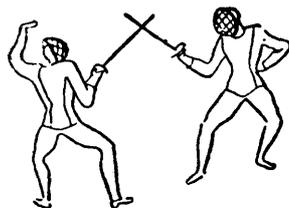


REVIEWS



EVERYTHING IS DANGEROUS

John Rajchman, *Truth and Eros: Foucault, Lacan and the Question of Ethics*, London, Routledge, 1991. 155 pp., £30.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 90379 3 hb., 0 415 90380 7 pb.

Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body*, London, Routledge, 1991. 130pp., £30.00 hb., £8.99 pb., 0 415 90187 1 hb., 0 415 90188 X pb.

Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Michael Levine, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. £30.00 hb., £10.95 pb., 0 521 37410 3 hb., 0 521 37770 6 pb.

What to do with masters, dead or alive, past or present, is a perennial problem. They appear to require introductions, but all too often introductions also introduce something else, something extraneous to the thought that is purportedly being mediated for our instruction. The work of masters can be appropriated – and successive appropriations of continental theorists have given rise to a whole sub-genre of studies in Marxism and psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis and feminism and so on – but the distinction between appropriation and the legitimization of positions developed in other contexts is often a nice one. Masters can, on occasion, also be read.

Foucault and Lacan have often been introduced and appropriated. Lacan was reluctant to be introduced, but inevitably fell prey to commentators as his version of psychoanalysis, largely as a result of his very public presence, became part of a broad philosophical-cultural field which often paid little attention to its clinical origins or even to other developments within psychoanalysis. For his part, Foucault appeared actively to encourage the appropriation of his writings by describing them not as a consistent body of work, but as a tool kit to be used by anyone as circumstances demanded. He could, however, be scathing about the results.

Foucault is an improbable subject for feminist appropriation. Nothing in his work on prisons or madness indicates that the rationale for incarceration and the treatment of the incarcerated might be gender-differentiated, that the regime prevailing in Holloway might not be identical with that in Wormwood Scrubs. Foucault said almost nothing about feminism or femininity, and never wrote the volume on 'Woman, Mother, Hysteric' which was to be part of the *History of Sexuality* series. Undeterred by this, Jana Sawicki attempts to outline the 'basic features of a Foucauldian feminism', defined as being compatible with the radical and emancipatory project of feminism in general. Given that Foucault failed to supply the master plan, the project has to be described in terms of what a Foucauldian feminism 'would be'.

Despite his undoubted, androcentrism, Foucault offers a theory

of power and resistance which is neither monolithic nor instrumental, seeks to demonstrate that power is not an object to be possessed or seized, queries the alleged need for 'a true sex' and stresses the uncertainty of gender (and other) identities. The theory is intriguing and the query has far-reaching implications, but here they trigger some odd slippages, some affecting Sawicki's interpretation of Foucault, others her appropriation. Sawicki asserts that the *History of Sexuality* provides an account of the process whereby the modern individual comes to see *herself* as a sexual individual. Yet the texts in question make very sparing use of the feminine pronoun, and Foucault's references to the 'body' and 'sexuality' remain strangely ungendered. Sawicki's 'difference', in the mean time, slides alarmingly from its sexual acceptance to 'racial difference', which may not be quite the same thing.

Whilst Sawicki's invocation of Foucault to combat monolithic images of 'male science' is useful, she is more interesting when discussing the ambiguities of *in vitro* fertilization and other new reproductive technologies than when she looks at Foucault's bio-politics. Arguing that differences are not an obstacle, but can multiply sources of resistance to relations of dominance, Sawicki concludes by recommending the building of coalitions. It needs, surely, no ghost to tell us this. A similar bathos surrounds the exploration of Foucault's notion of desexualization, which is part of his challenge to concepts of identity in that it questions the need for a true sex. Paradoxically, the realm of sexuality is broadened by the refusal to limit in advance either its definition or the practices it implies. For Sawicki, this strategic move enables us to extend sexual debate and struggle to include reproduction and abortion. Yet in Britain, the National Abortion Campaign was perfectly capable of 'expanding' the domain of sexuality to include abortion, reproduction and the right to choose without any reference to Foucault.

The tropes of political correctness undercut many of the author's claims. Far from being an area of uncertainty or of a desirable indeterminacy, identity becomes a source of unchallengeable authority: as a lesbian mother and partner in an inter-racial couple, Audre Lorde is credited with having 'unique insights' into the divided allegiances that seem to threaten the very possibility of a unified women's movement. One can almost hear a sceptical Foucault asking just why this should be the case. Finally, it is, surely, rather odd for a text which makes so much of the problematization of identity to be prefaced by a first-person narrative account of life in the academy as a feminist, which is somehow 'not simply a brief chapter in my intellectual biography'.

Introductions are no less treacherous than appropriations. Samuel Weber's *Return to Freud* originates in a series of lectures

on Lacan given in Berlin in the early seventies, and originally appeared in German in 1978. One wonders about the wisdom of publishing an English version at a time when there is no shortage of 'introductions to Lacan', and when Malcolm Bowie's *Lacan* (1991) provides a comprehensive (and at times nicely sceptical) guide to the work of a notoriously difficult writer. Weber's introduction is more than competent, but major sections of it deal with topics that are over-familiar from repetition. This may reflect the delay in English publication, and it is probable that the discussion had more appeal in 1978. It is difficult to feel great enthusiasm for another reading of Lacan's use of Victor Hugo to elaborate a theory of metaphor, or of Freud's account of his inability to recall the name 'Signorelli' (or, more accurately, of Lacan's rereading thereof).

The text is an introduction, but it also represents the induction of Lacan (and Freud) into a very Derridean framework. It is marred by the all-intrusive word play that has become the hallmark of a certain academic appropriation of Lacan. Near-tautologies serve as arguments thanks to assertions which proclaim that the sense of Lacan's discourse is the derailing of sense, and then define that sense as 'the language of the unconscious, the unconscious as language'. Phrases articulated around ambiguities and commas become substitutes for more cogent demonstrations.

More problematic still is the elision of differences between Freud and Lacan, notably in the matter of desire. As Weber notes, if we take Freud's texts at their word, we find that 'desire' is rarely used. Lacan's foregrounding of desire, as opposed to Freud's 'wish', is justified by the claim that interpretation may require the introduction of terms which are absent from or even alien to Freud's text. Overt differences between Freud and Lacan can be elided by the insistence that the latter's innovations are tacitly present in Freud. At such points, it is not the reader who is being introduced to Lacan, but Lacan and Derrida who are being introduced into Freud. This is a case of Freud being turned into Lacan, rather than of Lacan returning to Freud. One of Weber's strengths is his reading of Lacan on temporality, and of the theme of the 'future anterior'. The child in the mirror stage, for example, does not glimpse an image of what it has been, but the illusory unity that will have been incorporated into its imaginary identifications. Weber's brief but illuminating comparison of this disjointed temporality with 'metaphysical' temporalities based upon the past perfect unwittingly illustrates the temporal mode of his own reading: Freud is of interest largely in terms of what he will have become in Lacan and for Derrida.

It is not easy to accept Weber's unproblematic and unqualified endorsement of Lacanian-Derridean orthodoxies, or the implied charge that all the wrongs were on one side in Lacan's endless quarrels with the International Psychoanalytic Association, conveniently dismissed as the representative of 'official psychoanalysis', just as the philosophy of Husserl and the linguistics of Jakobson and Benveniste are disqualified as belonging to the 'metaphysical tradition'. Many analysts and others would, for instance, disagree with the contention that it is language that allows the ego to constitute itself, particularly as Weber restricts discussion of language to 'the signifier', to the exclusion of all other possible linguistic categories. Many historians of science would reject as spurious the claim that Freud's descriptions of drives and quantities of psychic energy owe little or nothing to the thermodynamic model in physics, and that he uses 'quantitative' to mean 'not reducible to qualities', or 'to identities'. For all the insistence on taking Freud at his word, it is clear that his words can, for the purposes of the argument, be taken to mean almost anything. The introduction of 'absent' terms or concepts begins to look suspiciously like an exercise in tendentious reading.

Whereas Sawicki appropriates and Weber introduces, Rajchman reads and explores Lacan and Foucault in terms of their

confrontation of their own difficulties. No masters emerge from this reading. For Rajchman, Foucault and Lacan promote suspicion of all demands for moral theory and of the masters who promote it. His subject is ethics, the topic both of Lacan's seminar in 1959-60 (and one of great personal importance to him) and of Foucault's last writings. Reading is not a disinterested or neutral activity, and the effect of Rajchman's reading is to raise the ancient question of the 'eros of thinking'. Of what is philosophy the love, the *philia*? In the case of Foucault and Lacan, it is clearly not love of the Idea, but of a passionate confrontation with thought.

In many ways, the final two elements of the *History of Sexuality* are not the most attractive of Foucault's writings. There is a certain aridity about the long exploration of Greek thinking about the 'care of the self' and the 'use of pleasures', about the laborious exposition of themes in Stoic thought which are well known to anyone versed in ancient philosophy, or even in its avatars in French Renaissance philosophy. There is little novelty in Foucault's final vision of the master who is able to temper the excesses of reason thanks to the exercise of a reasoned care of the self, a vision which sometimes recalls Montaigne or Erasmus rather than the Foucault of *Madness and Civilization*. Yet Rajchman quite rightly perceives that the texts become fascinating when juxtaposed with the interviews given in the last few years of Foucault's life, where he began to outline what might be meant by a gay ethics, or by a gayness which succeeded in breaking with fixed sexual identities, which was the product of a continued work on the self. The abandonment of philosophies of desire in favour of the uses of pleasure does offer something new. In this perspective, freedom is no more a state or an object to be possessed than is power; freedom becomes the precondition for 'an unidentified work of thought, action and self-invention'. An intensely exciting and fearful prospect. There is no future anterior here, nor yet a future perfect. But there is at least a future that escapes the rereading of masters.

There is a strong hint in Rajchman's treatment of Foucault that problems in styles of thought may reflect a problem in a style of living in an era when, as Foucault put it, nothing is absolutely good or evil, but everything is dangerous. Although Rajchman does not explicitly make the point, his approach at least suggests that a return to the biographical may have its uses, that it may not be as fallacious as several decades of formalisms would have us believe.

A similar note is struck in the discussion of Lacan's seminar on ethics. This is the seminar which meant most to Lacan, and the only one he was tempted to turn into a book. It was a product of a tragic time – the Algerian war was drawing to its vicious close – and of a tragic vision centred upon Antigone, whom Lacan clearly identifies with his step-daughter Laurence Bataille, jailed for her involvement in the struggle for Algerian independence. The composite figure of Antigone and Bataille becomes emblematic of a fatal passion obeying the unwritten law of passion as opposed to the written law of the city. That figure is also emblematic of the essence of psychoanalysis, which introduces a new problem into the domain of ethics: that element in our desire that goes beyond anything that might direct us to what we think we want for ourselves. Antigone's desire is not a desire for the good. There is nothing joyous about this desire, and nothing to be liberated. Yet psychoanalysis – or at least Lacan – insists that the truth of desire is 'written' in the puzzle of our destinies. Antigone's tragedy is her inability to be false to a passion that is her truth and which will destroy her. In his last writings, Foucault had little time for theories of the truth of desire, but he shared Antigone's knowledge that it is both dangerous and necessary to stray outside the city walls and into the empty space of freedom.

