The spectre of communitarianism

Daniel Bell, *Communitarianism and its Critics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993. 256 pp., £30.00 hb., 0 19 827877 2.

Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*, Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1993. xvi + 330 pp., £23.95 hb., 0 674 03180 6.

Communitarianism has become a fashionable topic. Where, not long ago, most effective criticisms of liberalism were advanced from a Marxist standpoint, they are now often framed in terms of some communitarian alternative. It is worth remembering that from the early 1840s onwards the recently coined adjectives 'communitarian', 'communitive' and 'communist' were all used in much the same way, until the first two fell into disuse, while 'communist' continued to be applied to holders of a wide range of views until about 1920.

It was a prophetic exaggeration when in 1848 Marx and Engels declared that the spectre of communism was haunting Europe. But the spectre of contemporary communitarianism haunts only liberal periodicals and university departments of philosophy and political science. Yet even this raises questions: what is it about communitarianism that liberal intellectuals find threatening? Is some vulnerability of liberalism disclosed not so much by communitarian criticism, as by liberal reactions to it? One difficulty in answering such questions is that the label 'communitarian' has been affixed to too many significantly different views. (I have myself strenuously disowned this label, but to little effect.) What has been needed therefore is a statement of communitarian positions which can be used as a point of reference. Daniel Bell – a Canadian political theorist who teaches in Singapore – has provided just this in his excellent book.

It is an exercise in that most difficult of all genres of philosophical writing, the dialogue – here used successfully – in which an imagined communitarian, Anne, elaborates her positions in debate with an imagined liberal, Philip. But the critique of liberalism is secondary to the statement of communitarian claims, claims of four kinds. First there is the thesis that only from within some socially located standpoint do we recognize those 'higher, strongly evaluated goods . . . that generate moral obligations', goods which we may subsequently endorse reflectively. Secondly, there are claims about how, within our own social order, we have to rely on historically generated shared understandings in moral discourse with others. (The influence of Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer is acknowledged.) A third set concerns the kinds of community within which goods and obligations may genuinely be recognized and the resources available for rational criticism of beliefs about them, while a fourth addresses issues about the nation as a principal locus of community. Bell's imagined characters outline salient issues with verve and clarity. Matters of detail and references to the relevant literature are relegated to extensive and useful footnotes. Finally, in two appendices, a counter-dialogue by Will Kymlicka challenges Bell's communitarianism further and Bell responds. Kymlicka is as skilful a writer of dialogue as Bell and the result is a book that will be accessible to a wide range of readers.

Two features of Bell's position are notable. One is the extent to which Anne's defence of communitarianism is an invitation to her interlocutors to recognize salient facts about themselves, their relationships, and the obligations which partially define those relationships. A liberal understanding of those obligations, it is suggested, obscures those facts and, by impoverishing our conception of ourselves and our relationships, deforms both selves and relationships. One liberal response to this charge has been to distinguish social relationships in which the values of community have a legitimate and important place – those, for example, of the family and of local community – from those legal and political relationships in which impersonal and impartial standards are required, if justice is to be done. A second notable feature of Bell's position puts him at odds with this response, since his is a defence of communitarianism according to which the political life of nations needs to be informed by the values of community, although he does indeed argue that the kind of impersonality and impartiality required can nonetheless be preserved in a communally organized nation. The forceful critic of communitarianism in Kymlicka's dialogue replies that

in communitarian politics communal partialities will always be apt to undermine justice to an extent with which Bell has not reckoned.

Yet what stands out is the degree of underlying agreement. Bell's is a communitarianism which is anxious to accommodate liberal concerns. It offers itself as a complement to, as well as a correction of, liberal principles. And how could it do otherwise, since the institutional frameworks within which its values are to be realized are those of the modern nation-state and market economy? From within the defining assumptions of those frameworks any movement away from liberalism must seem to threaten a movement towards authoritarian politics and a command economy, and Bell is anxious to assuage such fears. So Bell's preferred form of economy is – the Japanese!

Liberal agitprop

It is a very different matter with any view which puts radically in question those same institutionalized frameworks, with any view, that is, which involves fundamental conflict with the social order of the modern state and the market economy. Yet from the point of view of modern liberalism such criticisms must appear not so much a version of the authoritarian threat as deeply unrealistic and utopian. One might, then, have expected them to be ignored. Instead they surprisingly often evoke spluttering outrage. One expression of such outrage is Stephen Holmes's *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*, a work of liberal agitprop rather than of serious theory, whose dust jacket (with its endorsements from a variety of distinguished liberal theorists) is among its valuable features, for it shows that Holmes does not merely splutter on his own behalf. Holmes has three main targets: the writings of myself, of the late Christopher Lasch and of Roberto Unger. A plain reader of these writings would have had to notice that, although all three of us are at odds with liberalism, and although each of us shares some premises with each of the others, we differ notably in our aims, in some of the most important premises from which we argue, and in the positive positions which we assert. Holmes, however, takes what is crucial about us to be our shared enmity to standard liberalism. He invents not just a category, but a tradition of anti-liberalism, notes that earlier enemies of liberalism in this grabbag holdall have included such figures as De Maistre and Carl Schmitt, and by so doing, as Richard A. Posner puts it in his dust jacket endorsement, 'exposes its roots in the soil that nourished Fascism'. The implied history is even more dubious than the arguments.

What are some of the differences which this homogenization obscures? Lasch, as even Holmes is forced to note, was concerned to uphold the familial and political solidarities of an older working-class life, to diagnose the consumerism and the narcissism which had so often dissolved those solidarities, and to understand the transformation of beliefs, desires and institutions which had bred that consumerism and narcissism. His cause was that of a democratized workplace in a society in which work was adequately valued. Unger has been preoccupied, in contexts as different as those of Brazilian society and the law schools of the United States, with how to enable us to imagine and implement constructive institutional alternatives to what we had falsely supposed to be necessary features of our social existence. And I have attempted to distinguish rival traditions of morality and moral enquiry, to ask in what kind of social setting each is at home, and to understand in what type of local community the virtues might flourish, and how the politics of such local community puts it at odds with the dominant social, political and economic order. For each of us the critique of liberalism has been incidental to something else.

