of safety of the patient, but there are obvious arguments against such treatment too. In applying his 'reverse view', however, Fulford is able to argue that Mr A.B., being deluded as to the true circumstances (he thinks he has cancer, but he has not) has 'defective intentions' which lead to his failure to act in the ordinary way. Ordinarily, test results and medical assurances would convince such a patient that his self-diagnosis was mistaken. As it is, Mr A.B.'s depression has caused a delusion which damages his ability to act upon reasonable intentions. He is suffering from the effects of 'failure of ordinary action' just as surely as if he had a bodily illness.

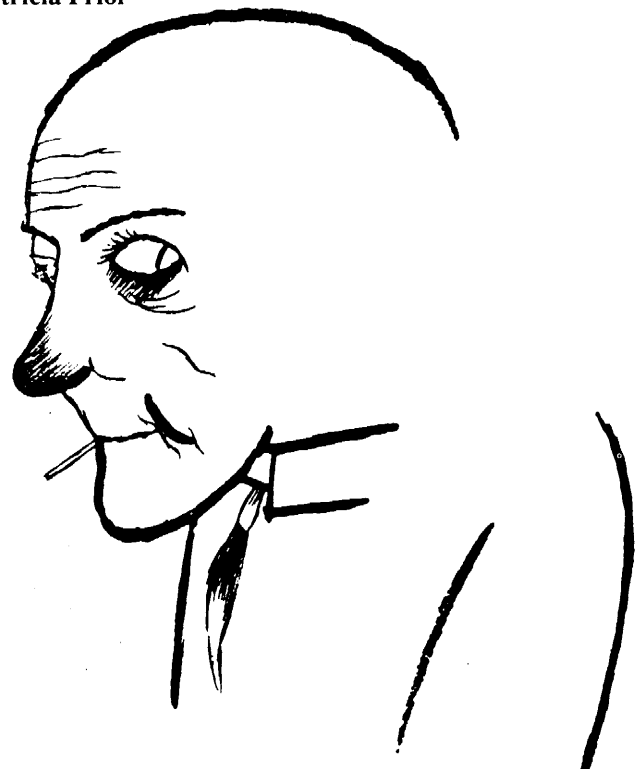
All this makes absolutely fascinating reading, I think, but there are one or two problems for the non-medically trained reader. I was aware, particularly in the applied part of the book,

where Fulford talks in detail about clinical practice in psychological medicine, of my own scant knowledge of this field. Despite the impressively detailed and cogent argument, there were some stages in the process of analysis that were hard to enter into without more medical knowledge. Some more case histories, in the style of Mr A.B. perhaps, would aid understanding of other clinical problems. But this is a point taken up in Fulford's conclusion, where he argues that in medical ethics 'medicine wears the trousers'; a rather unfortunate phrase but one whose point I now agree with. Philosophers, says Fulford, should 'move closer to clinical practice', and not see ethics just as something philosophers do to, or for, medicine. This is a hard demand, but it seems a necessary one.

Just as interestingly, though, Fulford argues that medicine is a 'resource' for philosophy. As may be gathered from the argument of the book, many other areas of philosophy touch upon medicine once it is seen as an ethics-based, rather than a purely science-based subject; for instance the philosophy of action, of freedom, of persons, as well as of responsibility and rights. All these Fulford identifies as 'growth areas' in his argument; ones where further research may profitably be undertaken. So to say that I would have wanted more, particularly on the concept of *intention*, or the relationship between the compulsory treatment of patients and the punishment of mentally ill offenders, is not meant as a negative criticism, but as a mark of how Fulford's analysis and argument involve one in thinking about the issues in medical ethics that our more conventional, science-based view of medicine so often obscures. These are issues just as important to the progress of philosophy as to the clinical practice of medicine that concerns us all.

Fulford has moved further towards the achievement of his aim, expressed in a 1987 article, of making medicine more like a branch of ethics. In doing so, he has also given substance to the idea of a synthesis between the fields of medicine and philosophy, replacing the 'applied' view of this relationship to a large extent. Medical ethics will benefit from such a change, as indeed will medical practice.

Patricia Prior



# OPENING TIME

Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger and Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1989. 293pp., £31.50 hb, 0 8632 3887 8

For some philosophers the Continental provenance of deconstruction sufficed to discount it. Others, who should have known better, have been grateful to the *literary* reception of deconstruction for the diversionary role it has played. The institutionally legitimated distinction between philosophy and literary theory has often functioned as a reception station for intellectual foreign aid, distributing it in ways least disrupting to the local economy. The academic policing of the boundaries of philosophy is a long-term affair whose history is inseparable from philosophy itself. Deconstruction both thematizes and intervenes in these boundaries and its fate is tied to the responses stirred by this complex relation to philosophy.

A common complaint by defenders of the Continental philosophical tradition used to be that the literary appropriation of deconstruction (Culler, early Norris, Ulmer) wilfully neglected its roots in philosophy, attempting to salvage from it either a kind of interpretive licence, or a justification for a rhetorical displacement of substantial philosophical issues. With Gasché, and now with Rapaport, the tables have been turned; it must now be recognised that philosophy is being done *elsewhere*.

Rapaport, it is true, does not claim to be doing philosophy, but intellectual history. His recognition of the difficulty of writing an intellectual history of the relation between two figures (Heidegger and Derrida) each of whom puts in question the very axioms of such a discipline, is symptomatic of the methodological subtlety that pervades the book. The consequence of such sensitivity is an often brilliant account of the complex trajectory of Derrida's reading of Heidegger. Even if Rapaport had nothing new to say philosophically, his tracing out of the relation of Derrida's deconstruction to Heidegger's own accounts of the need for the destruction of the history of ontology, supplies an excellent map, and one that should be required reading for any future discussion of Derrida's 'debt' to Heidegger. But Rapaport does in fact have a philosophical claim to make, one of the highest importance: 'the question of time is far more fundamental to a philosophical understanding of deconstruction than one might at first suppose.' It is this question that both illuminates the trajectory of Heidegger's thought and allows us to unravel the complex relationship between Derrida and Heidegger. Rapaport claims, and I think he is right, that the centrality of the question of time has often been forgotten in discussions of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. It is equally easy to suppose that Heidegger's turn (Kehre) is a turn to language, and away from time, or that it marginalizes the question of time. Where is the problematic of time to be found between *Being and Time* (1927) and *Time and Being* (1927)? And does not Derrida

himself tell us that the very category of time is an ineradicably metaphysical one? Rapaport shows how wrong all these ideas are, and in presenting Heidegger as continuing to pursue 'the temporal clue', and Derrida as responding constructively to the failure of these efforts, Rapaport does a great service to Heidegger scholarship and to our appreciation of Derrida.

Our understanding of the formation of Heidegger's philosophical project in the early '20s has been facilitated by work by Thomas Sheehan and Theodore Kisiel on the early drafts of *Being and Time*. Rapaport is someone for whom Heidegger's trajectory is not just one turn, but a series of turns, the first of which, from Being to time, he is working through in these drafts. There are different views about whether Heidegger anticipated deconstruction, and if so when. Rapaport moves skilfully through the various options, and through Derrida's apparently inconsistent remarks on this topic. Again, it is the possibility of rethinking, resituating, and perhaps even renaming the question of time that guides Rapaport's reading.

One of the distinctive aspects of Rapaport's reading of Derrida is his emphasis on the importance of Blanchot in accounting for the shift in Derrida's reading of Heidegger from the essays of the '60s to those of the late '70s and '80s. Erasmus Schöfer has described as paronomasia Heidegger's habit of 'stringing of different word types which ... belong to the same word stem'. Rapaport finds in Blanchot – especially in *Le livre à venir* (1959) and *Le pas au-delà* (1973) a way of developing or interpreting this rhetorical principle into one offering temporal illumination. In his *La parole sacrée de Hölderlin*, he writes: 'Hölderlin is credited as comprehending the poet as one who, in announcing his arrival in the wake of his being-there (or Dasein), brings into proximity a *sacred disseminating temporality* by means of reflectively holding together in an *à venir*, *à venir*, or *à venir* that is literature' [my emphasis]. Rapaport devotes a long chapter – Paronomasia – to the impact of Blanchot's elaboration of such disseminating temporalities on Derrida, instanced in his deployment of *Viens*, in, for instance 'On an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy'. The discussion is extended in a series of acute commentaries on later Derrida essays, and on the temporal dimensions of *The Post Card*, *Shibboleth*, 'Geschlecht II' and so on in the chapter 'Anticipations of Apocalypse'. The book concludes with a short defence of Derrida against Habermas, arguing in effect that the latter is being undialectical in refusing to grasp or even consider the value of Derrida's slow, patient working through of the consequences of Heidegger's thought, a criticism one could make of many of those who reduce Derrida to some pre-Hegelian philosophy of difference.

This book is a major contribution towards the fundamental renewal of our thinking about time, and convincingly shows just how central that project continued to be for Heidegger and just how far it informs deconstruction. A great deal of work is done by such rhetorical categories as metalepsis and paronomasia, and what perhaps remains an open question is how far their application is restricted to literary texts, and whether they displace or merely supplement the existential temporality of *Being and Time*. One powerful lesson from this book is that pursuing Heidegger's 'temporal clue' must make allowances for the twists and disguises that this quest undergoes. This book shows admirably, sometimes brilliantly, that the question of time is not simply another metaphysical issue ripe for deconstruction, but that deconstruction is intimately entangled with the project of rethinking time.

David Wood



# WHITE NOISE

Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Mark Poster, Oxford, Polity, 1988. viii + 230pp., £27.50 hb, £8.50 pb, 0 7456 0586 9 hb, 0 7456 0587 7 pb

After producing over twenty books and monographs as the professional *enfant terrible* of French sociology, Jean Baudrillard has achieved a kind of apotheosis, at least among the Anglo-Saxons. His 'underground' English-language reputation has spectacularly surfaced, as this volume witnesses. Confusingly, this seems to have happened just as Baudrillard renounced theorizing about the world and turned to the more mysterious practices embodied in the personal jottings of *Cool Memories* and *America*. Apart from some wobbles in the new translations ('Seduction, it is destiny', we are informed at one point, neatly effacing Baudrillard's sloganizing gifts) and a disappointingly casual introduction by the editor, who has written excellently about Baudrillard elsewhere, Mark Poster's selection supplies a judicious introduction to this situation, justifiably emphasizing the side of Baudrillard's work which is closest to canonical social theory. What emerges, at least initially, is an urgent, somewhat overheated exchange between semiology and Marxism (and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis) on the terrain of sociology, an encounter rich in provocation and innuendo but often innocent of argument.