David Macey

JUST IN TIME

James S. Fishkin, *The Dialogue of Justice. Toward a Self-Reflective Society*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992. 243pp., £17.95 hb., 0 300 05161 1 hb.

Barbara Goodwin, *Justice by Lottery*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992. 214pp., £30.00 hb., 0 7450 1274 4 hb.

Klaus R. Scherer, ed., *Justice: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. 302pp., £40.00 hb., 0 521 41503 9 hb.

Philippe Van Parijs, ed., *Arguing for Basic Income. Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform*, 1992. 248 pp., £34.95 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 86091 371 6 hb., 0 86091 586 7 pb.

In Klaus Scherer's collection Bernard Cullen concludes his review of philosophical theories of justice with the complaint that 'pandemonium' and a 'cacophony of discordant ... voices' reign. This seems to me to be over the top. There is significant disagreement about substantive issues. But in which area of philosophy is this not so? In fact the last two decades of political philosophy are recognised to be a success. Most attention has concentrated on the work of John Rawls, and perhaps no other text this century has been as extensively mauled and lauded as his *A Theory of Justice*. Yet, inspired by Rawls, English-speaking political philosophy has spent twenty-five years bringing under sustained critical scrutiny the key concepts and themes of its discipline – liberty, equality, justice, democracy, community. There are significant gaps, and a few critics have bemoaned, with some justification, the dominance of a certain East Coast American understanding of democratic liberalism. However, it is as well to remember the bad old days of conceptual analysis, whose apolitical concern merely to get its terms of art well defined forbade consideration of political right and wrong. We have come a long way.

The worry now is less discordance than a certain narrowness of tonal range. Liberalism dominates to a point where its critics compete to show how wrong headed it is rather than offer systematic alternatives. At the same time it has become apparent that liberalism has a problem with its foundations. Famously, contemporary philosophical liberalism aspires to moral neutrality, that is it claims not to presume any particular ideal of the good life in its recommendations for the politically good society. Indeed its starting point is, as Rawls has increasingly made explicit, a recognition of value pluralism. Yet critics have argued that this leaves liberalism impaled on the horns of a dilemma. Either it is strictly true to its own requirements of neutrality and is condemned to say nothing of substance, or it does make substantive claims but only in virtue of presuming what it claims not to, that is a particular set of human values.

Two of the books under consideration start from these sorts of worry about foundations. Yet they reach quite startlingly different conclusions. They do share what is now an uncontentious assumption – that human beings merit a fundamental equality of consideration. Barbara Goodwin recommends the lottery as the appropriate distributive procedure. She does so both because it accords with the requirement of equality, and because all other criteria of distribution are essentially contested. James Fishkin argues that, even given an assumption of equality, there is no single principle or systematic theory of justice. Eschewing such a theory he offers instead an account of a fully legitimate political system, the 'self-reflective society'. Justice within any particular self-reflective society is the operation of rules which have been collectively approved by that society.

Goodwin's is an interesting and well-written book. It commences with an entertaining fictional fragment, a portrait of 'Aleatoria' – Britain organised by sortition. It then proceeds to the serious business of showing that what has been fictively sketched should not be immediately dismissed as madcap. Goodwin assembles an impressive array of examples, drawn from actuality or fiction, which illustrate the virtues of the lottery. She reviews some of the shortcomings of alternative distributive procedures and she mounts a fairly good case for the use of the lottery. Her claim is essentially that a lottery is impartial and that it gives effect to a powerful and plausible principle by which social choices should be constrained – namely, that you should submit to what you choose and choose what you would submit to. It is indeed instructive to imagine that politicians might by a turn of a wheel find themselves bearing the burdens their policies had imposed upon some within the population.

The rule of chance has most plausibility when intended to guarantee representative and accountable policy makers. In other contexts the suggestion of a Total Social Lottery is less convincing. Goodwin sees it as the means by which to secure 'equality of life chances'. But, although she indicates some of the problems with a simple principle of equal distribution, her dismissal of sophisticated accounts of equality is too brusque. So are her criticisms of distributive principles of need, merit and contribution. A measure of how sophisticated a contemporary egalitarianism can be is given by the contributions from Baker, Barry and Norman in *Arguing for Basic Income*.

One gets the sense that Goodwin thinks that a lottery is to be used when all else fails. When there are no good reasons to prefer heads over tails, toss the coin. The strength of the lottery system is directly related to the weakness of other distributive criteria. But they are not so obviously lacking in justification as Goodwin implies. Moreover, it is interesting to note what we would clearly not wish to see distributed by lottery: punishment, the rearing of children, sexual partners (though Goodwin at least rehearses some arguments for 'polyfidelity'), inexpensive life-saving medical treatment, and favourable book reviews. Now sometimes it is simply the case that considerations of justice do not apply. Who gets to sleep with John is not a question of fairness. But often justice is at stake. Whether John gets cured of his illness and Jane does not may well be such an issue. It would have helped to spell out in more detail the limits of certain distributive principles in all those areas where the use of a lottery is certainly impartial but may not be obviously fair.

Fishkin's book is in three parts. The first is a clear, insightful critique of any pretensions liberalism might have to offer a systematic theory of justice. Fishkin offers something like an impossibility theorem to show that no single principle of distributive justice can yield an acceptable allocation of goods in all contexts. The situation is one of 'ideals without an ideal'. In the second part Fishkin outlines a theory of those principles informing a fully legitimate liberal state, that is one which all of its citizens are morally obliged to support. These principles can be chosen in a hypothetical or actual choice situation, and by citizens whose motivations are unaltered or filtered in some way to secure impartiality. Armed with a fourfold categorisation of possible theories Fishkin reviews the familiar work of Nozick, Rawls, and Walzer, finding them all deficient. He concludes that a plausible theory of legitimacy must rely on filtered consent in an actual choice context.

In the third part his own ideal of a self-reflective society is

offered as fitting this category. Such a society's practices are consensual. They supply essential benefits to their members, and are self-reflective, that is subjected to continual critical examination through unmanipulated public discussion. Finally these practices are voluntary, that is members have unimpeded exit from them. Fishkin's ideal is of a society which collectively and openly examines its own reasonableness through undistorted dialogue between all of its members. If, by the norms of evaluation which inform such a society's practices, roles and goods are distributed in a certain way, then such a distribution may be considered just. Fishkin's theory offers a non-systematic theory of justice which is context-dependent but not prey to moral relativism.

The similarities with Habermas's work and indeed Rawls's more recent writings are not explored. But the general approach is persuasive. It is, if you will, a theory of rational democratic proceduralism. The terms of the good polity are those its members can publicly demonstrate to one another when all participate freely and equally in the democratic determination of these terms. Fishkin has much of interest to say about the institutional and legal conditions of a free political culture, one that ensures the unmanipulated expression and reception of all political views and information. He also specifies the terms of free and equal political participation. In all this he displays an estimable sensitivity about what is feasible in contemporary politics.

There are weaknesses, however. Fishkin never explains what unimpeded exit from political practices actually means. It is unrealistic to insist that dissatisfied citizens should simply emigrate, but in what other ways does Fishkin envisage them withdrawing their consent? For Fishkin a general requirement of any theory of legitimacy is that acceptance of obligations should not be the result of indoctrination. Now it is fine to rule out consent which is due to brainwashing or coercive moulding. But clearly Fishkin is worried about Barrington Moore's celebrated observation that some of the worst instances of injustice have been accepted by their victims. On the one hand Fishkin simply ascribes such acceptance to indoctrination. On the other he trusts to the rigours of a truly self-reflective society to purge its members of false ideas. Yet surely individuals can be socialised, not indoctrinated, to believe that some injustices are permissible, if only that the poor deserve their indigence.

Fishkin also appeals to the idea that subordinate groups would lack the self-esteem necessary to full membership, and moreover could not have, as full self-reflectivity requires, an unimpeded and effective voice. Some of this seems *ad hoc*. Much of it merely trusts in the dissolvent effects of collective scrutiny upon inequity. Yet Fishkin also talks of cleavages along the dimensions of race, class, gender and ethnicity without any suggestion that these would necessarily disappear in a self-reflective society. This is problematic. One particularly serious question facing the defender of a feasible liberal democracy is how it might cope, if at all, with serious ethnic divisions. Fishkin does not address the issue.

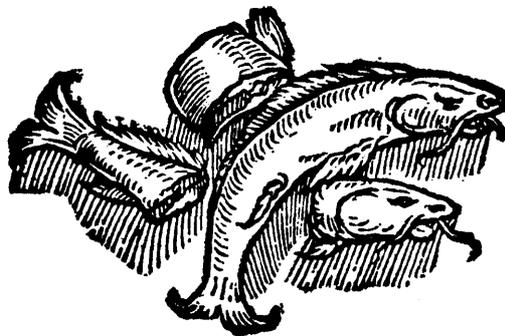
Arguing for a Basic Income tackles the question of whether a basic income, paid unconditionally to everyone in society, is just and feasible. It also broaches the question whether the demand for such an income captures much of the radical idealism of a socialism which has otherwise been seriously discredited. The ethical arguments in the book dominate the economic ones, but the former are very varied. There is everything here from Hillel Steiner's idiosyncratic socialism with libertarian foundations to Bill Jordan's left communitarianism. The arguing is consistently good and it is surely a sign of the left's intellectual health that the issue can be so intelligently discussed with differences openly acknowledged. Not everyone in this volume agrees with the proposal. Although some see basic income as an immediate or

transitional demand, others consider its possible role within an achieved just society. And disagreement here is about what such a society should look like. Equality has never appeared a more complex ideal.

The volume benefits from its conference origins since clearly authors have read and responded to one another's contributions. Van Parijs supplies an excellent if densely argued introduction which shows just how many ways there now are to argue for a desired political conclusion. His concluding piece also suggests how subtle the marriage of justice and efficiency can be. Most interestingly he argues that basic income may be economically efficient to the extent that it is widely perceived as fair.

This raises the fascinating question of how far a plausible theory of justice is dependent upon an accurate account of what individuals believe or can be led to believe is just. Goodwin does not seem optimistic about the chances of a Total Lottery System being universally accepted, not least because, as she notes, lotteries are currently perceived in some important contexts as evidence of a failure to solve a distributive problem. Fishkin seeks to have justice flow from consent rather than the reverse.