This is why, just as we are all three to be sharply distinguished from Taylor and Walzer, and therefore also from Bell, we are in no sense a school. Holmes is not the first to use the label 'communitarian' too widely, and, like others who have done so, his use of it misleads him. Consider one small, but instructive example. In a list of what he takes to be the 'contradictions' of *After Virtue*, Holmes says of me that '[h]e pillories the modern figure of "the therapist", while presenting himself as the self-accredited therapist for his entire society'. But not only have I never offered remedies for the condition of liberal modernity, it has been part of my case that there are no remedies. The problem is not to reform the dominant order, but to find ways for local communities to survive by sustaining a life of the common good against the disintegrating forces of the nation-state and the market.

Holmes thus conducts a set of mock-battles, not against the real positions of Lasch or Unger or myself, let alone against those of Taylor or Walzer, but against phantoms of his own, and not only his own imagining. But why is contemporary liberal theorizing thus haunted by phantoms? Here I can make only a suggestion. Is it that such theorizing is now informed by an imperfectly suppressed consciousness of its own irrelevance? In liberal periodicals and among university teachers the battles of the concepts proceed, with liberals continually announcing victories over some new set of enemies or dissidents. But in the social and political order at large the ugly realities of money and power are increasingly badly masked by the games played with the concepts of utility, rights and contract. The spectre haunting contemporary liberal theorists is not communitarianism, but their own irrelevance.

Alasdair MacIntyre

An unquiet corpse

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, translated by David Pellauer, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992. xxiv + 583 pp., $49.95 hb., 0 226 73511 7.

H. W. Wardman, *Jean-Paul Sartre: The Evolution of his Thought and Art*, Lewiston NY and Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992. 439 pp., £49.95 hb., 0 7734 9526 6.

Andrew Dobson, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Politics of Reason: A Theory of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. xii + 199 pp., £30.00 hb., 0 521 43449 1.

In his *Notebooks*, Sartre writes that the future is 'my death as the possibility of having no more possibility, the possibility of impossibility'. This is of course a variant on the theme of the theft of an individual's gesture or project by facticity or the in-itself. The posthumous publication of so many texts – the second part of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, the *War Diaries* and the correspondence with Simone de Beauvoir – has allowed Sartre to forestall or at least postpone the theft of his freedom to write. As more material appears, our perception of Sartre must change or at least shift. Like some unquiet corpse, he refuses to lie still and still has a future.

The very last lines of *Being and Nothingness* (1943) announce a forthcoming work on ethics. For a long time, it seemed that this was one of Sartre's many unkept promises, but the work was at least begun; it was finally published in French in 1983. Written in 1947–48, the *Notebooks for an Ethics* are an incomplete draft for a text which would have inaugurated the slow transition from *Being and Nothingness* to the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. The two notebooks are complemented by an apparently abandoned text on 'Good and Subjectivity', written in 1945, and by a study of the oppression of blacks in the United States which was presumably to be included in the *Ethics*. Although all four texts are incomplete, Sartre clearly intended them to be published after his death, stating in an interview that 'these texts will remain unfinished and obscure, since they formulate ideas which are not completely developed'. In a characteristic appeal to the freedom of the other, he adds: 'It will be up to the reader to decide where they might have led me.'

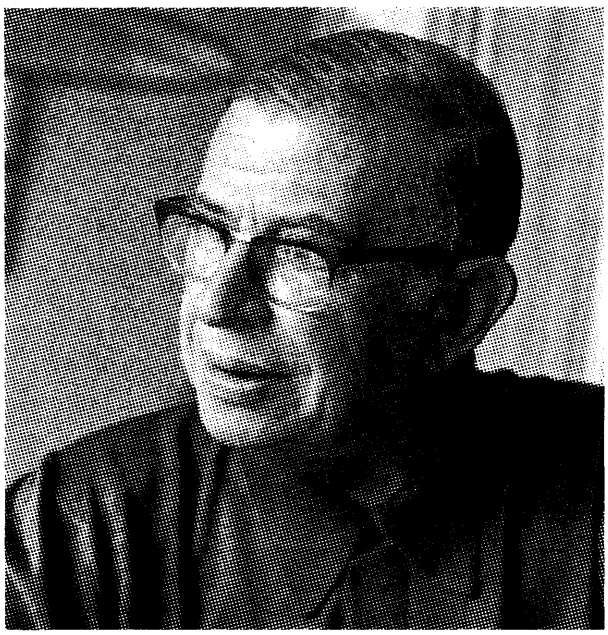
The *Notebooks for an Ethics* in fact demonstrate where they did lead him – namely, to the encounter with Marxism that eventually resulted in the *Critique* of 1960. They are obviously incomplete and were presumably intended to undergo further revision: it would therefore be somewhat futile to look for a fully elaborated ethics here. The *Notebooks* do, on the other hand, provide an invaluable insight into one of Sartre's most prolific periods and could also be profitably compared with de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947). Posthumously published drafts can be a source of embarrassment – the authorial decision not to publish is often a wise one – but these have all the freshness of a real work in progress.

For anyone already familiar with Sartre, the *Notebooks* make for uncanny reading as they seem to be a condensation of past and future. Certain of these fragments – some of them so brief as to be quite enigmatic – are later expanded into long passages in the *Critique*. A sentence such as 'I kill my wife's lover and find that I have deprived a Party about to take power of its leader' sounds like a summary of *Crime Passionnel* (1948), whilst references to the impossibility (or futility) of attempting to do good for the sake of the Good surely look forward to *Lucifer and the Lord* (1951). Short passages on revolutionary violence anticipate the extreme violence of the notorious preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and thus clearly indicate that there is more to it than a vicarious Third Worldism. At the opposite extreme, familiar figures from *Being and Nothingness* constantly reappear: the famous waiter who is obsessed with his 'being-a-waiter', and the frigid woman who does not want to be so and 'twists in pleasure without any pleasure'. Echoes of even earlier essays like *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936) strongly suggest that, whatever shifts of position and perspective occur as Sartre attempts to come to terms with collective history rather than the individual situation, there is a deep underlying continuity to his work, though perhaps not at a truly conceptual level. To open the *Notebooks* is both to enter a familiar philosophical world and to encounter what can only be called familiar characters. Indeed, given that the dividing line between fiction and non-fiction is always very ill-defined in Sartre – a philosopher who excelled at telling stories – a poetic-thematic approach is perhaps preferable to a purely conceptual reading. The *Notebooks* are an extraordinarily rich text, though probably one to browse through and return to, rather than to read at a (very long) sitting. It is further enriched by the quality of Pellauer's translation. Pellauer modestly

claims to be a Sartre translator and not a Sartre scholar, but his illuminating notes and introduction tell a very different story: this edition is indeed 'Sartre scholarship'.