The early analyses of consumer society engage in unabashed critical theorizing, along New Left lines: not only Marx, Freud and Saussure, but McLuhan and Norbert Wiener, are deployed in order to unmask the processes by which Baudrillard sees that categories of consumer objects induce categories of person through the construction and manipulation of needs. The critical site of advanced capitalism is now the sphere of consumption. The problem is no longer how to produce cars, but how to sell them, a problem capitalism solves in the domain of signification. Even if, as the selections reproduced here attest, there was a touching faith in the capacities of capitalism to control human beings and their environment quite comfortably, we were also allowed the conceptual space for (perhaps covertly ascetic) moral revulsion in the face of this repressively tolerant Shangri La and for the scathing sociological examination of its hysterical commodity fetishism.

In some acute observations on Georges Perec's novel *The Things: A Story of the Sixties in The System of Objects* (1968), reprinted here, Baudrillard remarks that its protagonists, an affluent couple whose life-style is meticulously detailed, 'do not exist as a couple: their only reality is "Jerome-and-Sylvie" as sign', the freedom of their 'projects' masks the tyranny of desires guided by consumer objects. As watchful amateur sociologists, Jerome and Sylvie are an appropriately ironic model for his gaze to rest on. It is in the imagination of the powers of the sign profoundly to subvert its rational observers – as well as the explanatory notions contained in his earlier work – that Baudrillard's *oeuvre* comes into its own.

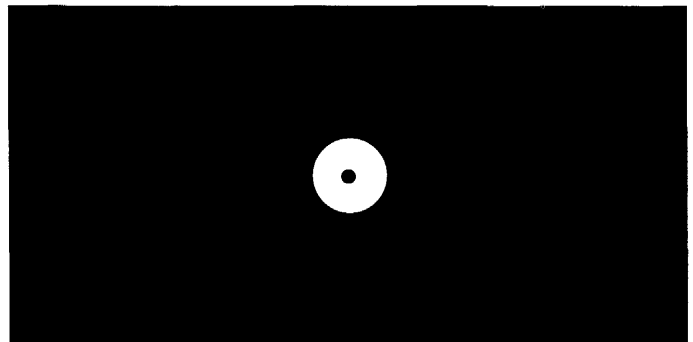
The crucial turn for Baudrillard occurs in *The Mirror of Production* (1973) with its repudiation of Marx's theory of value on the grounds that its alleged naturalism viciously implicates it in bourgeois political economy. The authentically radical task (Baudrillard casts himself as Marx to Marx's unwitting Feuerbach, although such appeals to the dialectic will shortly disappear) is now to perform the critique of the political economy of the sign: the very fact of systems of meaning, describable in something like Saussure's terms, the argument seems to run, marks a deep reification (peculiar, apparently, to capitalist societies):

[Signification] is the locus of an elemental objectification that reverberates through the amplified systems of signs up to the level of the social and political bracketing [*encadrement*] of meaning. All the repressive and reductive strategies of power systems are already present in the internal logic of the sign, as well as those of exchange theory and political economy.

Baudrillard's thesis seems to be, in essence, that the sheer proliferation of messages through mass communications media has obliterated the meanings which these messages once conveyed. The noise of too much information has drowned its content: a mass of signs still circulates, but referents are the stuff of nostalgia. In Baudrillard's invoked fusion of McLuhan and cybernetics, the code is, precisely, all the message there is. The restless spread of images (simulacra, simulations) colonizes human subjectivity, according to Baudrillard, liquidating its old forms (hence the notorious 'death of the social') on behalf of new kinds of experience for which Baudrillard does not lack names: obscenity, vertigo, ecstasy, cyberblitz, the hyper-real, and so on. The step from Disneyland to Watergate and terrorism (Baudrillard understandably loves Reagan) is a short one in this claustrophobic forest of symbols – symbols which signify nothing in particular, except, perhaps, according to Baudrillard during occasional functionalist moods, the self-maintenance of the social and political order.

In the hyper-real blizzard, distinctions between domination and resistance are as defunct as those between object and representation. The 'over circulation' of ideas siphons off their specific content, effacing negativity in favour of the absolute positivity of the media themselves. Baudrillard sets the iron cage of modernity seething with all kinds of meaning only so as to pronounce more categorically on the 'disappearance of power' and the collapse of political alternatives. An initial response to this predicament was to press the exhortatory energies of his earlier sociology into an even tighter corner for the sake of some primordial, pre-simulatory meaning. The above passage continues: 'Only total revolution, theoretical and practical, can restore the symbolic in the demise of the sign and of value. Even signs must burn.' The attenuation of hopes in this emancipatory semantic eruption has led to a deepening, rather depressed, suspicion of any reference to meaning at all. In *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1988), Baudrillard makes unusually explicit what he sees as being at stake in our response to the hyper-real 'excess of information':

The present system of dissuasion and simulation ... forcefully controls all procedures for the production of meaning. It does not control the seduction of appearances. No interpretation can explain it, no system abolish it. It is our last chance.





Baudrillard as moralist invests our last hope in a motley variety of entities whose existence is more or less purely metaphysical: death, the seduction of appearances, the fatal strategies of the object, the impassivity of shadowy silent majorities. What he seems to want from each of these is a resistance to meaning itself.

The theoretical trajectory which can be mapped across Mark Poster's edition, in its curve away from a critical science of signs toward the more unruly influences of Nietzsche and, particularly, Georges Bataille, has the air of the double, or simulacrum, of other intellectual careers. Initial fierce scientism, the subsequent disillusionment with depth hermeneutics and the vindictive turn against the goals of truth and understanding in favour of appearance, the corporeal, jouissance, seduction – we have seen here, more than once, before.

It is Baudrillard's distinction to have located the source of epistemological and semantic instability in a specifically transformed *social* context. Hence the problem, according to Baudrillard, is not merely that the explanatory categories which we hopefully bring to the social world are found to be inadequate to fresh, confusing phenomena (yet how adequate were they ever?) but that the substance of this world has itself so 'unravell'd' or 'imploded' or 'vanished', become ecstatic or obscene, that the very idea of self-understanding now looks embarrassingly complicit with our postmodern mechanisms of social control. (He also cursorily endorses the global philosophical critique of representation associated with the names of Derrida and *Tel Quel*.)

This scepticism does not seem to have been accompanied by any access of humility, cognitive or otherwise. Baudrillard is happy to appeal to a superior grasp of reality, and indeed to the authority of the object itself, in the course of his numerous polemics. But how can his own work avoid the complicity he describes? Has he shown that all of the traditional conceptions of self-understanding are now necessarily irrelevant? And, correspondingly, is it clear that we are each of us, in our subjectivity, the 'cultural dupes' of the mass media?

Negative or sceptical answers to these kinds of question bear on political consideration of these ideas. It is a vexed question among Baudrillard aficionados to what extent he cheerfully acquiesces in our postmodern predicament. If, as the above quotations indicate, he may be over-hastily condemned for alleg-

edly tranquillizing moral effects, it is also unclear, given his extravagant suspicions, how or why he can consistently argue any political position, reactionary or otherwise. Baudrillard's political pronouncements, like the rest of his social theory, are conspicuously short of people acting for themselves (women are given a notoriously sharp dressing down for failing to appreciate the challenge of seduction). After a period of embattled ultra-leftism, it is unclear quite where he stands politically. It might be suggested, however, that he is most comfortably located alongside other self-proclaimed speakers on behalf of the 'silent majorities' or Europe and the USA.

Baudrillard's argumentative strategies have grown increasingly elusive. His early studies are expressed in a spiky, assertive rhetoric, engagingly unencumbered by empirical nuance (readers who enjoyed his recent *America* will be interested to note that as early as 1968 he felt able to record that 'In the United States 90 per cent of the population experience no other desire than to possess what others possess'). In his recent work, with its preference for jottings and oracular dicta, the rhetoric, still bristling with jargon, has taken over. Here Baudrillard is admirably consistent in stubborn resistance to the lures of explanation and theory. What remains is the force-field of buzz-words which seems to surround Baudrillard's name on its every public appearance, and the dogmatic, offhand presence of the man himself.

While the efflorescence of capitalist consumption for Jerome and Sylvie's present-day counterparts, the spread of information technologies and even the collapse of actually existing socialisms render a renewed pessimism about one-dimensionality (with an accompanying politics of the Great Refusal) understandable, it is no more acceptable now than any other announcements that ideology, or history, has ended. Baudrillard – in part by example – pushes us hard toward thinking about how prevailing frameworks of social and political thought (liberal, Marxist) might fail to comprehend new forms of control, subjectivity and agency, but he does so in order to liquidate those very notions. This fatal strategy is not likely to be cognitively or politically benign in the long-suffering real world.

Matthew Festenstein

## THE POINT OF VIEW OF ANIMALS

Barbara Noske, *Humans and Other Animals: Beyond the Boundaries of Anthropology*, London, Pluto Press, 1989. 244pp., £27.50, 1-85305-054-7

Noske criticizes the objectification of animals and present human-animal relations, arguing for the need to rethink our image of other species. The concept of animals as objects has been prevalent throughout the history of Western culture, accelerating and gaining wider application with the advent of capitalism. It is under capitalism that animals became subjected to a more extensive and controlling form of domestication. Whereas previously their subsistence cycle was largely left intact, with the advent of capitalism animals became totally incorporated into human technology. The life-supporting activities that used to be under the control of the animals themselves were now placed in the hands of farm and factory managers. Present-day capitalism sets out to eliminate any facet of the animal that cannot be incorporated into the productive process. Not only this, they have been deprived of

any social system to which they can relate (something animals need as much as humans according to Noske) both in terms of interacting with their own species and their relationships with humans. This reduces them to appendages of computers and machines as they have no living beings with which to form relationships, a situation that can be just as harmful to animals as it would to humans. This economic objectification has been shored up by the doctrines of natural science and Western culture. These doctrines have devalued nature and animals, providing a rational legitimization for this derisive treatment of anything that lies outside the realm of humanity.