It would be crucial then to explore the relationship between the moral arguments about justice and the facts of what people judge



to be fair and why. Törnblom, as a social psychologist, provides a full and compelling account of the latter facts. But Scherer's volume as a whole misses the opportunity to make the proper connections. The sub-title is misleading insofar as each contribution is offered solidly from within the author's discipline: philosophy, law, economics, sociology, and social psychology. Each is essentially a state-of-the-art review essay, summarising the major work in the field. This can sometimes amount to a rather plodding series of exegeses. The authors try not to be controversial in their interpretations, but they also for the most part seem ignorant of the others' contributions. Interdisciplinarity is confined to a very brief concluding essay whose suggestions are gestural and necessarily vague. This is a pity. It would have been interesting to explore the cross-fertilisation of economic theory and philosophical understandings of welfare and justice (are human beings rational economic agents?), or to try to determine what social and psychological realities an account of moral education in the just society needs to accommodate (how do you teach a sense of justice?).

A theory of the good society must be sensitive to the realities of the world and human nature. But it must not conservatively presume that what is currently given is unchangeable. To that extent the foundations of any theory must follow from an exploration of what can be secured within and by an actual democratic community. Political philosophy must become political in the best sense of that word. The marriage of the ideal and the real, what can be recommended as fair and agreed to by all, is yet to be achieved. But there are a lot of different bids, and political philosophy is all the healthier for that.

David Archard

BEYOND FACT AND VALUE

Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*, London, Zed Books, 1991. xv + 157pp., £27.95 hb., £8.95 pb., 1 85649 024 6 hb., 1 85649 025 4 pb.

Can there be a distinctly *Islamic* science? If not, may faithful Muslims adopt science as currently practised in the West, or must they reject science full stop and confine their attention to the revealed truths of the Qu'ran? Pervez Hoodbhoy, a Western-trained Muslim physicist alarmed by the ascendancy of anti-science and Islamic science movements in his native Pakistan, argues there can be no such thing as a distinctly Islamic science (just as there can be no distinctly Christian, Marxist, or Third World science). Science proceeds according to its own internal logic and, when intruded upon by external factors like religion or politics, it quickly becomes 'pseudo-science': 'a waste of time ... whose pursuit can only serve to accelerate the backwardness, poverty, and ecological destruction' of the Islamic world. Muslims must therefore master Western science since it alone will enable them to liberate themselves from their current poverty and powerlessness. If Islam is to regain its past glory, it must resist the reactionary calls of religious fundamentalists to reject science in favour of revelation and theological first principles.

Hoodbhoy supports this position by arguing that science is a value-neutral tool for predicting and controlling physical events, that is grounded upon universal principles of reason and observation. As such it may be used for good and evil, and in no way challenges the Qu'ran. To reject or *Islamicise* science because of its role in Western imperialism is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Faithful Muslims may practise Western science in good conscience by directing it towards Islamic ends. Indeed, such 'Muslim science' flourished during the 'Golden Age of Islamic Intellect' from 750 to 1100.

Hoodbhoy contends science and Islam complement rather than oppose one another. Physical knowledge is properly pursued by scientific observation and experiment, not by revelation. The Prophet and Qu'ran both enjoin this. Inconsistencies between scientific theory and Qu'ran are dissolved by interpreting Qu'ranic claims about the physical world as allegorical rather than literal. Moral knowledge, however, is properly pursued through revelation and scriptural meditation. 'Science is excellent at producing but terrible at distributing – justice is a concept which lies outside of science.' Science is appropriate for matters physical; Islam, for matters moral and spiritual. Science provides value-neutral, factual means-ends information; Islam provides moral and spiritual direction. Therefore the fact that there can be no distinctly Islamic science does not discredit Islam. Hoodbhoy establishes the Islamic pedigree of this view by rooting it within the tradition of eighth-century Mu'tazilite rationalism which sought to reconcile Hellenistic reason, science and logic with Islamic revelation, and recent 'modernist-reconstructionism' of Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–1898) and Syed Ameer Ali (1849–1921).

Hoodbhoy rejects two of the leading alternatives to his view. 'Orthodox-restorationism' denies the compatibility of Islam and science. Islam can recover its former greatness only by expurgating all things Western (including science, reason and logic) and returning to the Qu'ran as the last word on everything. Because it embodies Western values and experiences, science is intrinsically evil and thus ill-suited for Islamic aims. Opportunistic fundamentalism regards Western science as value-laden and incompatible with Islam. But instead of rejecting science it advocates the Islamicising of science, i.e. infusing it with Islamic principles,

beliefs and values. Islamic science studies such problems as the speed of Heaven, the tilt of God, the quantity of Divine reward earned by prayer, etc.

How happy a union between science and religion does Hoodbhoy's compatibilism create? First, it seems to constitute a profound revision of traditional religious doctrine since it entails a significant retreat from the view that Islam provides humankind with a complete worldview and life-guide comprised of absolute, literal truths about the physical and moral make-up of the world. Once one understands the biological, geological and cosmological claims of the Qu'ran allegorically, can one still accept the literal truth of its claims about human creation, immortality and predestination or its claims about the efficacy of prayer, the existence of heaven and hell, the resurrection of the body, and divine intervention in the physical world? Similarly, what justifies continued acceptance of the literal truth of Qu'ranic claims about morality? Islam bases its moral claims upon factual claims (e.g. about human nature); but if these are undermined by science, aren't its moral claims also undermined? And if the Qu'ran's moral claims are fact-laden and its factual claims allegorical, shouldn't its moral claims also be read allegorically?

Secondly, Hoodbhoy's compatibilism rests on the thesis that science is value-neutral. But is it? Clearly not; science embraces such values as predictive accuracy, explanatory power, simplicity and elegance as opposed to permanence, conformity with scripture, or authority. That these are *cognitive* values in no way diminishes the value-ladenness of scientific theory and judgement. Does science proceed according to universal principles of reason and experience? It would seem not; its principles are anathema to fundamentalist Muslims who regard Western logic, reason, and secular science's disenchantment of the physical world as intolerable incursions upon the authority of text and revelation.

Beneath Hoodbhoy's rejection of Islamic science and marriage of Western science and Islam lurks a pre-Kuhnian, positivist view of science (along with its distinctions between science and pseudo-science, fact and value, internal and external history of science, discovery and justification, etc.) that has long been abandoned by philosophers and historians of science in the West. It simply doesn't look as if there is a tidy set of essential characteristics of science (such as falsifiability, appeal to natural law, etc.) which we can use to demarcate science from pseudo-science and disqualify Islamic science. (Incidentally, equally unsatisfactory reasons against scientific creationism were advanced by Michael Ruse in his courtroom testimony in *McLean v. Arkansas*. Ruse's testimony later became part of the presiding judge's decision to exclude scientific creationism from Arkansas high school science curricula.) But rather than reject Islamic science (or scientific creationism) wholesale as pseudo-science, why not (following Larry Laudan) squarely confront the claims of Islamic science piecemeal and assess the evidence and arguments that can be marshalled for and against them? This enables us to rebut the hypotheses of Islamic science without recourse to philosophical claims about science which are as dubious as Hoodbhoy maintains Islamic science is.

Finally, I find Hoodbhoy's compatibilism disturbing since it leaves unresolved what is the most pressing problem for us all: how to create a world order in which all humans may coexist and be treated justly. Its dualism of facts and values removes claims of morality from the realm of experimental intelligence and historical experience, situating them instead in what he

characterizes (when defending secular science) as the irrationality and superstition of revelation and literal scriptural interpretation. But if science runs amok when governed by scriptural driven physical truths, why not morality?

When our moral claims inevitably come into conflict, Hoodbhoy leaves no other court of appeal than individual revelation, clerical authority, and scriptural exegesis. I doubt the efficacy of resolving disputes in this *a priori* manner *within* Islam (e.g. witness the recent Iran-Iraq bloodbath) and *without* Islam (e.g. between Muslims, Jews, atheists, etc.). A secular process would seem better suited to the task. As Marx and Dewey urged, the proper solution requires more science, not less. It requires extending experimental methods to moral inquiry; not leaving it to the mercy of unchecked personal and social self-interest.

In conclusion, by Hoodbhoy's lights what we have here is a battle of classical proportions between science and superstition, reason and faith, tolerance and zealotry, and modern enlightenment and medieval darkness. *Islam and Science* could have been

written three centuries ago by a European advocating the separation of science and Church. Indeed, Hoodbhoy sees himself as trying to reproduce within Islam the West's secularisation of science and 'victory of science over superstition'. Yet this book could also have been written just sixty years ago during the heyday of logical positivism with its conceptual landscape of fact vs. value, internal vs. external, scientific essentialism, value-freedom, etc. Those who have emigrated from this landscape will find Hoodbhoy's argument unconvincing.

These reservations notwithstanding, *Islam and Science* is a clearly written, well organised, extremely useful and lively introduction to issues about the nature of science and its relationship to values, morality, politics, religion, society, imperialism, and non-Western culture. Hoodbhoy is to be applauded for placing what some may see as an abstract academic issue in the context of contemporary geo-politics, neo-colonialism, third world nationalism, and religious fundamentalism.

James Maffie

THE ART OF THE NECESSARY

Brian Medlin, *Human Nature Human Survival*, Adelaide, South Australia, The Board of Research, The Flinders University of South Australia, 1992. 74pp., Aust \$10 pb., 0 7258 0525 0.

This is a little book with big ideas. It's a revised and expanded version of Medlin's public lecture, 'Human Nature and the Prospects for Human Survival', given at the celebration of The Flinders University's silver jubilee in 1991. That lecture must have been quite an occasion. Though the audience of 300 included many non-academic citizens of Adelaide, most with only slight contact with the university itself, they must all of them have been aware of Medlin's reputation as a committed radical activist: his angry and vigorous campaigning against the American war on Vietnam had earned him a jail sentence and the public image of 'infamy personified'; through his 22 years as Foundation Professor of Philosophy at Flinders he had been dedicated to radical priorities both in and outside the university; and since then, in the here and now, retirement and ill-health, far from subduing him, have sharpened his sense of urgency, as he has turned his energies more towards writing and publication.

Like the lecture, the book aims to be both serious philosophy and intelligible to non-philosophers. This combination is of large consequence: Medlin both presupposes and argues that through its operation on the public consciousness, philosophy, far from leaving everything as it is, can make a difference to things, even a crucial difference, and to those things of the greatest human importance. Size of topic is thus no deterrent. In a recent paper, so far unpublished, Medlin tackles 'Love, Mortality, and the Meaning of Life'; this present book, as its title indicates, concerns human survival.

Medlin's mentor, in these as in other ways, is Russell. He brings to the task, as Russell did, the advantage not only of having done time in prison but also of a prose style of great clarity and simplicity – earthier and stringier than Russell's, but owing something to the fact that Medlin is also a poet. This style makes him one of the best writers in contemporary anglophone philosophy. The text of the book itself has a liberal sprinkling of poems, though regrettably none of his own, ranging from a part of William Dunbar's 'Lament for the Makaris', with its haunting Latin refrain, to some slightly less scholarly Australian ballads.