In some ways, the incomplete text is the ideal Sartrean medium, not least in that it highlights his talent for epigrams, often directed against God and the *bien-pensant*. Thus, the Christian's faith is disparaged as bad faith, whilst 'God is an inauthentic man, thrown into the vain task of founding himself, who cannot *create himself* because he already is.' Or again, 'If you seek authenticity for authenticity's sake, you are no longer authentic.' In technical terms, Merleau-Ponty was a much more sophisticated and cogent phenomenologist than Sartre, but he could not write like this. The aphorisms, and the revolt they express, are a reminder of Sartre's wicked sense of humour and his constant rejection of the *esprit de sérieux*, of the stultifying effects of the 'age of reason'. One begins to recall just why Sartrean existentialism became, for better or worse, a fashionable cult.

Whether or not Sartre actually succeeds in grounding his ethics in ontology is open to question. Many of the arguments are predicated upon voluntarism, on a will to arrive at an ethics, rather than convincing argument. The voluntarist tone is no doubt in part a reflection of the experience of Occupation and Resistance. Sartre argues that the French had never been freer than under the Occupation, when every choice meant total commitment, and when many commitments involved the risk of death. The problem of collaboration or resistance posed a concrete moral choice, and a Kantianism addressed to an abstract universal had nothing to teach anyone about that choice. Even the categorical imperative is unsatisfactory, as the freedom that upholds it is, for Sartre, noumenal. It is therefore the freedom of another, and is 'separated by that slight stream of nothingness which suffices so that *I am not in it*'. An abstract ethic is an ethics for a good conscience, that seductive avatar of bad faith. Yet the claim that ethics *today* must be 'revolutionary socialist ethics' smacks of voluntarism rather than an apodictic proof.



Throughout the *Notebooks*, Sartre is involved in dialogues with Engels – focused mainly on history and freedom – and especially with Hegel. This is of course the Hegel constructed by Kojève in his pre-war lectures on the *Phenomenology* (the text was published in 1947) and by Hyppolite. The importance of Kojève's Hegel in the post-war period – not least for Lacan – can scarcely be overstated and, like so many others, Sartre is fascinated by the figure of the master–slave dialectic. It is, he finds, seductive as a phenomenology of human relations, but not one which stands up historically: the slave did not invent anything of technological significance. Ultimately, Hegel (or perhaps Kojève is indicted for sophistry: consciousness exists for itself, but in Hegel its status is always one imposed from outside. Sartre is not seduced by Hegel, but nor is he totally won over by Marxism (in effect, represented here by Engels) and is distinctly suspicious of arguments about historical necessity (all too common on the French Left in the 1940s), to say nothing of Marxism's alarming tendency to lapse back into economic determinism.

The exhumation and publication of more and more material makes it increasingly difficult to read Sartre, as the expanding corpus (and Pellauer speaks of still more unpublished material: enough, it would seem, to make a further weighty volume) renders the possibility of a synthetic or totalizing study ever more remote. How to read Sartre – and which Sartre to read – is becoming more problematic. Wardman's life and works approach offers an example of how not to do so, offering little more than a chronological survey (and often no more than plot summaries which make inadequate reference to context or to the voluminous secondary literature). It is further marred by minor but irritating errors of factual detail: Nizan's *The Watchdogs*, for instance, is not a novel.

Dobson's solution is much more satisfactory, and he is openly aware of its incompleteness. He focuses on the emergence of the theme of history through the encounter with Marxism and then in the major biographical studies of Baudelaire, Genet and, of course, the massive (and perhaps inevitably incomplete) *Flaubert*. For Sartre and Dobson a biography is not simply a serial account of a life, but a clarification of the human condition, demonstrating how a life is at once a project conditioning, and conditioned by, contemporary circumstance. It is at the methodological level that biography can be integrated into a broader history.

Individuals form projects on the basis of what they lack, but do so within a situation that conditions the project. The human project is unlike an event – by definition inhuman – in that it is describable, and it lends a signification to the event by supplying the thread that binds it into history.

Dobson gives an illuminating account of Sartre's biographical method and succeeds in demonstrating its relevance to a Sartrean history. He is by no means unaware that Sartre's biographies often relate more to his own concerns than to those of his subjects, and rightly notes, like others before him, that Sartre's Baudelaire is a creature of 1944 rather than of 1857 – the year in which *Les fleurs du mal* appeared. *Saint Genet*, on the other hand, should arguably be viewed with rather more cynicism than is evinced here: Sartre accepted Genet's account of his early life almost at face value, and there is now some evidence to suggest that much of it was a fabrication. Dobson's decision to exclude the fiction and drama from his corpus is, in many ways, justifiable, but it is surely unfortunate that he does not discuss *Nausea*, which contains some of Sartre's most incisive comments on biography (and its impossibility). The 'hero' of *Nausea* is – or hopes to be – a biographer, and more attention should be paid to his gradual realization that the very nature and closure of narrative induces a misrecognition of the incommensurability of a life lived and a life narrated.

Dobson is a supporter of the argument that Marxism replaces existentialism, largely as a result of Sartre's wartime politicisation and enforced experience of sociality. This is obviously unobjectionable to the extent that Sartre's whole trajectory is an attempt to escape individualism and theorize the social-political. In terms of the encounter with Marxism, perhaps more might be made of the weakness of Sartre's economics. Categories as global and abstract as 'need' and 'scarcity' do little if anything to help analyse a concrete situation. Yet whilst the trajectory described by Dobson is clearly a real one, it could be argued that Sartre's thematic remains broadly the same from 1943 to 1960 and beyond: the praxis which acts upon the world (the practico-inert) which then produces a counter-finality is a variant on the theft of our projects from others, on the disappearance of the for-itself into the in-itself and facticity.