As a counter to these mechanisms of animal objectification, Noske seeks to construct an anthropology of animals as part of her quest for their 'resubjectification'. In her opinion anthropology could be particularly suited to the study of animals, since as a discipline it circumvents some of the limitations traditional science necessarily imposes on such a project. Anthropology is conventionally the science of the Other, examining different

cultures from an external standpoint, possessing a pre-eminently inter-subjective method and thus capable of making such an attempt to bridge the gap between species. She argues that just as anthropologists study people from cultures other than their own by an inter-subjective method of participatory observation and a holistic approach of immersing oneself in the Other's cultural setting, animals could be considered in a similar fashion. Anthropology would be methodologically better placed to tackle the examination of animals than the more conventional sciences. Anthropologists are in a different position from the traditional laboratory orientated scientists, since they are encouraged to empathize with the object under study. The anthropologists as far as human subjects are concerned should view the unknown with respect to enable them to arrive at an understanding of the different culture. This understanding goes deeper than one gleaned in a laboratory where feelings are taboo because they interfere with scientific objectivity. If anthropological methods as conven-



tionally applied to humans of other cultures could be applied to animals, Noske claims a much greater depth of understanding could be reached than that provided by traditional subject-object minded sciences.

Noske is prepared to state without reservation that there are great continuities between species. There are many traits that are traditionally thought to be solely facets of humanity (the higher order cognitive behavioural patterns for instance) and she argues that these are exhibited by various species. Animals in Noske's view are very complex, sentient beings and the idea that they are merely machines or incapable of communication is an unjustifiable one, postulated to preserve the uniqueness of humanity. In her opinion animals fulfil many of the criteria of personhood; language, sociality, and an almost Hegelian sense of self in relation to others to name but a few. Noske contends that these continuities should only be used to provoke us into realizing that animals are really much more sentient than previously thought. In order to free animals from object status their claim for autonomy cannot rest solely on arguing that they are the possessors of human attributes, their own animal subjectivity must be recognised and established. It is on this basis that their rights must be defended and this is the crucial issue for Noske. There is a dilemma in that there seems to be no alternative frameworks to impose on animals other than object status or *human* subject-status. What Noske wants to see is a notion of a non-human subject, that would provide an adequate evaluation of animal traits, while breaking free of the limitations of always defending animals on the grounds of their similarity to humans.

Noske takes issue with the social sciences and humanities and biobehavioural sciences, as well as with feminism, the Green movement and animal liberation. Her disagreement with the feminist line of argument is based on the fact that feminists have traditionally been wary of animal-human comparisons, as they have often been used to shore up sexist claims. Women have been seen as more biological and therefore closer to animals than men, and this women-animal continuity could form a major barrier for social equality between the sexes. Noske argues that it is not the continuity itself that is oppressive but rather its social construction and interpretation. For this reason feminists have uncritically adhered to the subject-object distinction between humans and animals and are therefore unwilling to produce a non-reductionist model for interpreting these divisions. Since feminists have been at the forefront in the culture-nature debate, Noske argues that feminists should extend their theorizing to provide a more radical consideration of animal-human continuity. Indeed, in recent investigations it has been contended that animal societies can no longer serve as models for a male-dominated society. Female subordination is less extensive than in human society, since female animals seem to get a better deal.

Her criticisms of the Green movement centre upon the limitations of their holist approach to the human-nature continuity. Most left-orientated environmentalists eschew biological reductionism but fail to address their anthropocentric reductionism. This is facilitated by defining 'green' as something that is situated outside humanity itself. The environmentalists seem hardly aware of a nature that is not green, domesticated animals for instance. Consequently, they concentrate on ecology and in the process negate biology. There is not a simple model of human subjects acting on a separate natural object. Humans and animals must also be included in the definition of nature. Noske argues that the environmentalist movement must show that biology i.e. human-animal continuity need not be reductionist *per se* and should be included in the equation in order to have a movement that incorporates all facts of nature.

Although Noske's aims are laudable, one wonders where her argument would lead. It is by no means certain that anthropology could provide a more illuminating account of animal behaviour, as there needs to be a much more rigorous reconsideration of the study of animals to fully overcome the anthropomorphic implications with which it is currently burdened. Even if this difficulty could be overcome, she never states exactly what is to be done with this increased understanding of animals. If their newly acquired subject-status should be used to give them moral and political rights akin to humans, then the issue of human-animal continuity becomes even more important. How to facilitate the provision of 'subject' orientated rights for animals is an area she does not cover, apart from warning of the dangers of anthropomorphic colonization, stating that animals are other worlds, simply different from humans. Under this formulation it would seem impossible to preserve animal other-worldliness and credit them with the moral rights humans enjoy.

Noske's major contribution is in stepping outside the terms used in the debates over animal-human comparisons by sociobiologists, ethologists and analytic ethical philosophy (Midgley and Singer for example), a debate that is increasingly noted for its circularity and anthropomorphism. Noske attempts to formulate a notion of animal subjectivity independently and without recourse to such comparisons. By trying to see things from the animals' point of view (as far as she is able) a whole different perspective is created. As to how successful this project could be remains to be seen – but Noske's book provides an important first step in trying to achieve such an end.

Lucy Frith



# ILLUSIONS OF TECHNIQUE

Paul Franco, *The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990. 277pp., £20.00 hb, 0 300 04686 3

Michael Oakeshott is a defamed figure in the intellectual culture of the left. He is seen largely as a representative of the romantic right; an elegant if quirky essayist and anti-progressive pedagogue of the Black Papers persuasion. His overtly political writings are taken to be of little value being slight, wilfully untheoretical and demonstrating a commitment to conservative ideas and values. Paul Franco's study, whilst neither addressing the left nor adopting any of its familiar positions, seeks to redress the balance by presenting Oakeshott in a sympathetic, at times adulatory, light. His guiding assumption throughout is that Oakeshott is a first division philosopher. And, further, as a political thinker his work makes an important contribution to contemporary debates, crucially so around the topics of tradition, rationalism and liberalism.

Franco defines his task as threefold: to present Oakeshott's 'theory of philosophy', initially elaborated in *Experience and Its Modes* (1933), and to demonstrate how this is all of a piece with his later political writings; to analyse the 'critique of rationalism' expounded most notably in the collection entitled *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1962); and finally, by way of an exposition of *On Human Conduct* (1975), to suggest ways in which Oakeshott advances 'liberal theory'.

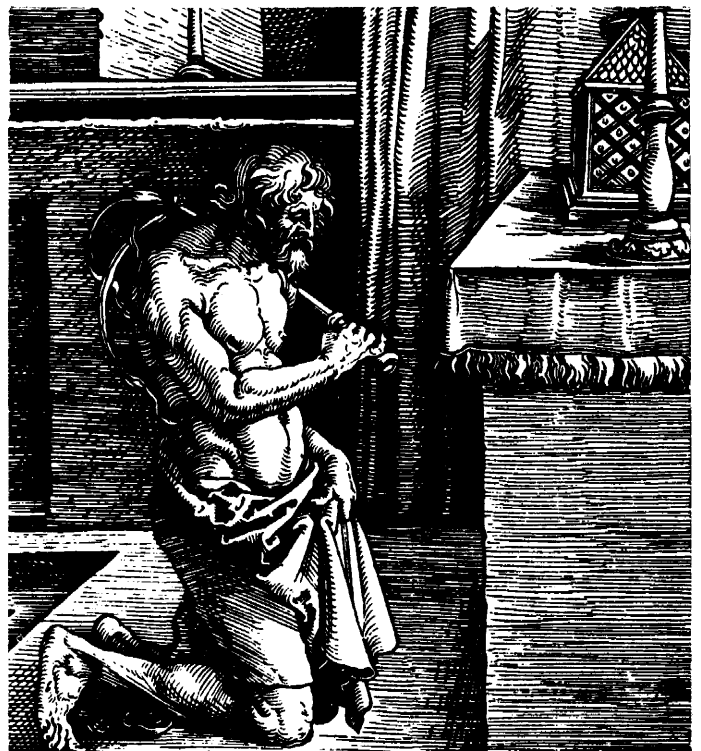
By far the most provocative section is the one on the 'critique of rationalism' entitled 'Rationalism, Tradition and Politics'. Franco tells how Oakeshott draws a distinction between technical and practical (or traditional) knowledge. Both operate within 'concrete activity', but whereas the former is acquired by attention to formulated rules, principles, or maxims, the latter always resists reduction to method, 'because it exists only in use'. The procedural rules, giving rise to technical knowledge, only have meaningful application within the context of concrete activities and thus lose their force when abstracted from practical engagements. The whole of Oakeshott's politics is driven by this basically Aristotelian insight. Rationalism, the underlying tendency in modern Western political theory and ideology, is little more than a self-justifying belief in the sovereignty of technique. Practical or traditional knowledge (also referred to as style, artistry and judgment) has no part to play in rationalist schemes, and, yet, for Oakeshott, it is only within the context of lived, practical activity that such schemes maintain their authenticity. The 'unmistakable emergence' of rationalism as an identifiable philosophical creed takes place in the early seventeenth century under the influence of Descartes and Bacon. In the political realm it comes on the scene at the same time and is translated variously into 'the politics of the felt need', 'the politics of perfection' and 'the politics of the book'. Politics becomes increasingly the inscribed formulation of theoretical schemas and utopias designed to have universal application. The success of such politics stems from its appeal, not to the disenfranchised but to the 'politically inexperienced' in need of guidance. Hence, for example, Locke's *Second Treatise* is as much a vademecum in political education for the aspiring novice, a 'training in technique', as it is a justification for bourgeois revolution. The more the projects and ideologies of rationalist politics take hold in the modern world, the more detached from practical knowledge they become. What we lose is the pre-reflective 'knowledge' of things that is transmitted through tradition. Tradition is the silent bearer of customary morality and conduct not learned but acquired, and acquired in

much the same way as a language is, Franco tells us, 'continuously, unselfconsciously, imitatively'. Franco emphasises that we should not confuse Oakeshott's understanding of 'tradition' with the one advanced by Burke. Here tradition is bound up with a 'cosmic conservatism' presupposing a 'belief in the wisdom or rationality of history'. No such theoretical structure underpins Oakeshott. On his account, tradition is without any metaphysical grounding and generates no normative principles; its value is in providing the contexts and occasions for 'conversation' and 'intimation'. Non-rationalist politics is, at best, an unimpeded conversation within tradition—a ceaseless, contingent conversation in which 'self-disclosure' and 'self-enactment' are freely explored. Oakeshott's conservatism is one in which the tradition is conserved and the possibilities for self-discovery are never foreclosed.