Medlin's book starts with some quotations and comments on the nature of philosophy, including this choice remark overheard

on a bus: 'You've got to be philosophical. Just don't think about it.' Allan Bloom is quoted: 'The uncompromisable difference that separates the philosophers from all others concerns death and dying. No way of life other than the philosophic can digest the truth about death.' Of this Medlin says: '... death and dying are the most obdurate and indigestible facts of human life, those which most systematically generate the afflatus of irrationality, and which issue most noisily in evasion and myth. Only the philosophical mind ... is likely rationally to confront these central facts The obduracy of fact, the versatility of hope are what makes religion, especially, a powerful tool for social control.' For Medlin, 'Philosophy is the commitment to thinking about the whole of life, the whole universe animate and inanimate ... with the commitment to uncompromising rationality ... in action as well as in thought ... the commitment extending further to the rational ordering of desire and feeling ... the philosophical life is not cold, unemotional, dehumanised; only a passionate, compassionate person could hope to achieve it'

The argument proper begins with what Medlin admits is 'potted, simplified history'. Over recent centuries, he says, philosophy, 'that most practical of all intellectual activities,' has generated certain ideas about human nature, and contrary to Marx's Eleventh Thesis these have been part of the philosopher's conscious attempt radically to change the world, to change it for 'the relief of man's estate'. These ideas are 'objectively pro-bourgeois', supporting the economic system of capitalism and the intellectual practice of scientific objectivity needed by capitalist technology.

Science demands objectivity, the subject of a substantial paper by Medlin in *Cause, Mind and Reality*, edited by John Heil. Objectivity requires 'the untrammelled intellect', and this in its turn requires the liberation of unfolding bourgeois societies from revelation and religion and the release of the intellect from political and economic domination. It requires, that is, the establishment of the authority of reason. In a judgment typically generous, perhaps over-generous, but in the light of his struggles in academia over the last few decades commanding particular respect, Medlin observes that this aspiration to establish the authority of reason has been 'fairly successfully' institutionalised in the modern liberal university.

But these institutions, like many others, are under threat. Though capitalism has nurtured the ideal of objectivity as has no

other mode of production in history, it is only for the philosopher that objectivity is an ideal, an absolute, important in itself. For capitalism, objectivity is of value only as a means to a different end, namely economic advantage. Already universities are being tied tighter and tighter to the tail of market forces, and the prospect is that ultimately big capitalist enterprise will be able to dispense entirely with academic research.

The fact is that the ideas of the bourgeois philosophers have not succeeded in bringing about the New Earth. On the contrary, capitalism has produced both social and ecological disaster on a global scale. One result is that more recent bourgeois ideas on human nature represent people as not merely too selfish but also too aggressive or too irrational or stupid to resolve the current ecological crisis.

Medlin makes hay of some examples of these ideas but is prepared to concede that we perhaps can't claim to know that all such views are false. However, he argues, we don't know either that they are true, and since they threaten human survival it's rational to assume that they are false. Behind this argument lies what he has called elsewhere (in his paper 'Ecological Crisis and Social Order', in Bierbaum, Nena, eds., *Towards Ecological Sustainability*) a 'Main Principle of Rational Action: We must act with regard, not only to relative probabilities, but, along with these, with regard also to the magnitude and value (whether good or bad) of the possible consequences of our own assumptions'.

Medlin does not suppose that the authority of reason is achievable. It is essential as an ideal, but uncertainty and disagreement are themselves of the essence of rationality. We need to persuade one another in argument and discussion, but disagreement may persist and decisions may be necessary in the teeth of disagreement. Thus every society, however liberal, must provide for power and authority, the need for which is 'part of the fact that we are rational animals'. This is a 'general contradiction' that takes its particular form within each particular social order. Specifically, social revolution, when a whole social order is being transformed, is impossible without 'revolutionary repression': this was true of the establishment of the bourgeois order, and it will be true of the destruction of capitalism in the transition to socialism.

The overthrow of capitalism is necessary for halting the degradation of the planet. Capitalism is incompatible with survival because capitalism requires economic growth, and survival requires a halt to economic growth. But classical Marxism is not adequately equipped for the task of destroying capitalism and replacing it with socialism. For one thing, it is as wedded to economic growth as is capitalism, and in this respect it is a species of bourgeois ideology. For another, Marxism has not solved 'the fundamental political paradox of the age', the problem of using the revolutionary repression needed without also destroying the freedoms established in liberal capitalist democracies, and while preventing those who exercise that repression from constituting themselves as a new exploiting class. 'In our age politics has ceased to be the Art of the Possible and become the Art of the Necessary.'

In what used to be actually existing socialist states revolutionary repression became tyranny, intellectual freedoms were suppressed along with others, and the new societies consequently deprived themselves of the objectivity necessary to solve even the most elementary problems of production. The result has been the resurgence of capitalism in Eastern Europe.

Medlin's book is an exploration and defence of rationality, of rationality not in the abstract, the usual way with philosophers, but as a concrete force in human social life. One of the book's most striking aspects is its facility in relating very general philosophical ideas to specific human and social institutions and situations. The need to do this is in fact explicitly affirmed, as in Medlin's

rebuke to those who 'talk as though the fact that we are bringing about our own extinction implies that we have a moral obligation to do so'. 'Extinction', he replies, 'isn't an abstraction. It would be the death and slow dying, not of the abstract Platonic form *Humankind*, but of billions of concrete, sensate, intelligent human beings, a process to be consciously endured. The last to go would have to witness, like Black Elk, the breaking of the hoop and the dying of the sacred tree. To contemplate that process with indifference, to blind oneself to its nature, even with an accompanying consciousness of virtue, is less to occupy the high ground than to wallow self-indulgently in a moral slough.'

Medlin's final target is philosophical irrationalism, exemplified by Keats, who 'is alive and well in Adelaide and, I urge upon you, at least as dangerous as Hitler'. His conclusion is: 'We see now the urgent practical importance of philosophy. Unless enough of us get our philosophy right enough and quickly enough, we are all dead.'

Roy Edgley

HALF-LIFE

Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1992. 215pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 0940 6 hb., 0 7456 10161 pb.

Zygmunt Bauman always was ambitious. In a previous book, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he argued that the blame for the Nazi persecution of the Jews should be laid at modernity's door. A sociologist given to taking a step back from his discipline and much indebted to the Frankfurt School, he attributed the form and scale of the holocaust to the instrumental rationality at the heart of modern bureaucracies and scientific progress. Whatever judgement one may come to about this analysis, it is a good indicator of what we might expect from Bauman's latest work: a grand sweep of thought which ranges wide and digs deep.

Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies is far from a disappointment in this sense. Bauman's chosen task is the investigation of death, or, as he defines it, the knowledge of mortality, in 'human institutions, rituals and beliefs'. Human inability to confront the inevitability of non-being is the single most important source, he claims, of creativity, but an awareness of this central fact of existence takes the form of a kind of displacement. It is this transmutation which forms the basis for Bauman's main thesis: 'The impact of death is at its most powerful (and creative) when death does not appear under its own name.' Human responses to mortality, then, are to be found in all times and all places; the content lurking under the disguise is universal, but the form of the disguise itself is specific, changing according to the geographic and historical locations of the culture. Bauman's aim is to lay bare the relation between culture and mortality in human social life; to identify what he calls the 'life strategies' developed by each society to deal with death. The first three chapters of the book chart the universal and permanent role of mortality; the final two, on modernity and postmodernity, explore the culturally specific forms relevant to us today.

While the early chapters offer convincing and elegant accounts of mortality's veiled presence through the ages, covering love, religious life and political movements, the reader is left with the strong impression that Bauman's real interest is in modernity's treatment of mortality. He argues that, whereas the energies of the pre-modern era focused on establishing immortality, the certainty of an after-life rendering death 'tame', modernity dealt with anxiety about death in a different way. Firstly, the increased organisation of society and establishment of national identities

led to a greater emphasis on the survival of the group; now the immortality of the individual soul was replaced by the immortality of the collective, those with the greatest power making the most successful bid. Secondly, since death threatened the very heart of modern man's new confidence, challenging his mastery of nature and the primacy of reason, modernity responded by engaging in combat with the *causes* of death. The small-scale but widespread offensives on the part of the medical science and the public's faith in them are, according to Bauman, indicative of a strategy which deals with death by distracting attention from it, by replacing one insoluble problem – our finitude – with a series of smaller but 'do-able' challenges.

These two aspects of the modern era's treatment of mortality share a common characteristic: loneliness. Under modernity's auspices, death has become a private affair, neither attenuated by a shared understanding in this life nor promising greater glory in the next. And this in turn reflects the loneliness of life in the modern era. It is here that the central preoccupation of the book begins to come, albeit hazily, into view. For just as Bauman argues that behind many human activities there lies the harsh fact of mortality, it seems that 'death' for him is a symptom of something more significant. What really counts, it is hinted, is that modernity (and this includes its natural successor, postmodernity) suffers from a fundamental lack: that of human togetherness, sociability.

The curious thing is the oblique way in which Bauman suggests this. Early on he devotes some ten pages to the work of Emmanuel Levinas. His account is exegetical in style and laudatory in tone, explaining Levinas's 'ontology of ethics', the re-grounding of the meaning of Being in ethical responsibility to the

Other. Bauman notes the distance of what he calls 'the quotidianity of social existence' from the ethical space posited by Levinas, attributing to this loss of proximity the re-opening of a void which 'brings the terror of death right into the centre of life'. The loss of the state of 'being for' another means that death is now the lonely, private affair of the solitary ego, a death which is the natural consequence of an asocial life.

Bauman hints that it is modernity which has led to this lack of ethical responsibility; and he uses Levinasian thought as a basis for his critique of modernity. This is arguably a move which has been crying out to be made for some time; the problem is that there is no explicitly communitarian element in Levinas's thought, and one is left wishing that Bauman had gone some way to forging a link between it and his critique. Instead, he adheres rigorously to his subject, in the final chapter identifying a 'new, specifically postmodern life strategy' in which immortality is banished owing to lack of interest. Bauman's representation of postmodernity borders on caricature and his objection to it comes as no surprise: 'The sociality of the postmodern community does not require sociability. Its togetherness does not require interaction. Its unity does not require integration. The life of postmodern community is itself a daily rehearsal of mortality Death is back – un-deconstructed, unreconstructed.'

Had Bauman developed the links between the basis and results of his thought, he would have produced a different book, one in which death would be relegated to the back seat. This perhaps explains the unresolved tension in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*: what it presents us with is a halfway house on the journey it begins, rather than the destination.

Alex Klaushofer

REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

Allan Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual: Commitment, Subjectivity and the Performative in the 20th-Century French Tradition*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1992. 384pp., £35.00 hb., 0 8032 4215 8.