It is easy to deride Sartre for many of his political gestures, especially in later life, when he sold Maoist newspapers or perched on a barrel in the Renault factory, speaking to almost no one but a press photographer. And much of the complex debate within the Parti Communiste Française seems to be of historical rather than philosophical interest. The Sartre of the 1940s now looks distinctly more attractive. The stubborn insistence that we are free, and that freedom is not the liberation of something which has been repressed, but the creation of a self and a world, sounds oddly similar to the last works of Foucault, though both would no doubt have rejected the parallel. Yet as 'grand narratives' fragment around us and political certainties vanish, maybe we do have to come to terms with being condemned to freedom.

David Macey

Flogging Foucault

Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: Subversions of the Subject*, London and New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993. 232 pp., £12.95 pb., 0 7450 1397 X hb., 0 7450 1398 8 pb.

Caroline Ramazanoglu, ed., *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. ix + 271 pp., £37.50 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 05010 3 hb., 0 415 05011 1 pb.

Mike Gane and Terry Johnson, eds, *Foucault's New Domains*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. vii + 223 pp., £37.50 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 08660 4 hb., 0 415 08661 2 pb.

Over ten years after his death from AIDS, Michel Foucault exercises a powerful hold over the contemporary intellectual imagination (see Kate Soper's review article in *RP* 66). His work has proved a successful hunting ground for scholars, political theorists and polemicists. It has launched thousands of academic books, among them the three under consideration here, which are all typical examples of variations on Foucauldian paradigms.

Philip Barker's book is the most bizarre of them, by turns fascinating and irritating. Barker begins with a discussion of intellectual history as an academic discipline, principally via the work of Lovejoy and Collingwood, concluding that what both lacked was a theory of the subject in language – something ultimately provided by Foucault. Barker is acute and lucid on the contradictions between the phenomenological and structural strains of Foucault's early work – especially

The Order of Things – but there are few surprises in his summary of later developments regarding the inseparability of power and knowledge. I would, however, question his assertion that 'Foucault is unequivocal in his denunciation of violence': it seems to me that this is the very issue Foucault is most equivocal about, as, *Pierre Riviere* – the reconstructed tale of a nineteenth-century peasant who bumped off his mother, sister and brother – demonstrates (it is a disappointment that Ramazanoglu's collection contains little discussion of this work).

At this point Barker veers off at a tangent to try out his reading of Foucault on the Middle Ages. Through a discussion of primogeniture, Peter Abelard, Augustine, St Anselm, Chrétien De Troyes, and various bits and pieces, Barker concludes that in the twelfth century the 'autobiographical self-reflective transparent subject' was born. Again, I have a feeling I have heard this somewhere before, but with different dates. Barker has revised Foucault's time scheme, but it is by no means clear that he has surmounted the problem of writing a history of the subject outlined in the first part of the book. However, there is no time to stop. Barker provides a strong final chapter, dealing with Descartes and Freud, which demonstrates that contemporary discussions of modernity reflect ignorant Enlightenment attitudes to the Middle Ages. No one who has ever been tempted to use the term 'postmodernity' should be allowed to write again without first reading this chapter and attempting to refute it.

If Barker's book is something of a curate's egg well worth persevering with, Gane and Johnson's collection is of another nature altogether. *Foucault's New Domains* might well be retitled *Essays on Foucault which originally appeared in a Sociology Journal*. Obviously some of the contributions are intelligent readings and applications of Foucault's theories – notably, Johnson's own analysis of recent British government (the only essay not reprinted from *Economy and Society*) and Bevis, Cohen and Kendall's critique of *The History of Sexuality*. However, the book is incoherently assembled with an insubstantial introduction and some strangely chosen pieces – Jacques Donzelot's interesting essay doesn't mention Foucault at all; Denis Meuret's equally worthy offering does, but only on the first page; and I cannot really see that Foucault on Enlightenment fits in terribly well with the project. A further cause for complaint is that the publishers clearly could not be bothered to typeset the book properly and simply left each essay in a different style of print. One wonders what Foucault, who did have ideas about the production of knowledge, would have made of it all.

Probably the most intellectually coherent and useful of these books is Ramazanoglu's collection. The main argument in this book is between those like Bailey who feel that, for all its flaws, Foucault's work provides a useful toolkit for feminists, as long as women are prepared 'to use their imaginations and fill the gaps left', and those like Ransom who find Foucault a false friend: 'Foucault's work may seem to resonate with feminism in its open-endedness, but he does not offer a theoretical framework which can distinguish between the kinds of differences which cut across women's lives.' Does Foucault provide adequate models – or suggestions which can help others to form such models – of resistance to dominant male-centred conceptions of subjectivity? In one of the hardest-hitting pieces, Dean and Juliet Flower MacCannell re-examine male violence towards women, highlighting a number of appalling cases, and suggest that Foucault's model of social formations has effaced and evaded problems of, especially physical, violence in the process of producing a seamless web of power. Foucault, they suggest, was unable to see matters from the perspective of a victim and they declare themselves 'troubled' by feminists who shower praise on the emancipatory possibilities of his alternative histories and theories.

Immediately preceding this essay is Susan Bordo's contrastingly witty and good-humoured negotiation between Foucault and feminist politics of the body. One might imagine that two completely different philosophers were being considered. Bordo quotes an extract from the essay 'The Eye of Power', and comments that Foucault's '"impersonal" conception of power does not entail that there are no dominant

positions, social structures or ideologies emerging from the play of forces: the fact that power is not held by anyone does not entail that it is equally held by all.' Bordo acknowledges that not all feminists would agree – indeed, the MacCannells would undoubtedly be troubled by her analysis – but I think she provides the much more sophisticated and plausible reading.

Overall, the volume contains some excellent essays and is an important contribution to political and philosophical discussion. Perhaps the best essay is Soper's sceptical survey of lacunae in Foucault's body politics and the dangers of accepting the proposition that everything is constructed within discourse. Also useful are MacNeill's discussion of how Foucault relates to the history of recent feminism, which contains an illuminating commentary on terminology, and Ramazanoglu and Holland's analysis of men's appropriation of desire (although it shares the MacCannells' reading of Foucault on power/resistance). The collection could have been even stronger if it had contained fewer essays of greater length. As with most multi-author volumes there is a tendency to repeat material and gesture towards, rather than explore, certain ideas and conclusions. One might also criticize Ramazanoglu's somewhat sketchy introduction, which has the irritating tendency of reaching for the word 'elitist' as a means of dismissing difficult issues. But *Up Against Foucault* is an intelligently compiled volume which provides a coherent series of perspectives on important issues, even if one is tempted to agree with Soper's opening salvo that 'Foucault is rather fortunate to have attracted the attention he has from feminists, since it is not clear that he has done that much to deserve it'.