Franco performs a valuable service in presenting an overview of Oakeshott's political work and offering a lucid and persuasive account of the attack upon rationalism. In a world in which modern Conservatives engage in permanent revolution and the orthodox left looks back to its past, the placing of 'tradition' on the political agenda is timely.

Franco's work is not without shortcomings. He acknowledges an anti-epistemological stance in Oakeshott and rightly makes the comparison with Gadamer and Rorty. Gadamer's position on the reason-traditional opposition is remarkably similar to Oakeshott's. But perhaps this connection is not explored sufficiently, particularly as the Gadamer-Habermas exchanges might have sharpened up Franco's rather slender critical reflections on tradition. The analysis of Oakeshott's 'restatement of liberalism' is fairly inconclusive. Franco suggests that there is a middle way between 'deontological' and 'communitarian' forms of liberalism, and that it is to be found in Oakeshott's conception of civil association; but, frustratingly, this point is not developed.

Chris Lawn



# DINOSAURS

Gemma Corradi Fiumara, *The Other Side of Language: a Philosophy of Listening*, trans. Charles Lambert, London, Routledge, 1990. 231pp., £30.00 hb, 0 415 02621 0

There is a celebrated fragment of Heraclitus which says, in a standard translation, 'When you have listened not to me but to the Meaning (*logos*), it is wise within the Meaning to say: One is All.' One of Heidegger's most resonant sermons took this passage as its text. In an analysis which he first developed in 1944, he fastened on the reference to listening (*akouein*) and used it to provide an articulation of his theory of history. (See 'Logos' in *Early Greek Thinking*, edited by David Farrell Krell and Frank Capuzzi.) The history of the West, he claimed, was a story of deafness: its ears were atrophying whilst its mouth grew big. It had become hard of hearing and hard in speech. *Legein* – the process of saying and meaning – was reduced to vocalising or signifying, and language downgraded to the 'picking up and transmitting of sounds'.

But it had not always been like this. 'Once,' according to Heidegger, 'in the beginning of Western thinking, the essence of thinking flashed in the light of Being.' At that time – the time of Heraclitus and other pre-Socratic thinkers – language was a rapturous opening of the world, not a technique of self-expression. In those days, *legein* had referred to 'the realm of the primordial, essential determination of language'. It had meant 'to lay down and lay before'. The task of philosophy in the modern world, therefore, was to reawaken our capacity to listen to the laying out of Being. It should lead us back to 'hearkening attunement' (*Gehöran*), a condition in which we would no longer attend to 'the sound of a word, as the expression of a speaker,' but rather learn to belong to (*gehören*) the matter addressed.' According to Heidegger, 'You never hear properly so long as your ears hang upon the sound of a human voice.'

Gemma Corradi Fiumara's book – first published in Italian in 1985 – is an enthusiastic reaffirmation of this sad but apocalyptic theme. At a time when others are inclined to see Heidegger as one of the 'masters of suspicion', and to be pretty suspicious of him too (what else was he in favour of in 1944, after all?), she stands out as a Heideggerian of passionate humanistic conviction. She paints a very pathetic picture of the state that we in the West have got ourselves into. We have cut ourselves in two, and thrown away the better half. We are so intent on speaking that we have forgotten all about listening, 'the other side of language'. We have become creatures of 'competing monologues' rather than 'genuine dialogue'. Philosophy – the only kind of thinking worth the name – has turned into a kind of warfare, and 'the original loving aspect of research – the first part of *philosophy* – has been lost.' We have succumbed to 'benumbment', and language has become something monstrous: 'neither sym-bolic, nor meta-bolic,' Fiumara says, 'but rather dia-bolic.'

Fiumara's manner may remind her readers of someone chairing a contentious meeting, obliged to shout at the top of their voice to let their plea for silence be heard. Hyperbolic, you might say. And her sense of urgency is understandable since, if she is right, what is at stake is nothing less than the survival of biosphere. 'The degradation of language and the cultivation of listening, respectively represent, in my opinion, the greatest danger and a preliminary task for the survival and destiny of the human species,' she says. What is needed, she continues (alluding to Gianni Vattimo) is a kind of deliberate weakness, a style of thought that distances itself from power. But such weakness (perhaps 'meekness' might be a better word) requires, she believes, 'extraordi-

nary strength'. She appeals to us to turn to a new style of thought, 'a listening type of philosophical contribution'. She attaches an impressive string of adjectives to this 'connubial listening propensity', as she calls it. It will be 'mild, moderate, modest, available, vulnerable, welcoming, patient, contained, tolerant, conciliating, receptive, pitiful, humble, poor, disciplined and vital'.

This description sounds, for those who like that sort of thing, like a job specification for the perfect wife, and I am afraid that cynics will make it into the occasion for unkind laughter. But *The Other Side of Language* appears to have been extremely well received. It is one of the very few works of philosophy to have been translated from Italian into English in the 1980s, and it comes supported by an impressive set of testimonials. ('A rare mastery' – Paul Ricoeur; 'surefooted ... thoroughly rigorous philosophical analysis' – Brian McGuinness; 'new perspective on the future of philosophy ... convincing' – Manfred Reidel.) Surely, then, there must be more to it than a Rousseauian lament for the terrible state that our civilisation has got itself into?

*The Other Side of Language*, though not a particularly carefully constructed book, certainly contains some interesting passages about Kant and Plato. It also reminds us of the possibility of reading Heidegger as a tearful humanist, which has been eclipsed by more sophisticated readings in recent years. However, it does take rather a lot for granted. Fiumara has no qualms about the assumption that Greek and German are the only languages that really count in the history of humanity. (She refers, rather bewilderingly, to 'our Western mother tongue', by which, you may be certain, she does not mean Irish, Basque, Spanish or Portuguese; still less the native languages of south and north America.) She is serenely confident that the canonical texts of Western philosophy, or rather those passages from them on which Heidegger chose to comment, include all the historical knowledge one needs in order to diagnose the maladies of modernity.

Fiumara has also followed Heidegger, and most of his disciples, in talking a great deal about language without ever paying attention to linguistics. (In *Le langage Heidegger*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, Henri Meschonnic has made a powerful attack on this procedure, in the name not only of linguistic theory, but of poetry, philosophy and politics too.) Fiumara may not like the work of Saussure, Sapir, Jakobson or Chomsky; for all one can tell she may not have heard of it either. Like Heidegger in the passages already quoted, she ignores the rather well-established fact that the perception of speech is not a matter of listening for the unstructured qualities of brute natural sounds, but of recognising phonemes, that is to say, sounds as organised by the sound-pattern of a particular language. She does not even regard speech as consisting in signs: language becomes a system of signs, according to her, only with the invention of phonetic writing systems. The techniques of 'proper written language' are the result, she says, of 'a surprising and un hoped-for "wedding", genuinely exogamous and revolutionary: the linking between signs and sounds'. Speech, as she understands it, is not a linguistic activity at all, in a sense that would be recognized by any viable theory of language; it is just a matter of hearing sounds.

So, despite her own injunctions about the importance of listening, Fiumara has refused to lend an ear to linguistic theory. This has helped her to follow Heidegger into another impasse: like him, she tacitly assumes that the only interesting objects of auditory attention are human voices, and that human voices do nothing but speak language. It is hard to see how a theory which,

like this one, ignores music, singing, and the world of non-human sound can have the right to describe itself as a 'philosophy of listening'.

There is one portion of twentieth-century science to which Fiumara does, however, give a whole-hearted and uncritical welcome. Perhaps the most unusual thing about the whole book, in fact, is the way it combines its sentimental humanism with an account of 'our own biological nature' from 'the evolutionary point of view'. Science has demonstrated, she believes, that although 'archaic saurian animals' such as dinosaurs are no longer with us, they have 'found a way of surviving by insinuating themselves into the human brain'. This means that we have a 'reptilian' brain as well as a 'mammalian' one; and our attempts to be open and dialogical always have to reckon with the vestiges of 'those deaf mechanisms of the ancient reptilian brain that coexists with the more recent cognitive structures'. Although the 'full biological evolution of man' was completed millions of years earlier, it is 'not until we arrive at the Upper Palaeolithic era that humans seem to have achieved a new awareness and a new sense of purpose'. The turning point, she believes, must have been the invention of phonetic writing, which made a 'linkage of sign and sound' and thus 'released the specifically human joy that comes from supplementing biological reproduction with cultural fertility'. For Heidegger, the difficulty of 'proper hearing' arose from historical causes located within Western philosophy; for Fiumara, the history of the West is in turn covered by biological laws. When we Westerners try to listen, we make ourselves vulnerable (though it is hard to see why, on Fiumara's evolutionary principles, northerners, southerners or easterners should be any different in this respect). Anyway, when we feel at risk, there is a danger that we will reactivate the 'archaic territorial structures that have been phylogenetically preserved in the vestiges of our reptilian brain'. It is not surprising, since this is what she thinks, that she should be very very worried about our future. But, despite her excursion from Heideggerian apocalypse into evolutionary theory, Heidegger's new philosophy remains, I'm afraid – in a pre-Thatcherite, if not pre-Socratic or pre-mammalian sense – very wet indeed.