The classic French intellectual, whose continued existence is by no means certain now that it has been reduced to the televised image of Bernard-Henri Lévy, was very much a product of the Republic and, more specifically, of the Third Republic. Not for nothing were the teachers of its godless schools known as the Hussars of the Republic.

Whilst the heroic image of the intellectual as defender of Dreyfus against anti-semitic reaction is familiar, Stoekl traces the origin of this figure to the sociology of Durkheim and his vision of a lay clerisy. According to Durkheim, the rational core inherent in any religion could not, *pace* Comte, be transcended by a leap into a positivist age; it could, when interpreted or appropriated by sociological science, provide the basis for a cult of civic service and state duty. The intellectual becomes the truth of the Republic and, by extension, of society in general. The foundations are thus laid for a confusion between universal values and French Republican values. That confusion can be exemplified in the circular arguments that opposed Julien Benda and Paul Nizan in the early 1930s. For Benda, any intellectual who espoused worldly or party political values was betraying his universal and clerical function. For the communist Nizan, the cleric was the watchdog of the bourgeoisie; any appeal to universal values was a betrayal of the proletariat, which was of course a potentially universal subject. To extend Stoekl's argument, it could be said that Alain Finkielkraut's recent meditations on 'the defeat of reason' are a

compulsive repetition of Benda's arguments, the difference being that there is no latter-day Nizan to oppose them.

As well as being an apologist for a rational State, if not a rational bureaucracy, Durkheim was the sociologist or anthropologist of the totem act, of the violent sacrifice of the totem animal or even human being. The notion of sacrifice as social ritual and medium of exchange is essential to his theory of 'primitive' society, and fundamental to Mauss's theorisation of the gift relationship. When it feeds into the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, it also becomes a component in any theory that stresses the symbolic roots of culture. In Stoekl's view, the culmination of the Durkheimian tradition is represented by Georges Bataille, who inverts its values in order to celebrate orgiastic violence, an economy of excess that deliberately recalls the culture of the *potlach* and a dark vision of sexuality which is of central importance to Foucault and Derrida alike.

Stoekl establishes an intriguing if sometimes slightly tenuous link between the totem act, Mauss's work on 'mana', or the anonymous power that inhabits the totem and circulates through the social group it symbolises, and the performative. The latter concept derives from Austin's work on speech acts, but Stoekl follows Bourdieu here by introducing a political dimension. A purely formal analysis of the performative 'I declare war' cannot, for instance, explain why war does or does not ensue. The ritual use of political performatives is, in this perspective, essential if any degree of stability is to prevail in a system founded upon unequal power relations. The stage is set for the classic conflict between individual and collective values, for, for instance, the conflict between commitment and freedom that plagues the communist characters in Sartre's novels and plays.

Retrospectively, Durkheim's vision has generated two archetypes: Zola and Flaubert, the defender of Dreyfus and the detached observer of human stupidity who creates novels 'about nothing'. The line of descent can then be traced down through Sartre's committed writer, as opposed to the poet, and, to invert the typology, to Barthes's 'author' and 'writer'. Foucault's universal and specific intellectuals can also be fitted into the schema without too much difficulty.



It is not hard to find literary variants on the themes of sacrifice and totem in twentieth-century French culture: in Nizan's novels, death becomes meaningful only if there is group solidarity, but the existence of group solidarity demands a death. Even the communist utopia will not remove or overcome the fundamental problem of death, but it may make the death of the individual significant. A similar tension runs through the fiction of Sartre, from *Nausea* to the *Roads to Freedom* trilogy – so often the homosocial group is founded or founded anew by the exclusion of a homosexual traitor – and throughout the difficult philosophical attempt to found a model of human community based upon the interpersonal recognition of the freedom of the Other. With literary figures like Jean Paulhan and Maurice Blanchot, the betrayal of the cleric becomes the treachery of the writer who would deny the reality of his language, an act of violence mirrored in the fratricidal purges of collaborators and communists – each acting in the name of a pure language of historical truth devoid of the snares of rhetoric.

Despite the importance rightly accorded to Durkheim, this is not a sociological study of intellectuals, but rather a series of readings of the theoretical and fictional texts from Nizan and Drieu la Rochelle, Sartre (and it is a joy to be reminded of just how fine Sartre's novels – especially *Nausea* – are), Paulhan and Blanchot, through to Foucault, Derrida and Bataille. Not all the authors will be familiar to the non-specialist, and Stoekl's study is therefore a welcome stimulus to explore unknown texts rather than to reread the increasingly familiar canon of a certain French modernism. Some of the writers discussed here deserve to be better known in English, notably Drieu la Rochelle. He was a fascist decadent, proto-pan-European and collaborator who flirted with the idea that the orgiastic crowd could somehow replace the endless corruption and inefficiency of the political parties of the 1930s – a vision not unrelated to that of Bataille, despite their different political loyalties. Drieu and Bataille are emblematic reminders that 'left' and 'right' could be very deceptive labels in the 1930s.

As he extends the discussion to more recent theorists, the author displays a nice scepticism about deconstructionism, which he relates to the Paulhan-Blanchot tradition; and particularly

about Derrida's increasingly tortuous attempts to absolve Heidegger on the grounds that his defence of 'spirit' is an attempt to oppose or deconstruct Nazi doctrines of race-spirit, not to mention his bewildering equation (drawn in 1968, no less) between France, humanism and the American presence in Vietnam – that being no more than an exported expression of French Republicanism. Courteously extending his definition of France to include parts of Belgium, Stoekl also eloquently voices the suspicion that the later writings of De Man are elaborate devices for defusing the question of their author's responsibility for his wartime collaboration: if every attempt to attribute historical guilt is the result of a misreading, then there is clearly no basis for judgement. Only the text is of relevance; all the rest is Western Metaphysics.

Stoekl has written an important and thought-provoking book which should be read by anyone concerned with French studies or with the intellectual politics of the major theoretical tradition it traces. It has, however, one major flaw. His comments on the intellectual and the secular cleric are restricted to the male of the species. There is no discussion of Simone Weil, Beauvoir, or Kristeva, whose recent essays explore the seeming impossibility of reconciling Republicanism with the ethno-religious identity supplied by Islam. More galling still is the absence of any discussion of Luce Irigaray, whose later work is both an attempt to integrate an element of the sacred into the life of the *polis* and a challenge to a patriarchal system based upon sacrifice and the violent exclusion of the Other.

David Macey

AND NOT A DROP TO DRINK

Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism (an essay in atheistic religion)*, London, Routledge, 1992. 223pp., £12.99 pb, 0 415 05608 X

Nick Land's *The Thirst for Annihilation* explores the writings of Georges Bataille (1897-1962), in an exciting attempt to explore the new spaces opened up by the crisis besetting traditional notions of subjectivity. Most importantly, Land employs Bataille with the express intention of further disrupting what is often seen as a humanist tradition of social reflection in which notions of subjectivity have been used to naturalize and justify the manipulation of individuals within and by the political state.

As is now generally recognized, Bataille's work engages such experiences as the orgasm, the laugh, crying and the smile in order to exceed the rationalized depictions of subjectivity. And in opposing such moralistic and rationalistic depictions, Land seems right to seek Bataille's support. Consequently, *The Thirst for Annihilation* is most effective where it enters the realms of what Bataille called *nonknowledge*. It is precisely this realm that leads Land to accommodate Bataille within a notion of a 'libidinal materialism' which he values, above all, for its pessimism: 'Historically it is *pessimistic*, in the rich sense that transects the writings of Nietzsche, Freud, and Bataille as well as those of Schopenhauer.'

Within this tradition of pessimistic anti-humanism, Land remains true, in spirit, to Bataille's writings in that he tries to avoid making *The Thirst for Annihilation* into 'an apparatus in the service of the state'. He hopes to resituate Bataille in opposition both to the more overtly conservative elements within academia and to 'the deconstructivist pulp-industry of endless commentary on

Logocentrism, Western Metaphysics, and other *Seinsvergessenheiten*'. The success of his endeavour must, however, remain a moot point.

Clearly, Land follows Bataille in pointing to the means *to* and the possibilities *for* a beyond to our existence within capitalist nation-states. Yet, unlike Bataille, Land seems to close down such possibilities in his claim that 'nihil is true religion'. Here, despite his use of Bataillean excess, Land dissolves the conditions of its radicality by making use of this nothing (or *nihil*) into a new absolute. This leads Land to forget the individual and social frames against which Bataille's excesses gain radical significance.

To carry out this reading, Land has to inflict a certain violence on Bataille's actual writings. This is never more evident than in his attempt to sever Bataille's life-long engagement with the 'political'. Thus, Land argues that 'Politics is the last great sentimental indulgence, and it has never achieved anything except a deepened idiocy, more work, more repression, more pompous ass-holes demanding obedience.... Bataille wasn't immune to the political charade, but even his short period of reality-process politicking during 1935-6 ... was mapped in the labyrinth.' The assumption would seem to be that Bataille's adoption of a Heraclitean perspective negates any 'reality-process politicking'. What seems most odd about this assumption is the fact that from 1927 onwards, starting with 'Solar Anus', Bataille saw his work as overtly political and even went so far as to note, during 1943, that 'currently we take pride in this ... propaganda and writing!'

To achieve this depoliticization, *The Thirst for Annihilation* tends to read all of Bataille's writings through a specific view of his earliest works, most of which can be found in the first two volumes of the twelve which form Bataille's *Oeuvres Complètes*. Yet, to have employed a more reflective reading would have forced Land into deeply political waters. To begin with, he would have had to recognise just how important Alexandre Kojève's lectures, delivered between 1933 and 1939, were in orienting Bataille's continuing engagement with Marx. In the second place, Land would have had to identify the political and often critical ways in which Bataille engaged with Nietzsche between September 1939 and August 1944. This can be traced in the three works (*Inner Experience*, *The Guilty*, and *On Nietzsche*) which he subsequently unified (in 1961) under the title of *Somme Athéologique*: 'The term *athéologique* does not deceive. From the fact that theology is subordinated to the intention, *God is impious*.'

Land regards Bataille's magnum opus, *On Nietzsche* (1945) as 'a book whose aberration is on a scale of Nietzsche's own'. And this inspires Land to remark that 'the fact that such a book could be published even dampens one's enthusiasm for the universal eradication of the species'. It therefore comes as something of a disappointment that Land's worship of a deified nihil subjects it, along with all of Bataille's work, to precisely the type of 'fall into oblivion' against which he protests. Hence, Land reduces *On Nietzsche* to his atheistic religion with a mere two-page overview. To have done otherwise would have opened his reading to the Bataille who announced that 'though different from Marxism's value, the value proclaimed by Nietzsche isn't less universal - since the emancipation he wanted wasn't that of a single class relative to the others but the freeing of human life under the example of its best representatives - compared to the moral slavery of the past.' Nor does Land's account tally with the Bataille who, in 1944, could 'picture the bourgeoisie as destroyed in a few legitimate bloodlettings'. It would, however, seem clear that it is the growing theoretical orthodoxy of our supposedly post-human(ist) era which leads Land to ignore what is most radical in Bataille's work: namely, his amalgamation of Nietzsche

and Marx. And this depoliticization is greatly helped by Land's employment of the earliest of Bataille's writings.