Andrew Hadfield

The flow of information

Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Spaces*, London, Sage, 1994. 326 pp., £13.95 pb., 0 8039 8472 3.

Recently, with a close friend, I spent a long Saturday afternoon in a retail clothing store arguing over the merits of a red suede jacket. The conversation moved quickly from issues of animal rights, moral responsibility, radical feminism, late capitalism to the importance of looking good in the nineties. We were both struck by the impossibility of resolving these issues, while recognising their importance. This experience seemed a long way from familiar images of the happy shopper or the duped consumer of much social theory. Indeed, according to Lash and Urry, it is problems of this order that are becoming characteristic of modern semiotic capitalism.

The complex intersection of being, space and time in the post-industrial economy provides the intellectual back-cloth for this novel account of social change. Unlike much current writing on postmodernism, Lash and Urry make connections between social institutions and the fragmented culture of everyday life. It is their deconstruction of many of the fruitless oppositions between the material and the symbolic that makes the book so compelling. Their point of departure is to argue that the global circulation of objects (commodities) is shadowed by the actual and symbolic migration of hybrid subjects (people). The increasingly frantic transportation of subjects and objects melts the boundedness of cultural traditions, replacing social structures with information formations. The freeing of individuals from old forms of life (the diminishing importance of family and social class) creates the conditions for social atomism as well as new kinds of reflexivity.

Modernity has witnessed the re-subjectivation of space. The modern economy, according to Lash and Urry, depends upon knowledge-intensive forms of production and aesthetic modes of consumption. This skilfully reverses the earlier Frankfurt School view which claimed that the production of culture was coming to resemble that of the Fordist assembly line. Instead, they suggest, it is the manufacturing sector that is becoming more like the culture industry. Modern capitalism has been both reoriented around new flexible modes of production (where power is relocated through the dominance of certain distributors), while becoming more heavily reliant upon product design. Old-style manufacturing, in the West at least, has been replaced by a culturally coded service sector. By the year 2000 the single largest item in terms of world trade will be international tourism. The production of tourism is of course heavily reliant upon the semiotic aspects of the social and physical locations of those spaces to be visited. However, global tourism has not meant that the world is increasingly coming to look the same. The authors cite the unlikely example of Wigan. Through a range of glossy publications the town has attempted to produce an image of itself as a contemporary location catering for modern middle-class life. To attract tourism (as well as a young service class), Wigan has to be able to sustain a variety of shops, up-market restaurants, fashionable bars and diverse forms of entertainment.

The acceleration and internationalization of capital has carved up our experience of space and time. Understood pessimistically, these processes have led to an increasing sense of the depthless and disposable nature of modern culture. The accelerated mobility of both human subjects and 'cultured' objects has meant that human relations are increasingly characterised by a lack of long-term connection. However, read more generously, the increased global circulation of signs and bodies may be seen to open up the possibility of a specifically aesthetic form of reflexivity. Sign-saturated capitalism not only creates instances of ideological domination, but also supplies the necessary culture for critique. For instance, the development of new communications technology allows armchair viewers to travel around the world without ever leaving their sitting rooms. This not only enhances a modern global consciousness, it also allows individual consumers to escape the cohesive power of nation-states. Alternatively, the rapidity of time and the chopping-up of space has drained the social of meaning, but has fostered a number of critical concerns. This is a prerequisite for a less instrumental and more communicative relationship with nature. Thus the very loss of the capacity to defer gratification has unintentionally promoted critical thinking about our obligations to future generations. These processes are encouraged through primarily aesthetic modes of reflexivity that reinvest in nostalgic representations of old coal mines and green cosmetic products, as well as the beauty of natural landscapes. Ultimately, then, disorganised capitalism outstrips the control of individual nation-states, while sustaining a more fluid cosmopolitan sense of self. This heralds what they call the end of tourism. The post-tourist is constantly engaged with a dedifferentiated culture where consumer choice is paramount and identities are constantly being reworked.

The central aim of the book is to shift our thinking away from the analysis of vertical social structures to more horizontal flows. Its central argument is that, even as specifically national hierarchies are being dissolved, more spatially located inequalities are being created. This largely ignores the preservation of more solid social relations based upon nation, social class, gender, age and ethnicity. This is not to dispute that capitalism and social identities are being transformed in at least some of the ways described. Indeed, the authors are to be congratulated for the cogency with which they address some of the most pressing social issues of our time. Yet more critical analysis needs to be given to the manner in which traditional divisions intersect with an increasingly disorganised social world. In addition, the concern to map out the parameters of modern aesthetic forms of reflexivity unnecessarily brackets off ethical forms of engagement. The soul-searching of our two shoppers is not only aesthetic and cognitive, but also moral. That said, Lash and Urry should be granted the last word: my friend bought the jacket.

Nick Stevenson

Dialectics resurgent?

Fred Moseley, ed., *Marx's Method in Capital: A Reexamination*, Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, 1993. vi + 233 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 3910 3785 4.

From Althusser's decentred structuralist Marxism to post-structuralism's connoisseurship of the fragment, Hegel has been typically cast as the arch-villain of modern Western philosophy. Despite the strength of the structuralist and post-structuralist intellectual currents, however, an increasing number of works have appeared in recent years which reopen the exploration of the interconnection between Hegel's dialectic and Marx's. Moseley's collection is an important contribution to this resurgence of interest in the Hegel/Marx connection.

Each of the eight essays addresses the methodology of Marx's *Capital* and the issue of dialectics. What unites them is more the questions asked than the answers given. These questions are important for a number of reasons. First, they refocus our attention on the core issues of Marxian political economy at a time when preoccupation with politics and culture on the Left has produced a relative neglect of the economic – this neglect coming at a most inopportune time given the state of global capitalism. Marxian political economy can be strengthened enormously by further clarification of the peculiar character of capital as a theoretical object.