Jonathan Rée

## DIFFERENCES

Denise Riley, *'Am I that name?' Feminism and the category of 'women' in history*, London, Macmillan, 1988. 126pp., £29.50 hb, £9.99 pb., 0 333 3461 2 hb, 0 333 34613 0 pb

Denise Riley adopts a number of strategies, more or less complex, to suggest that the term 'women', like the term 'woman', cannot be taken to be unambiguous and invariant in meaning. She points out in her opening remarks that the 'volatility of "woman" has indeed been debated from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory'. Her aim in this book is to develop an analogous debate around the term 'women', since, as she writes in her opening paragraph: 'both a concentration and a refusal of the identity of "women" are essential to feminism.' She is contributing to a line of questioning, which has emerged out of a confluence of enquiries in this century. There is the questioning of the stability of identity and meaning, opened up in the traditions associated with Saussure and semiology. There is radicalisation of questioning of gender and sexuality emerging in the domain opened up by Freud. This suggests that, while bodies may not change very much, what it feels like to live in them alters drastically. This often in feminist

circles gets combined with a residual Marxist analysis of class position and its effect on experience and self-image. There is furthermore the post-Nietzschean destabilisations of natural kinds, such as 'woman', associated with the names Derrida and Foucault, Kristeva and Irigaray.

Riley does not explicitly lay out these strands of enquiry but she, I think, takes them to be sufficiently well known to require no laboured introduction. This unfortunately rules out use of this book as an introductory text. The aim of Riley's discussion, then, is to examine the use and abuse of the term 'women' in feminist theory. This makes it strange that she does not locate her own enquiries in relation to contemporaneous discussions of parallel themes. The work and encouragement of Joan Scott is warmly cited in the acknowledgements, but even this alternative treatment is not discussed at any length. Various other contributors, De Beauvoir, Sally Alexander, Elizabeth Grosz, to name a few, get mentioned but not adequately discussed, and there is no mention at all of, for example, Barbara Taylor, Lynne Segal, Sheila Rowbotham, Anne Oakley, Michèle Barrett.

The problem, clearly, is that Riley has decided to produce a brief and manageable discussion, and wants to concentrate on the longer historical context, reaching back at least to the early modern period in Europe. She has however erred on the side of concision, with a foreshortened account even of European history. It is at the very least misguided to raise the issue of race and racism with quotations in her title and opening paragraph from Shakespeare's Desdemona and from the suffrage and anti-slavery campaigner, Sojourner Truth, but never to refer to questions about whether the entire feminist project has been caught up in the false universalisms of a white, middle-class imperial/missionary confusion. Reference to the now outdated two-way debate about an 'unhappy marriage' between marxism and feminism would at least have raised the issue of class differences, and their importance for feminist theory. This would have made evasion of the question of race less possible. While these issues may have been excessively discussed in journals over the last decade, knowledge of them cannot be taken for granted.

While no doubt Riley is acutely aware of these issues, they are not directly signalled in the book, and her discussion comes over as curiously anodyne. While she and her reader are perhaps in implicit agreement that it is important how the terms 'woman' and 'women' are understood, and whether their meanings are discussed at all, no sense comes over of a continuing battle for recognition of these issues within academic disciplines and in academic institutions. For a writer so acute on historical nuance and concerned to convey to the reader the importance for meaning of change of context, this is strange. She focuses on a shift between fifteenth- and nineteenth-century polemics concerning the depiction and status of women, with a change in emphasis analysed as resulting from an increasing use of humanist accounts of what it is to be human, in the service of democratising political movements. She suggests that this shift reveals fatal flaws in the strategy of using such accounts to promote the cause of female participation in political processes.

Her writing is taut and her observations acute; she understands very well the dynamics of interaction between two importantly distinct, but interrelated processes: the development of events and the development of ideas. She goes on to discuss the problem in the twentieth century of campaigning for women's emancipation, when the meaning of the term 'women' was so closely bound up with domesticity and self-renunciation. But even with this more limited theme, the treatment is just too condensed for her argument to come over without ambiguity. For the well-informed this book is a fascinating, indeed tantalising, suggestion of a rich set of theories, evidences and hypotheses, available to the author, but inadequately presented. For those without a firm grounding both

in the history of representation of women in Europe and in the recent debates the book can be sadly bewildering. She should be encouraged to address herself to these themes again, only at three times the length.

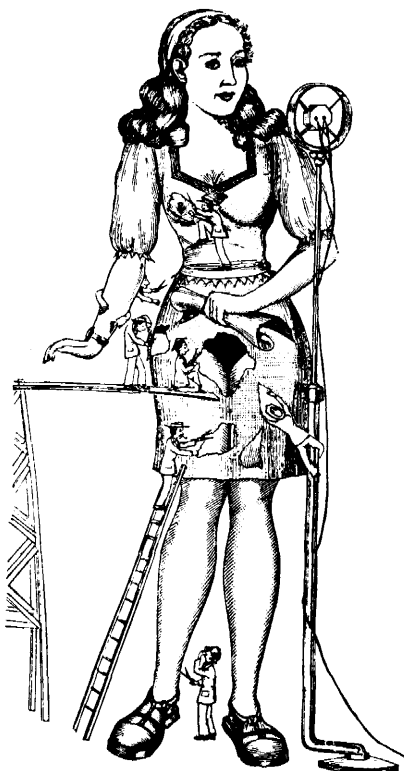
Joanna Hodge

## POSTMODERN TECHNOLOGIES

Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, Oxford, Polity, 1990. 179pp., £29.50 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 7456 0326 2 hb, 0 7456 03270 pb

Jacques Derrida has argued, in what today is a much repeated contention, that there is nothing 'outside the text'. While Derrida has stressed time and again that his deconstructive analyses of writing and 'logocentrism' are concerned with the qualities of 'experience in general', it is this focus on 'textuality' which has led many commentators to the view that poststructuralism is palpably unable to offer an appropriate account of the nature of social institutions and political relations. Lost in the free play of signifiers and displacements, so it has been argued, poststructuralists remain blissfully unaware of the political antagonisms that suffuse and structure the non-textual reality by which modernized societies survive.

This is the (stereotyped) position concerning the relevance of poststructuralism to social analysis that Mark Poster attempts to challenge and refute in *The Mode of Information*. Having written extensively on poststructuralism – and, specifically, on Foucault – Poster would appear well placed to assess the importance of this theoretical account for understanding the nature of late modernity and the possible transitions to postmodernity. Poster, though, is not only concerned to trace out the significance of poststructuralism for social and political theory. In a series of two-way mappings,



he also considers the extent to which newly emerging forms of social phenomena – such as computer writing, surveillance technologies, databases, etc. – open questions about the adequacy of poststructuralism for interpreting issues about social context. The result of these connecting strands of the book is a series of interesting discussions about the ways in which new communications technologies structure existing forms of self-identity, power and social meanings.

The main argument of the book is that the emergence of new information systems – computers, fax machines, VCRs and so on – suggests a new trajectory of social development that is taking us away from the traditional social practices and institutions of modernity. In particular, the spread of new communication technologies profoundly disrupts existing political categories (the division between liberal and socialist visions) and, most importantly, the notion of the self-identical 'rational' subject which is so pivotal to Enlightenment thought. In the emerging political landscape by which individuals are 'positioned' in relation to the 'mode of information', self-identity is constituted as a variety of multiple, dispersed, unstable 'subject positions' – cultural identities which, Poster argues, are at once inscribed in systems of domination and yet also offer potentials for freedom. The newly dispersed subject, he argues, arises from a series of upheavals in the 'wrapping of language' which have occurred during the twentieth century. This increasing destabilization and flexibility of language – a common poststructuralist theme – is analysed by Poster in relation to a number of new cultural phenomena. These themes are developed under headings such as 'Baudrillard and TV Ads', 'Foucault and Databases', and 'Lyotard and Computer Science'.

The more original aspects of Poster's study are found in his account of the way in which new social formations impinge upon the tasks of contemporary theory. In a stimulating chapter on 'Derrida and Electronic Writing', for example, Poster argues that, although deconstruction illuminates the decentering effects of computer discourse, the latter equally opens a series of questions about the status of deconstruction. Contending that Derrida's concept of *écriture* is gaining attention in the social sciences at precisely the moment when writing is being overshadowed by electronic media, Poster argues that computer writing dematerializes the written trace more profoundly than poststructuralism would lead us to believe. This, in turn, puts radically into question those qualities associated with the nature of human subjectivity and social praxis. As linguistic traces, spacings and marks lose their rootedness in time and space, he argues, it is imperative that modern critical theory seek to develop an interpretative framework that is adequate for understanding this reconfiguration of 'post-modern subjectivity'.

Notwithstanding this investigation into the ways in which newly emerging forms of social life affect poststructuralist standpoints, however, a number of problems remain with Poster's arguments. First, as is common with most debates about postmodernity, Poster fails to address adequately the degree to which electronic information systems have actually displaced the ways of life traditionally associated with late capitalist society. For while the globalization of knowledge is now a central feature of modern social life, it does not necessarily follow that class politics and modes of production have been rendered redundant in the industrial sectors of the world – as Poster too readily assumes. Second, while new communications technologies are undoubtedly producing a reconfiguration of self-identity in a way that puts many assumptions about subjectivity radically into question, it remains doubtful whether Poster can explicate the contours of these transformations from the vantage point of poststructuralist thought. For the decentering effects of social life on the human subject tend to be understood in poststructuralism as the

objectivistic work of either the 'text' (Derrida), 'power' (Foucault), or 'libidinal intensities' (Lyotard). But these standpoints have little to contribute, in my view, to a truly constructive theory which seeks to understand the intersections between the constitutive and creative aspects of human agency, on the one hand, and the nature of the modern world, on the other. Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly for a book of this length, Poster does not give himself adequate space for theorizing how these newly emerging social formations might be approached from the notion of the 'mode of information'. No doubt, this will be an on-going concern in his now growing corpus of theoretical work. For the moment this book stands as Poster's most detailed interpretation of the increasing impact of modern communications upon social and political life.

Anthony Elliott

## FANTASTIC BIOLOGIES

Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, London, Routledge, 1990. xi + 256pp., £30.00 hb, £9.99 pb, 0 415 90145 6 hb, 0 415 90216 9 pb

Noel Carroll's book sets out to provide an account of the cross-media genre of horror from the viewpoint of analytic philosophy. He cites Aristotle's *Poetics* as the paradigm for his own enterprise, which assumes that the horror genre aims to produce a certain emotional effect (viz., that of horror) and then seeks to elucidate how this effect is obtained. The attempt to construct a philosophy of horror must find answers to two chief paradoxes. Firstly, how is it that we can be frightened of what we know does not exist? And secondly, how can we enjoy being frightened? The text draws primarily on aesthetics and the philosophy of mind in order to tackle these questions – which Carroll calls 'paradoxes of the heart'.