Along with his work for *Contre-Attaque*, this early work has often been seen as sympathetic to Fascism. This view occurs even though Bataille was to give these texts increasing political clarification in a body of writings where, time and again, 'experiential excess' is identified as virulently antipathetic to political states. This claim is attested, for example, in Bataille's 'Le problème de l'état' (1933), 'La conjuration sacrée' (1936) and *Théorie de la religion* (1947). *The Thirst for Annihilation* is a significant book, but unfortunately it restricts Bataille's wide-ranging concerns. The removal of such restrictions will, of course, require an engagement with what Bataille often prioritized as the world of 'work': that is, the political state.

Desmond Bailey

HIGH ECOLOGY

Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, translated by David Rothenberg, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. 212pp., £14.95 pb., 0 521 34873 0.

Now approaching his eightieth year, Arne Naess is a Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer who has spent most of his life teaching philosophy in academia. His particular interests were semantics and the philosophy of science, and in the 1930s he appears to have been associated with the logical positivists - whose philosophy stands in stark contrast to Naess's present views. Naess has published important studies of Gandhi and Spinoza, and the influence of these two contrasting figures is clearly apparent in his work. His mode of presentation - abstract, normative and geometric - and his philosophy - which sees self-realisation as involving 'identification' with nature - have affinities with Spinoza. Indeed he summarises his own philosophy on one page, with an abstract schema of numbered boxes all neatly and logically linked by a series of lines, hanging together like a frozen mobile. Anything less organic it would be hard to imagine, but it reminds one of the gentle Spinoza.

Naess outlines the basic principles of deep ecology as follows: (1) The richness and diversity of life forms have an intrinsic value in themselves and they contribute to the flourishing of humans and non-humans alike, so we should in no way reduce this diversity except to satisfy vital needs. (2) The world is overpopulated with humans and this is causing serious problems to life on earth - 'life' for Naess being used in a comprehensive sense to cover not only living forms, but rivers, landscapes, cultures, ecosystems and the living earth itself. (3) Fundamental changes are necessary in basic economic, technological and ideological structures, and in individual lifestyles (Naess is clearly addressing those who enjoy 'high standards of living').

Naess suggests that 'economic growth' is completely incompatible with these basic principles, but nowhere does he directly address social problems - poverty, inequality, racism, state repression, neo-colonialism, exploitation - all of which are directly linked to environmental issues. In fact, given his emphasis on ideological transformations, on self-realisation, and on individual lifestyles, Naess does little to explore the underlying causes of the present ecological crisis.

In outlining his world view and in his advocacy of an 'ecological consciousness' Naess has many interesting and important things to say - on the need for a 'Gestalt' or relational way of thinking; on the need to reflect on, and explicitly articulate the basic norms of an alternative ontology, and to avoid as far as possible purely instrumental norms; and on the problems of

making ecology itself into an all-encompassing 'ism', as if it were a universal science. But Naess's discussion is marred, and its flow continually disrupted, by philosophical scholasticism and at times jargon. As with the positivists, the dichotomy between facts (hypotheses) and values (norms) runs like a silver thread throughout the text, although Naess, far from dismissing values, stresses their priority and importance. Yet although the idea that basic norms cannot be derived from factual hypotheses may be true, Naess's suggestion that they are therefore in some degree arbitrary verges on sophistry. Food, shelter and freedom are basic to human life, and norms related to them are not arbitrary.

When he comes to discuss the state and the present economic system – Naess never brings himself to describe it as capitalism – Naess expresses very ambivalent attitudes. He continually emphasises, often in strident terms, that they must be fundamentally transformed. The goal of the deep ecology movement, he writes, cannot be achieved without 'deep change' in present industrial societies. Expecting contemporary environment problems to be overcome solely by technical means reflects a 'shallow' ecological approach – what is needed are fundamental changes in consciousness and the economic system. Yet he quotes approvingly Erik Damman's suggestion that it is far too simple to claim that capitalists, industrial magnates, bureaucrats and politicians alone have the power to preserve the system, implying that people in democratic countries are free to make the changes if they desire. But the disclaimer completely obscures the real causes of the environmental problems we now face – which are intrinsically related to an economic system, namely capitalism, which for centuries has been one of tyranny and exploitation, and which is based on the endless pursuit of profit.

Drawing up a political triangle of red, blue and green, Naess sees 'green' as transcending the opposition between blue (capitalism) and red (socialism). He can only do this by making some very dubious equations. The greens (deep ecology) have affinity, he suggests, with the blues in valuing personal enterprise and in opposing bureaucracies. But, of course, supporters of capitalism when they talk about freedom and personal enterprise and initiative are not really concerned with the freedom of the individual but only with the needs of 'capital'. When the latter is challenged freedom goes by the board, and capitalist enterprises are highly bureaucratic and highly undemocratic. And when Naess distances himself from the reds (socialism) – which he sees as bureaucratic and as supporting industrialism and 'big industry' – he equates socialism with Soviet-style state capitalism. Yet when he writes that the aims and values of society cannot change unless the way of production is altered, when he speaks out for decentralisation and for the importance of social justice, and when he writes that 'the utopians of green societies point towards a kind of direct democracy with local control of the means of production as the best means of achieving goals', all he does, of course, is to suggest socialist ideas that communist anarchists and libertarian socialists have been propagating for a century or more. Like many in the ecology movement Naess seems quite oblivious of the libertarian socialist tradition, and so offers suggestions for a 'new renaissance' that are anything but new or original. He makes no reference at all to Bookchin, let alone any earlier anarchists.

Yet he makes two striking mistakes. The first is to suggest that there is hardly any capitalistic political ideology. But what on earth are liberalism, fascism, Thatcherism, and the so-called 'enterprise culture' – not to mention intellectual fashions like sociobiology? Capitalist ideology – with its emphasis on competition, on efficiency, on management, on monitoring, on privatisation, and on so-called free enterprise – permeates current social and political thought, and libertarian and real socialist thought hardly gets a hearing in any of the major institutions and cultural arenas.

Secondly, although advocating decentralisation, Naess suggests that in order to counter the increasing population pressure and war 'some fairly strong central political institutions' are necessary, and to keep transnational corporations in check we may in the future have to envision global institutions with some power 'not only to criticise certain states and companies but also to implement certain measures against the states which violate the rules'. This is virtually the advocacy of a global state, the totalitarian implications of which are too ghastly to contemplate.

Naess writes as a philosopher rather than as a social theorist and, although he stresses the importance of community, autonomy, local self-sufficiency and co-operation, and decentralisation, the discussion of these tends to be rather abstract. There is therefore very little in the book about bioregionalism, feminism, neighbourhood associations, or the communitarian movements and anarchist collectives that have challenged capitalist exploitation and hierarchy. And the stress he puts on changing life style and on 'self-realisation', while perhaps important to the affluent middle classes of Europe and North America, can all too easily lead to a politics of 'survivalism'. Following Gandhi, Naess stresses the importance of political action, but the action he envisages tends to focus on 'symptoms' – on environmental issues – rather than the primary social institutions of the capitalist system – the multinational corporations and state structures that support them. Indeed in the future ecological society that he postulates he seems to envisage the continued existence of both capitalist firms and the nation state – so, one wonders, how deep is the transformation that Naess envisages?

Brian Morris

MODERATELY DEEP

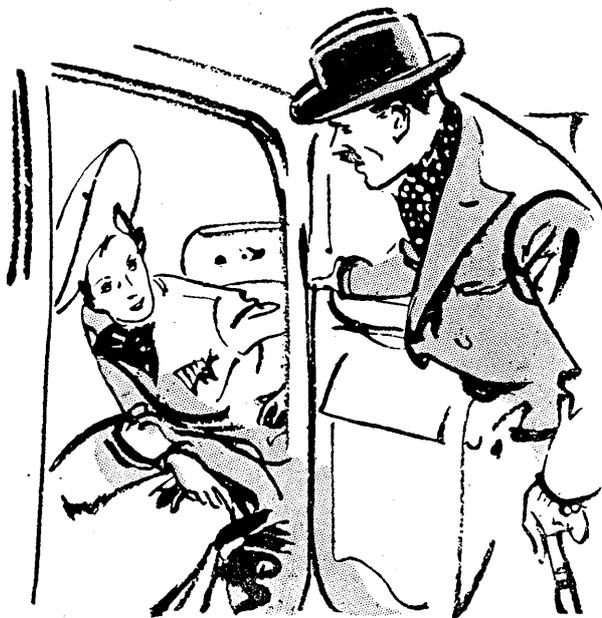
Robert E. Goodin, *Green Political Theory*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1992. 240pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 1026 9 hb., 0 7456 1027 7 pb.

Goodin has a dual aim in offering this philosophical examination of green politics. His primary thesis is that green parties have a distinct and cohesive political agenda, with an 'all-or-nothing' character that prohibits the piecemeal and opportunist plundering of green policies by other parties, on grounds of consistency. But he is equally concerned 'to rescue greens from themselves' by separating the important and persuasive core of their doctrine from undesirable and electorally unpopular stances that greens happen to, but need not, endorse. The core of green political theory, which Goodin wishes to defend, is a set of substantive public policy recommendations based on a green theory of value.

Although Goodin distances himself from the more 'exaggerated' claims of deep ecology, he endorses its contention that the value of nature is not wholly reducible to its value to humanity, and describes his own theory as a 'moderately deep ecology'. He advances a reconstruction of the green theory of value, which may perhaps be combined in a composite theory with approaches that value labour input or consumer satisfaction, but which he insists is not reducible to them.

Goodin's reasons for valuing natural objects lie in 'the history and process of their creation', and in particular 'the fact that they have a history of having been created by natural processes rather than by artificial human ones'. This, he thinks, is analogous to the way we value an original painting 'created by the master's hand' more highly than even the best reproductions. The analogy, however, reveals as much about the theory's limitations as about its truth. Firstly, Goodin concedes in a footnote that the preference for an original over a copy may reflect an attitude to art specific

to certain cultures, and in environmental politics reverence for untouched nature seems to be an attitude more characteristic of America and Australia (places which still have large areas of near-wilderness) than of Europe. Secondly, much of the 'nature' that greens wish to preserve is, like the painting in Goodin's analogy, the product of human agency. A theory that views creation by natural processes as the source of nature's value would therefore appear to have a very limited application. Thirdly, Goodin emphasises the superiority of an original painting by asking us to imagine an absolutely perfect copy, but surely much of the force of conservationist arguments lies in the fact that there are aspects of the environment that *cannot* be reproduced.