Second, in opposition to the neo-Sraffian fixation on technical weaknesses in Marx's theory of price determination, they shifted attention to the ontological and epistemological issues associated with theorizing the economic. No matter how technically neat and elegant a theory of price determination may be, its quantitative formalization can be no stronger than its underlying qualitative conceptualization of the subject-matter. And this is precisely where the neo-Sraffian theory flounders; it is not based upon an adequate social ontology of capitalism. Four of the contributors to this book are primarily philosophers and four are primarily economists, and it is out of such dialogue that a more

powerful philosophical economics will eventually be born.

Third, a number of contributions explore the striking parallels between Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital*. While these contributions are interesting, considerably more work needs to be done in this area. For example, Tony Smith distinguishes between 'systematic dialectics' ('tracing intrinsic relations between categories') and the 'dialectics of history'. His focus is on the systematic dialectics which, he claims, is characteristic of *Capital*. While I agree with him that systematic dialectics is only appropriate to the theory of capital in the abstract and in general and not to theories of stages or individual events, his article does not explore the crucial issue of just how these other levels of analysis might relate to systematic dialectics or how in general systematic dialectics relates to historical dialectics. Indeed, it is unclear what he means by 'historical dialectics', and I remain sceptical that such a thing exists. C. J. Arthur writes that 'the relation between systemic and historical dialectic is obscure'. With this I agree, and I might add that this may be *the* most important issue for Marxian political economy to clarify.

Like Smith, Arthur also directs his analysis primarily to the Hegel/Marx relation. While other contributors emphasize the connections between the doctrine of essence in Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's dialectic of capital, Arthur also finds parallels with the other two doctrines of the *Logic*: the doctrine of being and the doctrine of the concept (or notion). The parallels that Arthur identifies, however, are contained in the first three parts of *Capital* Volume I, and one wonders about the remainder of the three volumes.

In his Introduction, Moseley claims that the most important question to address is 'the relation between subjects and objects in Marx's economic theory'. Is the reifying force of capital such that subjects are reduced to being 'bearers' or 'personifications' of economic categories? Or is the agency of subjects central to Marx's dialectical logic? If we find that capital has laws of motion which, at the level of abstract theory, turn subjects into mere instruments for capital's own self-expansion, are we guilty of reifying capital or are we simply allowing capital fully to manifest its self-reifying force? No doubt the question of subjects and objects is important and is not unrelated to the question of how more abstract levels of theory relate to more concrete levels of analysis. But I would argue that it is this latter question that is of burning importance. If a renewed interest in Hegel and dialectics is to make a lasting contribution to Marxian political economy, in my view it will be primarily because of what it can bring not only to our understanding of how abstract economic theory can be most rigorously formulated, but also – and even more importantly – to how, once formulated, it can inform more concrete levels of analysis in ways that avoid economic reductionism. This book is a step in the right direction even if, as some of the contributors admit, some of the most difficult issues remain to be addressed.

Robert R. Albritton

Waiting for the great leap forward?

Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond*, Cambridge, Polity, 1993. xiii + 393 pp., £45.00 hb., £13.95 pb., 0 7456 0285 1 hb., 0 7456 0286 X pb.

Given the inability of traditional political formations to effect positive and progressive change during the 1980s and early 1990s, Green politics came to be regarded as an alternative. Of course, Green politics have been around for a while, in the form of activist groups. But a Green presence in party politics, involved in mainstream legislative processes through democratic means, seemed viable for a period; erstwhile utopian potential looked set to become realizable in material political reality.

I say 'seemed' for, while some Green values may have filtered through into the everyday, a powerful democratic Green politics in Europe and Northern America still appears unattainable. Britain's own disastrous flirtation offers ample warning of the pitfalls of such a venture. The German Green movement was truly enviable, however, offering a well-defined model – if not a great leap forward – from which to build the footpath. In order that we can look, learn and act, a definitive study is needed of this movement. Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski provide an interesting, though somewhat flawed, examination of the German Greens in the context of post-war German politics.

The book aims at historical comprehensiveness and sociological rigour. It compares the Greens with more traditional leftist movements in Germany, while attempting to explore the possible future of such a politics and the implications for the European Left. It is in these contrasts and speculations that it is at its best. While the historiography is almost faultless, the political conclusion is contentious. The authors argue that the German Greens have had a significant impact on German politics and have effected a transformation of the definition of the Left in German culture.

This thesis fails to convince. With hindsight, the transformative nature of the Greens can be seen to have been very limited. The very act of becoming involved in mainstream politics has, to an extent, disenfranchised them; controlled by, and contained within, the structures of parliamentary politics, they themselves have become *fainéant*. This is something which Markovits and Gorski do not take into account, chiefly because their study is so enclosed by academic objectivity, rigour and convention. The authors' contention that 'the German Left was to become increasingly "multicoloured", is not adequately supported, unless one considers 'compromised' to be a synonym for 'multicoloured'. Such details disturb the general structure of the book. So overpowering is the socio-historical framework that minor contradictions get lost in the shuffle. The most successful chapters are co-authored: chapter 3, with Gregory Wilpert, which deals with issues of subversive and terrorist activity; and chapter 8, with Susanne Altenburger, which examines the Greens' transition from the margins of political activity to the mainstream. These demonstrate a degree of commitment that is lacking in the rather arid prose of the rest of the book.

The technicality of the book's language is off-putting and does little to warm the reader to the subject, possibly rendering it of more interest to other sociologists and historians than those for whom Green politics is the principal concern. Indeed, the dispassionate stance of this book undermines its intent. The pseudo or quasi-scientism of the textual rhetoric is problematic, for two reasons. First, the representation of the cultural and historical contexts of the Greens' development is too generalised. It is not that the facts given are wrong, but that the argumentative ends to which they are put seem on occasion dubious because so broad-based. Secondly, there is a problematic attempt to project onto the development of the German Greens a dialectical structure whereby, out of the historical struggle between late-nineteenth-century Marxist Socialism and early-twentieth-century National socialism, the post-war Left somehow emerges, and the Green movement is produced in the ferment of 1960s radical cadres as an instance of Hegelian sublation. This reveals more about the authors' agenda than it tells us about the German Greens.