To understand how the affect of horror is produced, one needs an account of the individuation of emotions. The genre of horror, like world history, is dominated by monsters. Carroll argues that it is the evaluative aspects of horror which principally serve to distinguish it: specifically, the monsters in horror are seen as both threatening and impure. These evaluations, together with a factual cognition of the monster's presence and a physical state of felt agitation, constitute the emotion of 'art-horror'. The results are presented with a very interesting discussion of how the fantastic biologies of monsters are typically confected.

Carroll's answer to the first of the paradoxes is that we can feel genuine emotion at the *thought* of fictive objects, without a concomitant belief in their existence. But his appraisal seems to take the fictive state of monsters for granted; whereas the genre seems to appeal to a fundamental *uncertainty* about the existence of its creatures. I don't wish to suggest that the ontological status of Count Dracula is anything but dubious: rather, that to assert the ultimate fictionality of the monsters of horror is also to make reference to an unchallenged and completely assimilated area of ineluctable factuality. But it is just this uncertainty about what *is* that the monsters of horror emblematised. Thus the paradox of fiction can perhaps be profitably explored via a Derridean deconstruction of the antithetical categories of fact and fiction upon which it tacitly turns. Carroll's answer to the second paradox – the 'paradox of horror' – is the jejune (but not thereby any less likely) one that horror fictions are fascinating – and that such fascination is pleasurable.

This is a perspicuous and occasionally droll text which will be of considerable utility in cultural studies. However, one is a little suspicious of any delimitation of the horror genre which excludes Hitchcock's *Psycho* from the canon. Carroll argues that monsters are 'beings that do not exist according to the lights of contemporary science'; and that since the protagonist of *Psycho* is schizophrenic – a scientific category – he is not a monster. But this analysis has the phenomenologically unlikely effect of making the audience's emotional response contingent on its scientific knowledge. Perhaps it is the analytic/scientific bias in Carroll which makes him grant this privileged legitimating role to science. But then, as Norman Bates averred, we are all caught in our own traps.

Gary Kitchen

## TALK ABOUT KRISTEVA

*Abjection, Melancholia, and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, edited by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin, London and New York, Routledge, 1990. ix + 213pp., £30.00 hb, £8.99 pb, 0 415 04155 4 hb, 0 415 04190 2 pb

This volume of the Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature contains the proceedings of the 1987 conference devoted to Kristeva's work, augmented by three commissioned papers. She herself was present, contributing a paper on 'The Adolescent Novel', since the conference was held during the week which she spent as Visiting Fellow at Warwick. A special event, then, but one whose special features have not, unfortunately, been captured for posterity. None of the discussions are printed, nor are Kristeva's reportedly impressive comments on the papers she had heard. Particularly tantalising is a note relating the impossibility of recording her responses to prepared questions submitted to her by Jacqueline Rose and Toril Moi. While the absence of this dialogue must represent something of a missed opportunity, what we are offered still gives a valuable snapshot of the current reception and critical use of Kristeva's work. It does not on the whole extend it very much. The pattern of repetition and paraphrase which so often bedevils commentary on the Intellectual Greats is much in evidence here.

Kristeva's impact on current theoretical work has been immense; it is right and fitting that she should be invited to the Centre for Philosophy and Literature, for the philosophy/literature interface has loomed large in much of her work. She has a remarkable gift for the turn of phrase in which to make a whole set of ideas converge. Signifying practice, intertextuality, subject in process, chora, abjection: the familiarity of the vocabulary she has introduced indicates the extent to which her work has been enthusiastically greeted and indeed has shaped the nature of theoretical debate. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the shifts in focus across her now considerable *oeuvre* have produced some incompatibilities and, perhaps more importantly, disappearances of notions previously thought crucial. The notorious substitution of America for China is not an isolated case. There are also some rather old binary oppositions under their revolutionary new names; Leslie Hill points out that the musicality/rationality dichotomy is one of the former, in an essay of cultural contextualisation which strikes a welcome analytical note. At the other extreme, John Lechte's rather muddled exposition is rooted in admiration. He even gives an airing to the '19th century avant-

garde poets as threat to the bourgeois state' argument.

In spite of the ambitious sub-title, both the title (and the entry for Kristeva in the index) more accurately point to an overriding concern with Kristeva's output informed specifically by psychoanalysis, from *Histoires d'amour* onwards. Feminist theory is well represented, and issues of the body, otherness and speech, of language and female specificity, traverse the volume. Abjection, that borderline state of defilement and rejection where self and other are constituted in a mutual exclusion, is very much a linking theme, appearing in a variety of contexts – cultural, feminist, psychoanalytical, geometric. Such elasticity is only being true to the original. The majority of the contributions should be described as useful rather than exciting, with the notable exception of Maud Ellman's remarkable essay on 'Eliot's Abjection', a fascinating reading of 'The Wasteland' which singlehandedly puts Kristeva's critical categories on the map. Ellman uses the abject to give a thematic and structural reading of the poem which John Fletcher, in his introduction, quite rightly calls 'dazzling'. Taken with her recent work, Kristeva's own contribution demonstrates that the *Tel quel* days are well over. For a start, Sartre is mentioned in the same breath as Lautréamont and Bataille in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. There's never a hint, in 'The Adolescent Novel', of the bourgeois state, or even the infinite. The object of the analysis has changed. In earlier works, there was often a sense of the literary being mobilised to confirm theoretical positions in an endless circularity. Here it is clearly the processes of subjectivity which are being explored in and through connections with writing and signification. Adolescence is presented as a privileged moment marked by an open structure, itself emblematic of writing and signification. It is true that adolescence is not historically problematised, when it should be. And I can't be the only one to feel weary at being confronted with *Jehan de Saintré*, again. Nonetheless, the theoretical issues raised by abjection, and by Kristeva's continuing investigation of processes of identity and otherness, remain compelling.

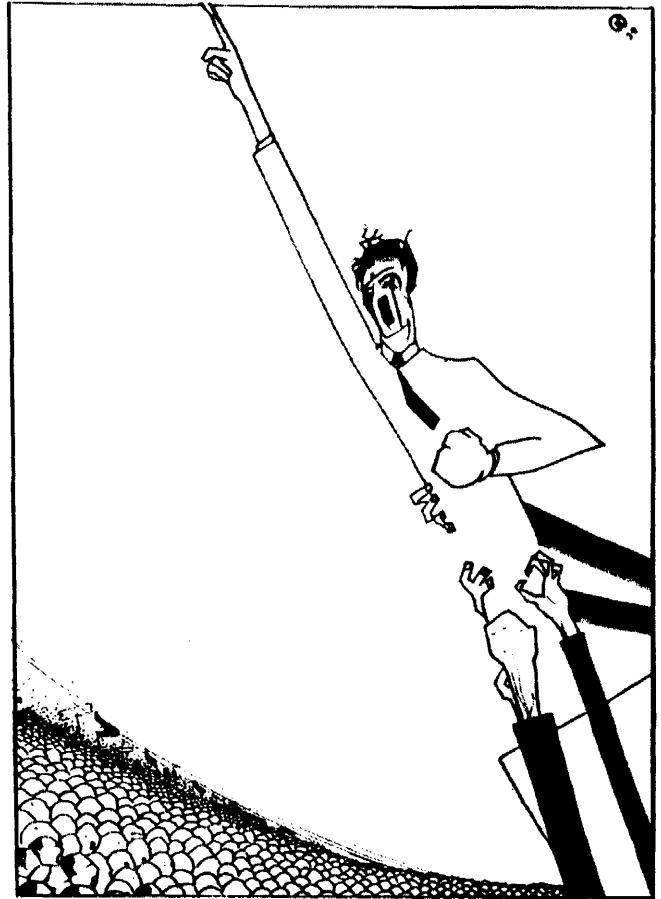
Since the appearance of this volume, Kristeva has published her first novel; her even more recent *Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir* also covers new ground. Devoted to questions of European and national identity, especially as articulated by de Gaulle, it combines a recognition of otherness with discussion of theories of political rights. It will be interesting to see how quickly the exegetes of Kristeva on abjection start grappling with her reading of Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois*.

Margaret Attack

## LIMITS OF EVIL

Ronald Aronson, *'Stay out of Politics'. A Philosopher Views South Africa*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990. xiv + 164pp., £32.00 hb, £11.95 pb, 0 226 02803 8 pb  
Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990. xxii + 258pp., £27.95 hb, £11.95 pb, 0 226 46869 0 pb

Ethics, writes Berel Lang, must 'prove itself by extreme cases'. The two writers reviewed here could hardly have chosen two more 'extreme cases': the Nazi genocide against the Jews and the oppression of blacks by South Africa's apartheid system. In their conscious and deliberate attempt to exterminate an entire group, membership of which was based on criteria over which individual victims had no choice of control, the Nazis, Lang argues, gave the



fullest imaginable expression to the idea of genocide. Apartheid, for its part, imposed on a racially defined group a structure of laws and regulations which resulted in its political disenfranchisement, economic underdevelopment and daily harassment over many years.

In their discussions of the Nazi genocide and apartheid respectively, Lang and Aronson argue forcefully that both were (or are) evil to an extreme degree, and that, this being so, they pose a whole range of moral questions with special and pressing urgency. When can evil said to be intended *as evil*? Whom does it implicate in moral culpability? How has it been, and how ought it to be, represented in language, historical writing, imaginative literature, institutional memory? To what extent do supposedly enlightened Western discourses – Kant's universalistic rationalism, Condorcet's progressivism – bear some measure of responsibility for licensing genocide and colonialism? What kind of practical moral response do apartheid and genocide demand of the philosopher? Are there grounds for hoping that this catastrophic century might still redeem itself in the triumph of good?