Goodin argues that we value natural processes because they provide 'a larger context', something 'outside of ourselves' in which to situate the plans and projects that comprise our lives. It follows from this hypothesis that a 'restored bit of nature', which is not in the required sense 'outside of ourselves', is 'necessarily not as valuable as something similar that has been "untouched by human hands"'. However, the hypothesis appears to be a matter of speculative psychology. Goodin recognises that the products of human history are often valued for the context that they provide, but assumes without argument that a natural context is required in addition. He may be right in this assumption, but for such a vital part of his theory more argument might be expected.

It may appear to both supporters and critics of deep ecology that this account locates the source of nature's value in a notion of human need. Goodin anticipates this response and attempts to characterise his account as a 'halfway house' between shallow and deep ecology. He asserts that the satisfaction people obtain from setting their lives in a larger context is not merely *great* satisfaction but is a sort of satisfaction upon which all other sorts are parasitic. This, however, appears still more speculative, and less plausible, than his earlier hypothesis. More interesting is his argument that two independent factors are at work in the green theory of value. He acknowledges that for nature to have value there must be human values, but argues that it depends also upon a value-imparting characteristic of natural objects – the characteristic of having been created by natural processes – which is by definition independent of human beings. This, however, does not make Goodin's theory 'deep', since it is not in dispute that the things people value, as opposed to the value of those things, may exist independently of any valuer.

Goodin argues that the unity of the green programme lies in the fact that its policy proposals – on environmental and other matters – are all derived from the green theory of value. In contrast, he argues, the personal lifestyle recommendations that greens typically propose, such as Eastern religion and holistic medicine, cannot be derived from their theory of value. They harm the greens' reputation, Goodin thinks, and should be discarded, or at least ignored in any assessment of the merits of green political theory.

The last part of the book is devoted to the organisational principles advocated by the greens, which, Goodin argues, are based on a green theory of agency quite separate from the green theory of value. This means that the proposed forms of organisation may conflict with green policy goals – the greens' commitment to radical decentralisation, for example, casts doubt upon their ability to deal with global problems. Goodin argues that where such conflicts arise, the theory of value must take precedence, requiring green parties to adapt their methods and compromise with other parties in order to achieve maximum implementation of their core policies.

This book scores highly for readability and analytical clarity. It brings a structure to green political thought that anyone studying the theoretical or practical problems of green politics would do well to consider. But its most important contribution, despite or perhaps because of Goodin's failure to detach his green theory of value from human-centred ones, is the light that it sheds on the often murky area of environmental value theory.

Jonathan Hughes

OVER THE LIMIT

Gisela Bock and Susan James, eds, *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity*, London, Routledge, 1992. 210pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 07988 8 hb., 0 415 07989 6 pb.

I don't know what it says about the resilience of dialectical thinking, but there is something about opposition and dichotomy that seems to drive us on towards some later resolution. No sooner have we set up what looks a useful distinction than we find ourselves compelled to knock it down. This fate has recently befallen feminist distinctions between equality and difference. For much of the 1980s, these terms helped clarify competing positions in feminist politics, exposing on the one side the precarious equality that requires women to simulate men, arguing on the other that too much attention to sexual difference leads to conservative notions of an essential female. Feminism was briefly conceived as *either* 'equality feminism' *or* 'difference feminism', and while the more historically knowledgeable complained that this played fast and loose with complex political histories, the choice between a right to be equal and a right to be different momentarily divided the field. *Beyond Equality and Difference* does not pretend to resolve this debate, but very effectively establishes the limits of the dichotomy for understanding feminist history or developing feminist ideas.

The collection includes, for example, Karen Offen's essay on the history of feminism, which takes issue with the anachronistic categories through which later feminists have often approached their precursors, and argues that most periods of feminist politics have been characterised by the co-existence of 'relational' and 'individualist' strands. An essay by Carole Pateman notes the recurrent combination of equality and difference through the history of women's citizenship and the politics of motherhood, and argues that equality, at least in some of its meanings, can

CHOREOGRAPHIES

encompass difference. Gisela Bock develops a powerful – and painful – analysis of Nazi sterilisation and annihilation policies, which convincingly refutes suggestions that these had their theoretical roots in a cult of motherhood or the celebration of female difference.

All these are important correctives to earlier debates, and this emphasis continues through other contributions to the collection. In a nicely titled essay on 'The good-enough citizen', Susan James reclaims liberalism as more continuous with feminist conceptions of citizenship than recent critics have allowed, arguing that liberalism does not simply ignore difference, and that liberal notions of independence can be more fully developed as a basis for women's equal citizenship. Deborah Rhode argues that some of the starker oppositions between equality and difference would dissolve if we shifted attention from gender difference to gender disadvantage, and hence to the varying contexts within which disadvantage appears. Once we did this, we would more easily recognise that some situations call for strategies that are attentive to difference, while others call for the opposite approach. In the concluding essay, Jane Flax echoes thoughts that surface in a number of the contributions when she argues that the central problem is 'how and why gender is a relation of domination and how to end such domination'. We do not have to get stuck into empty discussions about whether difference should be confirmed or denied. The problem is how to break the connection between difference and domination.

Though there are significant variations in emphasis and argument, these essays develop within a relatively consistent framework which queries simpler oppositions between equality and difference, and pushes beyond what is now considered a limiting dichotomy. One of the oddities of the collection is that this sits alongside a number of striking pieces by Italian feminists who insist that 'humankind is undeniably and ineradicably marked by sexual difference', and that women's chances of freedom depend on them developing their own language and understanding of liberty as something that will be different from men's. Despite good advice from the editors about what is distinctive in this tradition, I find it hard to view the essays by Adriana Cavarero, Silvi Vegetti Finzi, or Patrizia Violi as anything but a strong assertion on one side of the dichotomy that other contributors are warning against.

Adriana Cavarero's essay, for example, argues that no sexed being can hope to develop a universal and sexless paradigm, and that existing political theory has therefore subjected women to 'a homologising, assimilating inclusion'. As becomes clear in the course of the argument, this depends on viewing sexual difference as *the* primary difference. There are many kinds of differences between human beings, and any paradigm that claims universality will have to abstract from some of these. So to say that a sexless paradigm is simply impossible, it is necessary to argue that sex is the relevant characteristic in every situation and every context. This is, indeed, what Cavarero does. She sees the modern concept of equality as having already erased differences of race, culture or ethnicity, but claims it cannot do likewise for women because of their status as a 'primary difference' inscribed in all human existence.

This is then an unusual book, because it seems to include one side of a rather polarised debate, along with a set of essays that encourage us to move beyond the polarity. The combination makes it harder to do justice to the Italian school, but does not detract from the quality and relevance of the book. Apart from the essay by Karen Offen, all the contributions are published here for the first time. All of them will be of interest to those concerned with feminist political theory.

Anne Phillips

Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law*, London, Routledge, 1991. 239pp. £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 90105 7 hb., 0 415 90106 5 pb.

In many ways this is an important book. Feminism based on deconstruction, which has become something of an orthodoxy in so-called 'radical feminism', has too often fused post-structural perspectives in order to critique patriarchy. *Beyond Accommodation* works against this tendency, drawing attention to different approaches within feminist deconstruction. Cornell is out to show that the deconstruction of phallogocentrism, though important to gender analysis, should not simply be equated with feminism. She says that a feminist alliance with deconstruction is certainly important, but argues that the women's movement urgently requires 'something more' than deconstructive strategies. Without the affirmation of some kind of ideal of sexuality, love or eroticism, without a Utopian dream, feminism will only negate the important inroads it has made into masculinist culture, thereby reinforcing rigid gender identities.

Cornell provides detailed commentaries on many versions of post-structuralism and deconstruction. In excellent chapters on Lacan's theory of the prison of sexual difference, Derrida's refiguration of the feminine, Kristeva's exploration of maternal space, and Irigaray's theory of women's *dereliction*, Cornell shows how significant post-structuralist discourse is for thinking about the bipolarity of current gender identity. Perhaps the best part of the book is her patient reading of Derrida's deconstructive intervention into Lacanianism. Lacan's account of sexual difference is important, says Cornell, because it uncovers the complex links between the symbolic order and the masculine imaginary. Woman as the Other, as something which is outside the symbolic: this is what gives the masculine imaginary its self-presence as phallic authority. Yet Cornell, following Derrida, argues that Lacan blocks off the radical implications of his own statement 'woman does not exist'. Cornell constantly uses Lacan against himself to demonstrate that the Law of the Father only exists against the trace of what it represses, the feminine imaginary. The trace of the feminine, this 'scar of the maternal Other', cannot simply be represented in the realm of the symbolic. It is true, Cornell says, that there is no *beyond* to the symbolic, but the critical point is that there is also no pure cut from the feminine imaginary. As such, Lacan's claim to have grasped the 'truth' of sexuality is no more than an essentialising fetish, reinscribing what the symbolic has imposed as the dominant Law.

From this angle, Cornell argues that it is possible to imagine a 'new choreography of sexual difference', supporting the 'ability of actual women to dance differently'. When Cornell evokes the refiguration of the feminine she relies on the fluid basis of female morphology. She urges the celebration of woman's voice, her unique *jouissance*. Here Cornell takes her cue from the 'écriture feminine' movement – specifically the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. Feminine writing, says Cornell, orientates us towards a non-patriarchal future. It speaks of the shared conditions of women, the key to the politics of difference and feminism.

It is impossible to do justice here to the complexity of Cornell's analysis. Against this theoretical backdrop of feminism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis, Cornell examines a range of interesting issues: questions of cultural representation, Toni Morrison's writing on Afro-American women, the feminist narratives of Catharine Mackinnon and Carol Gilligan, and so on. Throughout, her project is critical yet affirmative. Against the bleakness of much contemporary theory, Cornell speaks up for

the imagination, creativity and utopian possibility – ‘the feminine as an imaginative universal’.

But I remain unconvinced by Cornell’s account of the possibilities for a restructuring of the socio-historical process. There is no indication here of what sort of feminist politics might be employed to transform social frames of sexuality and gender. Like Irigaray and Cixous, Cornell seems content to make a global appeal to the feminine imaginary. Cornell displays a curious lack of interest in the relations between the imaginary and the socio-symbolic network, the interweaving of fantasy and culture. It is as if the feminine itself, through some wild flight of the imagination, is to threaten (and perhaps undo) the male-dominated symbolic. Yet this idea is surely not convincing. It brackets the phallogocentric infusion of sexuality and the imaginary, and forecloses questions about institutional repression.

Rather than searching for new sexual choreographies outside the social-historical world, I suggest it is necessary to rethink the

profoundly imaginary aspects of unconscious sexuality and their relation to instituted forms of gender. We need to know more about the psychic processes of sexual identification, and how existing identifications interact, conflict and reinforce one another in the current gender system. We need to know more about the potentialities of such variations for subjectivity, sexuality and gender differentiation. And we need to know more about the enabling aspects of modern sexuality, enquiring at what point fantasy structures outstrip themselves and marshall human subjects into active forms of gender struggle and commitment.