And herein lies the fundamental problem of this history: if *The German Left* is arguing for an alternative political practice as the way forward for Western society, then is it not wrong (or at least ironic) that the alternative offered should be recuperated with such rhetorical, philosophical and, finally, political mastery? For all their good intentions, Markovits and Gorski domesticate the radical otherness of Green ideology in the most traditional of manners.

Julian Wolfreys

Colonizations

Marie Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Eco-feminism*, London and New Jersey, Zed Books, 1993. 328 pp., £32.95 hb., £12.95 pb., 1 85649 155 2 hb., 1 85649 156 0 pb.

During the past decade we have seen a spate of books on the politics of ecology, environmental issues and eco-feminism. Among this welter of studies two stand out: Maria Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) and Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1989). Both were seminal – substantive, empirical, integrative in approach, neither lost in philosophical musings, nor enwrapt in the more mystical versions of New-Age eco-feminism. The two scholars have come together to produce this volume. It follows the style of their earlier work in combining a philosophical critique of the dualistic rationalism of the Enlightenment (without going to the other extreme and collapsing into relativistic postmodernism), with a cogent critique of world capitalism. The authors eschew a socialist perspective; socialism, for them, seems to be equated with Marxism, and Marxist theory, in turn, with patriarchy – a logic of domination and the worship of 'mammon'.

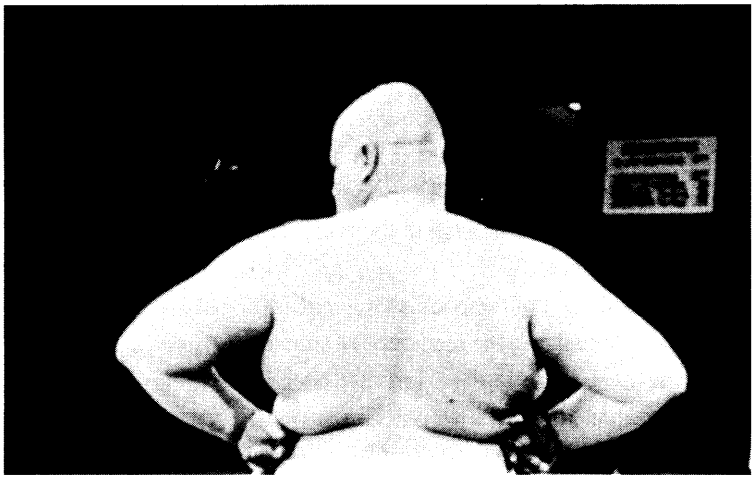
The book is a joint work. It consists of a collection of alternate essays, many of which have been published before. But unlike other books of this kind, the whole work hangs together rather well, mainly because both women have a shared understanding of the origins of the present social and ecological crisis. Together the essays cover a wide range of topics and issues; and insightful critiques are offered of modern science, of the new reproductive technologies, of modern capitalist agriculture and the 'development' ideology that accompanies it, and of the dualistic rationalism that is held to underpin both modern science and the capitalist world system. In a particularly interesting essay, 'White Man's Dilemma', Mies emphasizes that capitalism is philosophically based on a series of fundamental dualisms – between men and nature, men and women, city and village, metropole and colony – and she refers to these dichotomies as 'colonizations'.

With both writers we thus have an underlying emphasis on two important themes. One is that modern science is patriarchal, anti-life, and colonial in its essential structure. The other is that the crucial issues of our time are all intrinsically interconnected: the ecological degradation of the natural world; racism; patriarchy (the fact that Third World women are the people most vulnerable to the 'development' of commodity production is stressed throughout); and neo-colonial exploitation. And all, the authors argue, have their source in what they call the 'capitalist patriarchal world system'. Unlike a host of other eco-feminists, deep ecologists and environmentalists, both Mies and Shiva, like Bookchin, thus view the ecological crisis as related neither to generic humanity, nor simply to the male gender, nor even to mechanistic philosophy per se. Instead, the 'culprit' is held to be a historically specific social institution – world capitalism.

Unfortunately, they do not specifically examine capitalism as a *class* structure; and thus do not emphasize the first and most crucial 'colonization' – that over human labour, male as well as female. This leads them to marginalize men throughout the text, and to focus on the 'north/south' divide. The latter division, however, is both misleading and contentious. Stemming from the Brandt Report, which Teresa Hayter long ago critiqued, such a division is specifically designed to obscure the class nature of capitalism. In advocating a 'subsistence perspective' as an alternative to the present capitalist ethos and system, and in pleading for a universalism that is supposedly non-Eurocentric – a perspective based on a non-exploitative relationship towards nature, on human solidarity, and with an emphasis on basic human needs – the authors present a distorted and rather monolithic interpretation of both the Enlightenment and Marxism. The liberty, equality and fraternity embodied in the French Revolution are adjudged abstract and Eurocentric. Thus 'freedom' is interpreted as simply implying the freedom to exploit and dominate nature and other humans; fraternity and equality as simply a mask for Eurocentrism and gender hierarchy. To interpret the universalism of the Enlightenment in such a narrow fashion is to completely efface the emancipatory dimensions of both the democratic and socialist traditions. If it was so Eurocentric, why did Toussaint L'Ouverture take up its rallying cry? If the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity are in essence simply a front for Eurocentrism, gender hierarchy and implicit racism, as Mies and Shiva seem to suggest, it is indeed difficult to understand why Hitler and Mussolini found such ideals so 'loathsome' and disgusting.

As for Marxism, although several generations of anarchists have critiqued the 'productivist', scientistic and authoritarian aspects of Marxism, to imply that the distinction between the economy (life) and the cultural superstructures (consciousness) involves either mechanistic materialism or a reductive analysis; to equate historical or philosophical materialism with consumerism, hedonism and a fetish for commodities; and to assert that Marxism is a 'social constructivist' theory – all represent a highly distorted view of what Marx was trying to accomplish in giving both rationalism and materialism a historical dimension.