Lang's abiding concern is to engage the genocide in its historical particularity rather than as raw material for philosophical generalisation. Such concreteness is, for Lang, the prerequisite of practical and effective moral philosophy and the only way to reckon with the genocide's moral enormity. Consistently with this premise, he insists upon privileging historical accounts of the genocide over literary reconstructions of it – to the point where he, rather unpersuasively, denies all moral legitimacy to the latter. Literary form, like philosophical generalisation, detracts from what Lang considers to be the factual immediacy and transparency of the genocide. Yet curiously enough, his book is most interesting precisely when it bumps up against big philosophical questions. It demands to know of moral relativisms: if the genocide – a purposive and *principled* act of mass murder, bereft of utilitarian





## SETTLING ACCOUNTS

Gavin Kitching, *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis*, London, Routledge, 1988. 265pp., £25.00 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 415 00713 hb, 0 415 00714 3 pb

In his introduction, Gavin Kitching presents this book as his 'partial "settling of accounts" with Marxism' as a result of which he 'cannot now accept any account of Marxism which presents it as any kind of absolutely privileged discourse' – most revealing remarks with regard both to the merits and the shortcomings of what he has written. This led me momentarily to expect the rantings of an apostate, but no – *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis* is a critical introduction to Marx's thought, sympathetic to Marx but opposed to both 'orthodox' and modern 'realist' Marxism. Kitching's critical stance is avowedly based on the philosophy of Wittgenstein but, in fact, until the last two chapters it is by no means so narrow.

The book covers, at an introductory level, a fair range of important problems for Marxian economics, the historical materialist theory of history and conceptions of revolution and communism. It is far weaker on the origins of the ideas on which Marx drew in framing his theories, and in its exposition and critique of Marxian views on state, class and ideology. The book concludes with an interesting but flawed discussion of what Kitching calls 'Marx's dubious legacy' – a 'world view' to which he applies a critique he derives from Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

This last chapter is not really introductory: it is not esoteric, but is unlike the earlier chapters in presuming that the reader is already immersed in some variety of Marxism. Given that the whole book arises from Kitching's teaching, I suspect that the material for this chapter evolved from discussions with students who were Marxists before attending his course. His aim is to offer some Wittgensteinian intellectual 'therapy' which will unlock the shackles of dogmatism.

This chapter, however, is by far the least satisfactory in the book. Its aim is to discern in Marxism 'A picture [which] held us captive' in Wittgenstein's words, and to show, as Wittgenstein had in his arguments, how '... we could not get outside it for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably'. The 'picture' Kitching has in mind, however, is actually an analogy – 'human society as spatial object' with a 'base', 'upper' and 'middle' portions.

Where, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein repudiates 'pictures', it is often supposed that he had in mind particular theories, paradigms or 'world views', and that he was concerned with the constraints they placed on us. I do not think, however, that his targets were theories, or ways of seeing, as such. After all, if they are set aside then, necessarily, they will merely be replaced by alternatives – there is no way of 'seeing' which is not 'seeing as'. I think he is out to undermine the assumption (which the *Tractatus* shared with so much preceding philosophy) that something like *pictorial representation* is at the root of the way language functions. Let me place the passage Kitching quotes in its immediate context:

114. (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5): 'The general form of a proposition is: This is how things are.' – That is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

115. A Picture held us captive...

rationale – was not evil, what was it? Of epistemological positions which equate literary and historical texts, Lang asks: if the genocide was not an historical *fact*, extra-discursive and bald, what else might it be? A matter of interpretation? The implications of such an answer – an answer which Lang refuses – are clearly daunting. The implicit clash here between practical moral philosophy and some currently fashionable post-modernisms is fascinating.

Aronson's book is interesting in rather different ways. Unlike Lang, he seems eager to assimilate his object – apartheid – into universal philosophical themes. He places it against the background of a world-historical struggle pitting the evil side of progress against an advancing recognition, forged from struggle and bitter experience, of the basic prerequisites of human dignity and empowerment. What is remarkable about apartheid for Aronson – and what justifies its universal ostracism – is not that it constitutes the most evil regime either in history or in the present, but that it was developed to its outermost limits in blatant defiance of a global post-war consensus (to which the Nazi genocide contributed) about the illegitimacy of institutionalised racial discrimination.

The paradox in Aronson's book is the inverse of the one in Lang's. Aronson's general philosophical musings – about evil, moral complicity, hope, action – are in the end less compelling than his acute, richly textured observations of South African politics and society. Despite his efforts to simplify the South African drama into one of good versus evil, his own account discloses the many ambiguities of a situation where apartheid, though of course massively evil, is unravelling daily, and where its diverse and divided opponents now face the morally fraught task of forging a post-apartheid order sufficiently 'good' to justify the sacrifices made on the road to its achievement.

Daryl Glaser

Wittgenstein's point is akin to Hegel's argument about the working of the 'instrument' in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: – since language is the medium within which we formulate theories (amongst much else that we do), we will inevitably be misled by a theory of the same order *about language itself*.

These insights are far clearer in Kitching's opening chapter on Marx's philosophy of *praxis* – especially when he draws attention to Wittgenstein's remark: 'Language – I want to say – is a refinement, "in the beginning was the deed".' This idea – that the *intelligibility of what we do* comes first, and that what we say builds on and 'refines' what is already present and meaningful in our action – illuminates, for instance, the discussion of the 'builders', early in the *Philosophical Investigations*, which illustrates how utterances take on their sense only in a pre-existing context of action.

Notwithstanding the points at which this book might be criticised, however, it is no easy task to explain at an introductory level why Marx should be taken seriously but not swallowed whole, and at the same time to confront what is seductive about the outlook of the 'committed Marxist'. Indeed, it is even harder now than when this book was in preparation. Given that Kitching himself presumably once accepted an account of Marxism as an 'absolutely privileged discourse' – which I infer from his telling us he 'cannot now' do so – the appeal, for him, of Wittgenstein's passionate scepticism is not hard to understand. But all this contributes to my feeling that, when writing this book, the author was still standing a little too close to its subject.

Roger Harris

ised politics). This much is legitimate. But if accommodating difference in effect means embracing relativism then the Left would be right to resist. For, like it or not, a progressive politics must surely base itself on values which can at least claim to be universal and rational. These adjectives do not figure in the postmodern lexicon; they are as much bogey words as 'essentialist', 'fixed', 'static' and 'immutable' which are repeatedly used to describe Marxist explanations.

The problem is at least recognised by Jeffrey Weeks who writes of the conflict between our collective identity as human beings and our specific identities as members of diverse communities. Whilst old-fashioned progressive politics (and even, it is accepted, new fangled 'Green' politics) appeal to the former, postmodernist progressivism appeals, it seems, to the latter. But then when it comes to finding a set of procedures, a framework within which to reconcile the antagonisms generated by difference, postmodernism is at a loss. Social-democratic 'multiculturalism' is rejected, liberalism is falsely 'universalist', and mainstream socialist conceptions of community are inadequate. Yet tentative talk of 'ethical citizenship' (Watney) or 'democratic relativism' with 'democratic autonomy' (Weeks) seem not only limp but remarkably close to the supposedly discredited ideals of liberalism.

The problems of combining community and citizenship with cultural plurality are real and serious enough; and previous responses by the Left have been inadequate. But it does not help to caricature mainstream socialism; nor retreat from moral confidence into postmodernist relativism.

David Archard

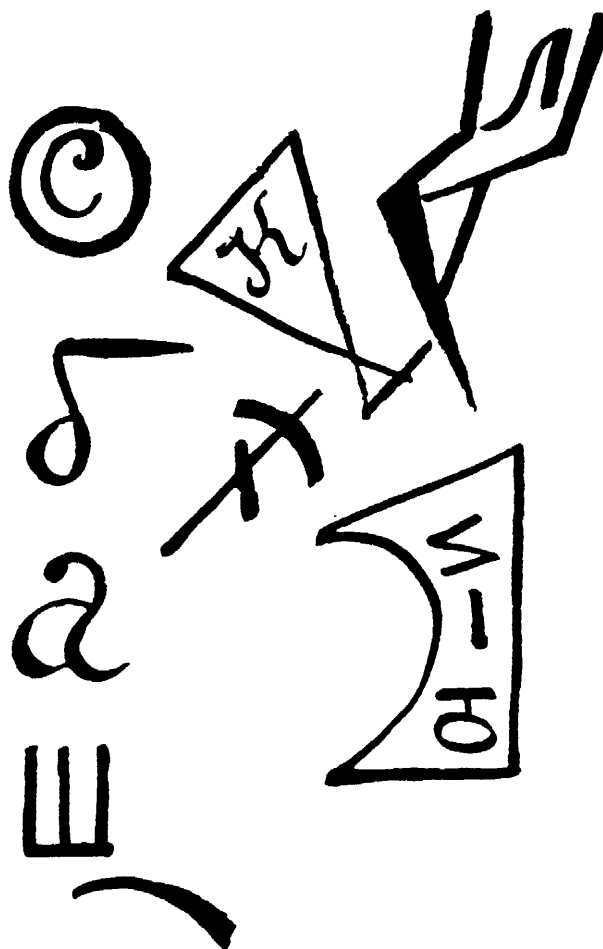
## SAME DIFFERENCE?

Jonathan Rutherford (editor), *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990. 239pp., £10.95 pb, 0 85315 720 0 pb

This book is about the politics of cultural difference; its intention is to gesture towards a progressive strategy which will avoid both the outmoded certainties of orthodox Leftism and a repetition of the debilitating failures of the 1980s. But its basic difficulty is signalled by the editor's declaration that 'the cultural politics of difference means living with incommensurability through new ethical and democratic frameworks, within a culture that both recognises difference and is committed to resolving its antagonisms' (26). The difficulty is that 'incommensurability', taken seriously, is simply incompatible with the construction of 'ethical' frameworks and the resolution of 'antagonisms'.

Nearly all of the book's contributors subscribe to the postmodernist, and more specifically Derridean, doctrine of irreducible difference. Applied to cultural plurality difference means or entails relativism: there is and can be no agreed moral position from which to appraise different cultural values. Fine, but then exactly what is progressive politics? Or, to take up examples cited in the book, why should a progressive person worry about black organisations being homophobic, or want to support Muslim women protesting their oppression within Islamic culture?