Cornell takes us some distance in questioning the emotional price paid – by both women and men – for current gender accommodation. Significantly, the affirmation of the feminine plays a crucial role in this sort of critique. But I suspect that any restructuring of sexual difference itself will involve much greater leaps of the human imagination.

Anthony Elliott

Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy*, edited by David Ames Curtis, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991. x + 304pp., £12.95 pb., 0 19 506963.

This is an unequal collection of essays. Some of them are occasional pieces, and Castoriadis does not always rise to the occasion. When he is bad, he is superficial and grumpy. A few windmills (Heidegger and ‘the end of philosophy’, deconstruction, but also, more surprisingly, the music of Saint-Saens as *pompier*) are predictably tilted at. And Castoriadis is not immune to ponderous platitude (‘as a psychologist, a sociologist, and a historian I am confident that the same individual who spends more than half of his leisure time watching television cannot become fully immersed in a great novel’). But when Castoriadis is good, he is very very good. Indeed, it is difficult not to like him, and not to forgive him his sweeping statements: he was so obviously right forty years before everybody else. More importantly, he is the only living incarnation of two figures who ought to be close to our hearts: the philosopher cum psychoanalyst who manages to articulate Freud and Marx (a recurrent dream of the left, last heard of in the early seventies) – see his Marxian reassessment of the concept of sublimation; and the true post-Marxist thinker, in whom, in contrast to Habermas and his like, the ‘Marxist’ is not overshadowed by the ‘post’. There is an ineradicable radicalism in Castoriadis. Thus, his cardinal concept that democracy owes everything to the practice of sixth-century Athens, or to the tradition of the workers’ councils, and nothing to the electoral charade whereby, every fourth or fifth year, the slaves elect their masters: there is a Utopian freshness about this sort of critique which is needed now as much as ever. Reading Castoriadis, therefore, is an urgent task. I cannot hope adequately to

convey the exhilaration that following his conceptual trails induces in a reader steeped in post-liberal political philosophy and sociology or analytical Marxism. Take, for instance, the conception of language and intention that is repeatedly hinted at in his essays (and which is more fully developed in his great book, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*): it does not sacrifice the social and the historical on the altars of methodological individualism and universal grammar; and it allows us to think the nexus between language, culture and historical conjuncture; likewise, intentions and affects are analysed as social constructs. The central concept, however, is autonomy: a concept rooted in Castoriadis’s constant revaluation of the miracle that was Greece. (This is where his personal history and cultural origins become assets.) Autonomy is the name for the concomitant invention of philosophy and democracy in Greece, and again in Renaissance Europe. The Kantian term is not innocent: Castoriadis stresses the moment of self-institution of society, which is also the moment when the closure of the instituted world of representation is broken, and the critical distance, which allows free thinking and political action, is established. The paradox and circularity of this self-creation is evident, but the advantages of this exposed position are considerable: the domination of instituted meaning, of a preexisting or teleologically guaranteed cosmos, is broken at last, and we are faced with our responsibility for organising, as best we can, the chaos (there is no science – either *episteme* nor *techne* – of politics, but this in no way precludes action), freely accepting the risk of error and *hubris* (i.e. the breaking of norms that were never clearly defined). There is something tragic, but also exciting, in Castoriadis’s political philosophy; as there is something exciting in his theory of ideology, of the shaping of the psyche by the social imaginary. Do forget about the

old man’s grumpiness: he had to be a one-man central committee for too long: here is a young and alert political philosopher.

J. J. Lecercle

Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude*, London, Routledge, 1992. 133pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 02677 6 hb., 0 415 02678 4 pb.

Lynda Nead draws on a wealth of feminist and Continental thought to explore female nudity in art; which, she observes, is a huge, controversial and important topic. Her study forms roughly thesis, antithesis and synthesis. First she gets to grips with the standard art-theoretic statement, Kenneth Clarke’s *The Nude*, and confronts it with ideas of *margin* and *frame* from Mary Douglas and Jacques Derrida, to find in it not only an oppressive patriarchal regime, but also a linchpin of orthodox art theory. The concept of *art*, she shows, is intimately involved as the opposite of *obscenity*. Second comes a review of feminist responses, starting with Mary Richardson’s attack with an axe on the ‘Rokeby Venus’ at the Tate Gallery in 1914, but centring on notable strategies of feminist art over the past two decades. Finally, we are taken into novel territory with suggestions about redrawing the relations between art and pornography, sacred and profane, sexuality and obscenity. Here she introduces us to the thoughts of Bourdieu who has urged that the so-called *aesthetic* distinctions we make about art are actually social distinctions. As this lays waste the Kantian orthodoxy (of traditionalism and modernism alike) we are left with no choice but to start again from scratch. Which is to say, here is a book which should also interest anyone contemplating ‘aesthetics’.

Nead’s contribution is mainly that of coordinating a great span of feminist and art-theoretical writing, and the proposal of

boundary as a key analytical term. She visits the spectrum of frames for female nudity to show how in each case the philosophical presumptions we customarily apply fall apart on closer inspection. Which is to say, the 'aesthetic' distinctions which we habitually make are (i) socio-political boundaries and (ii) nowhere safe or fixed. Nead marshals brief historical reviews of changing law and custom throughout her book to illustrate this, and to place her subject in a social and legal framework.

Nead skirts round the thorny divide which has grown up in feminist ranks on the question of censorship, but I think she shows the way to unite them by directing attention towards political and art-theoretical questions. This is where the ground is new and shifting, and she agrees with Bourdieu that the remedy lies in redrafting our notion of art by taking down all the barriers. All the old distinctions must be melted down, and special pleading for high culture must be cast aside. This is the case she skilfully and very readably argues and illustrates. What is perhaps most haunting about the book is the inescapable drift of the subject, under Nead's probing, from art to the politics of criminality, the State, and public and private experience.

Robert Dixon

Sonia Kruks, *Situation and Human Existence: Freedom, Subjectivity and Society*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990. xv + 215pp., £30.00 hb., £9.99 pb., 0 04 4454562 hb., 0 04 4454570 pb.

In this book, Sonia Kruks sets herself a double task. On the one hand, she gives a good and very accessible introduction to French existentialist philosophy. She provides a concise treatment of the work of Marcel, Beauvoir, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and places their thought firmly within the French philosophical and political scene. The intended audience here is 'students of Anglo-American philosophy' to whom existentialism is unfamiliar territory. However, as Kruks points out in her introduction, this is not simply a case of bringing our black turtle-necks out of the closet. Her interest in existentialism is informed by contemporary debates in sociology and political theory concerning the relation of subject and world. This brings us to the second function of the book. Kruks uses the concept of situation, 'the presence of an internal bond, a relation of mutual permeability between subjectivity and its surrounding world', to make an intervention in the libertarian/communitarian debate from a novel

perspective. The flipside of this project is to offer a consistent argument against structuralist anti-humanism. Thus, Kruks also contributes indirectly to the recent discussion of the return of the subject in French thought.

On the whole, the book is successful in presenting the existentialist critique of self-possessed, rational and free subjectivity. In the process, Kruks offers a timely reappraisal of Beauvoir's work and a sensitive reading of Sartre's development of a more rigorous treatment of the relation between individual and group in his later work. The introductory aim of the book limits the discussion of the possible contemporary relevance of the existentialist problematic to bare hints. There are several points where one would wish for a more thorough argument. If 'mutual permeability' of subject and world is a serious proposal then there are a number of problems which need to be addressed.

Kruks stresses for example the French lineage of the critique of modern subjectivity and focuses on Marcel's influence on French phenomenologists. Though this is certainly true, it sets a trend of keeping German references to a minimum. This may not be a problem in the case of Marcel even if an exploration of his relation to Kant or German romanticism might have been illuminating. With Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, this lack is more acutely felt, and it is less justifiable (Kojève for instance is never mentioned). As a result, their uses of dialectics and phenomenology remain strangely opaque. Reference to French philosophers is also thinly rationed. Kruks is right in claiming that the problematisation of the subject can be seen as a struggle against the Cartesian ghost. Yet Descartes often returns as the presiding genius, in Marcel's solitary embodied subject for instance, or in Sartre's dualism of the free, for-itself consciousness set against the alienating in-itself. Unless the Cartesian influence is adequately assessed it is difficult to see how the project of an ethics of situation which purports to overcome it can be a viable alternative. Marcel's inward turn which is articulated in religious terms is equally problematic. One may wonder for instance whether that influence does not undermine the phenomenological project (as Janicaud argued recently in a rather polemical book). Marcel's rejection of collectivities as necessarily dehumanising also passes without comment. This off-hand indictment of the social world of institutions and embodied praxis is potentially very conservative and could sabotage Kruks' own project. In the end one is left with the promise of another book which remains to be written.

Katerina Deligiorgi

Arthur Still and Irving Velody, eds., *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie*, London, Routledge, 1992. 225pp., £45.00 hb., 0 415 06654 9.

This book has as its basis Colin Gordon's claim that because a full-length English translation of Foucault's *Histoire de la folie* has never been published, English-speaking commentators have failed to comprehend the book. *Histoire de la folie* (its first title being *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie*) was published in France in 1961; in 1964 an abridged version appeared, and it is on this version that the English translation was based, published as *Madness and Civilisation*. Gordon argues that the untranslated 300 pages (approximately 40 per cent of the book) would shed a great deal of light on Foucault's arguments, and, crucially, show that his English-speaking critics have simply misunderstood him. Indeed Gordon, in foot-stomping mood, suggests that some critics may never have 'managed to find the time necessary to read it, let alone to reread it'.

However, much of the book is not about the 'missing' parts of Foucault's work, but about the nature of translation. For example one of the major criticisms of Foucault made by English historians concerns his use of historical detail. In the chapter 'Stultifera Navis' Foucault writes that *les fous alors avaient une existence facilement errante*. The English translation has this as 'madmen then led an easy wandering existence'. But Gordon argues that the sentence should read 'the existence of the mad at that time could easily be a wandering one'. The difference is important because historians such as Midelfort and Stone have suggested that Foucault believed that the mad led an easy life, which records show to be clearly false.

Gordon's thesis is flatly denied by Andrew Scull who claims that if the whole work were translated this would simply confirm the criticisms of it. The oft-repeated charge that Foucault projected French examples onto European history would be confirmed, Scull suggests, were the whole work available.

It should also be noted that Gordon's thesis rests on a simplistic division between (critical) English-speaking historians and (highly praising) French historians. The assumption is that because French historians praised the book and English-speaking ones didn't this must be because the former had access to more of Foucault, as though criticism of Foucault were an illness, the antidote being to read more of him.

Mark Neocleous