To say that the Left (which here equals Marxism) cannot accommodate difference may mean only that the explanatory category of class is insensitive to the facts of ethnicity and gender (and that this insensitivity finds practical expression in its organ-



# SHORT REVIEWS



There is the hint of an exotic odyssey in the title of *The Narrative Path: the Later Works of Paul Ricoeur* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, MIT Press, 1989. xvii + 121pp., £20.25 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 262 11147 0 hb, 0 262 61060 4 pb). And well there might be. For many of the articles in T. Peter Kemp and David Rasmussen's collection (originally published in 1988 as vol. 14, no. 2 of *Philosophy and Social Criticism*) trace the original lines of thought which give Ricoeur's work its characteristic feel: of a navigation between continents of thinking that once seemed to belong to different planets.

The book functions well both as an introduction (albeit at a fairly high-flown level of expression) and as an exploration of Ricoeur's thought. An article by Richard Kearney, for example, integrates Ricoeur's work as hermeneutics that retheorises the place given to the imagination in the phenomenological tradition. Rather than merely a modified way of seeing the actual world, in Ricoeur's hands, imagination has become a creative, 'linguistic' faculty mediated through intersubjective symbols. For Kearney, this approach – first broached by *Le Symbolique du mal* (1960) – opens the way for Ricoeur's more familiar works on metaphor and narrativity in literature and in history. Maria Vilella Petit also straddles decades of Ricoeur's work. She shows the continuity between his early reflections in *History and Truth* and his later three-volume study *Time and Narrative*. Again, we have hermeneutics with ontological implications. Ricoeur's hermeneutical study of the way history operates its narrative 'employment' has illuminated how the human condition requires history to bridge the gap between cosmic time and the lived time of suffering and action. T. Peter Kemp sets out the way

in which the narrative 'reconfiguration' analysed by Ricoeur infuses ordinary life, where seeking after a better life underpins its ethical form. Finally, Serge Meitinger, in an uncomfortably translated piece, advances the claim of lyric poetry to possess in its own right, 'narrativity' à la Ricoeur.

But the crucial contribution is that of Ricoeur himself. His paper for the 1988 Brighton World Congress on Philosophy (reprinted here) situates his own thought. He shows that, at each of three levels, the central philosophical issue of human identity calls for the insights of phenomenology and hermeneutics to supplement the findings of analytical philosophy. At the linguistic level, where the problems of individuation and the subject performing speech acts are resolved in semantics and pragmatics, hermeneutics leads us to embrace the idea of a human being in a real world. At the practical level, the much analysed tension between human deeds as effects and as actions calls for a phenomenology of the world as a field of human action. At the ethical level, where human actions are found to be embedded in practices and in life plans, analytical thought needs to be supplemented by a hermeneutics of human beings' self-evaluation. It is a magisterial survey, in which erudition and breadth of view take Ricoeur easily from continent to continent.

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For anyone who has noticed the demise of the classical marxist view of revolution (and who cannot?), **Michael Kimmel's *Revolution: A Sociological Interpretation*** (Oxford, Polity, 1990. ix + 252pp., £35.00 hb, £10.95 pb, 0 7456 0322 0 hb, 0 7456 0313 0 pb) provides at the very least an encyclopedic compendium of theoretical positions up to today. This is the somewhat tedious, but undoubtedly useful manner of many current books of social theory; though Kimmel's has the virtue of clarity, and of giving prominence to three of the Greats too lightly ignored by the Left: Weber, Durkheim and Freud. Beyond that, Kimmel has his own agenda: what he calls a 'structural' theory of revolution, which would synthesise the now enormous empirical heritage from works such as those of Charles Tilly. Kimmel's synthesis would locate each revolutionary situation at its particular spatial and temporal point in the long, world-wide processes of state-formation, centralisation, industrialisation, and proletarianisation. In

Kimmel's view, that encourages us to see each revolution as a distinctive, creative reaction against those processes. It firmly discourages facile carry-overs from one revolutionary experience to another, though it also downplays the revolutionaries' attention to the future. As is the way of sociologists, Kimmel also gives due weight (or at least conceptual apparatus) for the motivation of those involved in what he theorises. His concepts go beyond the limits suggested by the recent success of Rational Decision Theory. Notably, he develops concepts like the 'moral economy' and its 'cultural morality' – that representation of the current social set-up which renders legitimate its pattern of domination. Changes beyond the given 'moral economy' motivate and legitimate the collective resistance and risk-taking of revolutions. Those features of revolutions have always seemed to exceed the bounds blithely imposed today upon the realm of 'rational' behaviour.

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The Warwick University Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature has already produced a number of 'Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature'. The Centre, and its series, has been a conduit for serious academic analyses of writers embraced by post-modernism, such as Nietzsche, Kristeva, Levinas. Their ***Philosophers' Poets*** (ed. David Wood, London and New York, Routledge, 1990. viii + 200pp., £35.00, 0 415 04501 0 hb) gives the best sample yet of the range of work that gives the Centre its title and its rationale. Of philosophers, it is Heidegger who gets the lion's share of attention in the volume, with three out of eight articles. Other contributions embrace Derrida (two), Sartre, Bachelard and Adorno (one each).

The side of the 'poets' (which includes novelists and playwrights) is harder to summarise. In his introduction, David Wood extols the power of literature (rather than poetry in particular) vis-à-vis philosophy. The 'poets' are by no means so manifestly present in the text, or in the writers' minds, as are the philosophers. They are rarely as closely or as sympathetically in focus as the title might suggest, and in that sense the book remains academic. There are, for example, impressive, intricate research monographs here in which the poet in question is hard to find. So it is in Paul Davies's complex piece demonstrating that Levinas (and his inter-

preter Kelkel) wrongly distinguish between the views on Hölderlin expressed by Blanchot and by Heidegger. Similarly, there is Marian Hobson's telling, detailed explication of Derrida's *La Dissémination* as an attempt to follow the form of Philippe Sollers' experimental novel *Nombres*.

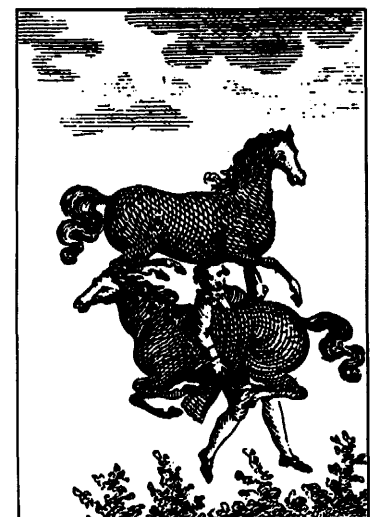
Another kind of contribution to the collection is the broader discussion of particular thinkers' views of the nature of poetry, imagery, imagination and so on. To some extent these do pursue the issue of the nature of imaginative literature and its impact on other types of thought. Of this

Llewelyn can explain how Derrida hesitates between a Nietzschean creative affirmation in the face of death and resignation over the absurdity of writing as a means to introject a real being. According to Llewelyn, Derrida learned the latter from Mallarmé's poetic handling of the death of his eight-year-old son. The last two contributions of this kind address language, meaning and death. The essay by Nick Land portrays Heidegger awkwardly having to keep his distance from the disturbed post-symbolist poet Georg Trakl, in order that the categories of language shall not

**Contemporary French Philosophy** edited by A. Phillips Griffiths (Cambridge University Press, 1987, v + 232pp., £9.95 pb, 0 521 35735 7 pb) exposes its reader to an impressive, if somewhat unassimilable, Babel of theoretical voices. Contributors include Pascal Engel, J. J. Lecercle, Michele Le Doeuff, Michel Deguy, Vincent Carraud, Bruno Latour, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney, Cyril Barrett, Mary Tiles, Elie Georges Noujain, David Wood, Gregory Elliot and David Farrell Krell – a list which may give some idea of how widely this collection ranges. As well as thematic and substantive studies (from pragmatics to the post-modern, from Descartes to the gendering of philosophy), there are several useful introductory essays, devoted variously to Michel Serres, Bachelard and Canguilhem, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and French analytic philosophy. Some useful indications are included too (in the papers by Engel, Le Doeuff, Latour, Tiles, Barrett, and Elliot) of the intellectual and political pressures which have gone into shaping this particular diversity. Such insight is necessary, since, even if one is not inclined, with Le Doeuff, to 'get rid of the old question of "who is producing the theory?"', which is old-fashioned anyway ...', it is hard to disagree that one should

pose a newer question seriously: 'In which community does such or such a work take place?' – is it an old boys' club, or a place where women and men can feel equally at home, and where they can work together? Where they can be equally unsatisfied? For intellectual life is made of the perception of deficiencies and inadequacies as well as of achievements.

Matthew Festenstein



type are Christina Howells's essay on Sartre on poetic language (with some reference to Mallarmé) and Mary McAllester Jones's résumé of Bachelard's views on the poetic imagination (with some reference to Shelley). These are indisputably useful as exegesis of difficult areas of the two philosophers' thinking, though they do not finally pursue a debate about poetry and philosophy very far. The Bachelard essay, for example, is crowded with unexplored references to his peculiar ontology of a Jungian 'psychic realism' beyond the rational and the irrational.

Yet the debate is clearly well worth pursuing. For there are, finally, some contributions here in which we seem to see the philosopher engaged in a crucial confrontation with the 'poet'. In the context, these are the most successful of the essays. Thus Jay Bernstein can decipher Adorno's aesthetics via his references to *Endgame*. The price for Adorno is that Beckett's play demonstrates how art may avoid complicity in reification and domination in a way that philosophy cannot do. Similarly, John

lose themselves altogether in the poet's eerie, limitless poetic sky and the discourse on language not turn into mere narcissism. And Robert Bernasconi shows the unsettling meaning of a Tolstoy story about a bereavement. In Heidegger's terms, the event is 'everyday', but it nonetheless appears to generate an '*existentiell*' commitment to life of a kind that Heidegger's theoretical, *existential* analysis of 'being-for-death' should have shown to be unachievable.

In such commentaries, we do indeed see, in Bernasconi's words, how the literary text may 'destroy the autonomy and integrity of the philosophical text'. In the light of explorations of this kind, then, David Wood's argument – that, for philosophical positions, literature is merely an 'exploratory tool' freed of the restraints of propositional forms – seems seriously understated. Something more disturbing than that seems to be going on when the poetry penetrates the philosophical mind.

Noel Parker