Although some telling criticisms are made of the conservative tendency to romanticize nature, folk traditions and the pre-modern, some reviewers have noted a similar tendency within this work, given its emphasis on 'old wisdom', the 'subsistence' economy, and the lingering affirmation of the 'spirit'. However, its



overwhelming message is a plea for a perspective that puts a fundamental emphasis on the satisfaction of human needs, not on the generation of profits, on a new paradigm of science that is neither reductionist nor instrumental, and on the establishment of a participatory democracy which involves both women and men. It is a message and vision to be found in such early anarchists as Blake, Carpenter, De Cleyre, Kropotkin and Landauer. And it is one expressed with cogency in these essays. It is a pity, therefore, that in emphasizing a feminist perspective, Mies and Shiva felt the need to rubbish both humanism and socialism, and to ignore entirely the libertarian tradition of anarchism.

Brian Morris

Aristotelian ecology

John O'Neill, *Ecology, Policy and Politics: Human Well-Being and the Natural World*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. 227 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.95 pb. 0 415 07299 9 hb., 0 415 07300 6 pb.

In this book O'Neill argues that an Aristotelian theory of value offers an alternative to both deep and human-centred approaches in environmental ethics, and that it teaches important lessons regarding the ways in which environmental policy should be decided and implemented.

He begins by disentangling the different senses of 'intrinsic value' which are frequently conflated in environmental ethics. In particular, he distinguishes between the *non-instrumental* value of a thing that is valued as an end in itself, and the *objective value* that an object may be said to possess if its value exists independently of the valuations of valuers. These, he argues, are logically independent of each other, so that it is possible, even if ethical subjectivism is true, for non-human objects to be valued as ends in themselves. It is O'Neill's view, however, that some non-human entities have objective as well as non-instrumental value. This view is based on the Aristotelian notion that whatever is conducive to an object's flourishing is good for that object. Such a good, O'Neill contends, is independent of human valuations and therefore constitutes an objective value.

This kind of value, however, appears to have little significance for environmental ethics, since it does not entail any obligations on the part of humans. As O'Neill puts it: 'One can recognize that something has its own goods, and quite consistently be morally indifferent to these goods or believe one has a moral duty to inhibit their development.' According to O'Neill, our reasons for preserving non-human entities derive not from the fact that they have their own goods, but from a connection between their flourishing and ours: 'The flourishing of many living things ought to be promoted because they are constitutive of our own flourishing.' This, he insists, is not a return to anthropocentrism, since the objects are valued for their own sake, and as constituents – not merely instruments – of human well-being.

Another major theme of environmental ethics concerns our obligations to future generations. O'Neill argues that human flourishing cannot be judged in solely hedonistic terms. The evaluation of a person's life depends not merely upon their happiness, but upon their achievements. But the extent of our achievements depends upon the success of our projects and this may be affected by events that take place after our deaths. Our flourishing therefore depends upon the ability of future generations to bring to fruition the projects in which we have participated. In harming future generations, we therefore do harm to ourselves.

Human flourishing, O'Neill maintains, depends not only on the success of our projects but on the projects themselves being objectively worthwhile. This informs his critique of market-based solutions to environmental problems. When the market works to allocate resources it does so on the basis of individuals' preferences, expressed through prices. Cost-benefit analysis exists to measure these preferences where the market fails to do so. But, O'Neill argues, preferences are not a reliable guide to the conditions for human flourishing: 'If people prefer marinas to mud flats, Disneyland to wetlands, and roads to woodland, then no amount of shadow-pricing will deliver environmentally friendly results.' Correspondingly, the representation of non-humans and future generations via the preferences of living humans is at best precarious. Environmental policy should not, therefore, accept preferences as they happen to be, but should consider the objective merits of different preferences and cultivate those which are most conducive to human flourishing.

O'Neill rejects the liberal defence of preference-based procedures on grounds of value neutrality, while defending his own approach against charges of elitism, paternalism and illiberalism. This leads into a consideration of the relation between scientific authority and democracy, and from there into a broader defence of science against its Green critics. Finally, O'Neill returns to the market, arguing that abolition and not restriction is

required, and that this need not lead to totalitarianism if it is achieved through the revival of appropriate non-market institutions.

O'Neill's book leaves familiar problems of Aristotelian ethics unaddressed. His argument for the objective value of non-human entities is particularly problematic in this respect. How do we define what it is for such an entity to flourish? And why should departures from normality be described as 'defective' or 'stunted', rather than enhanced or extraordinarily flourishing? This argument would be better dropped since it is in any case the notion of *human* flourishing that does most of the normative work. Other difficulties could be highlighted, but the book should rather be judged on its ability to illuminate our dealings with the world. In this respect the way in which O'Neill's theory of value informs his engagement with issues of environmental policy easily justifies putting it forward. This, together with an accessible style and imaginative use of examples, makes it a book worth reading.

Jonathan Hughes

Real people

Hwa Yol Jung, *Rethinking Political Theory: Essays in Phenomenology and the Study of Politics*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 1993. xviii + 295 pp., £34.20 hb., 0 8214 1052 0.

For those emerging from mainstream British social science traditions it can be all too easy to forget that phenomenology is about a lot more than ethnomethodology and methodological individualism. Hwa Yol Jung's collection of essays, spanning some twenty years, is a sturdy reminder of the debt that much contemporary social theory owes to phenomenological and existential philosophy. In stressing the significance of the lived body, phenomenology began to articulate a challenge to logocentrism before Derrida, while Husserl's concept of the life-world as a social-historical-cultural reality provides a basis for the kind of hermeneutic social theory we are now familiar with through Ricoeur and, differently, in Habermas. The concept of 'life-world' allows phenomenology to acknowledge difference and relativity at the same time as attempting to give theory a grounding. As such it may appear to tread a middle path between essentialism and absolute relativism.

Jung's main targets are the behaviourist political sciences, perhaps a straw target for those more familiar with Continental social thought than American political science, and essentialism. He is at his best when ruthlessly interrogating others (as he quotes Heidegger, 'questioning is the piety of thinking'). His critique of essentialism in Leo Strauss's political philosophy is both precise and lethal. However, this essay, written in 1967, is in danger of feeling a little outdated, as if waging a battle that has since been superseded. But Jung's stress on the limitation of thought, and his reminder that 'the real world is not what we think but what we do', is an apposite comment on the obscurantism of modern political philosophy.

But in returning to the importance of bodily action, of the active role of the person in creating their own existence, Jung and phenomenology fall short. His rethinking of political theory lacks, precisely, a politics. Like too much contemporary thought, Jung's existential phenomenology is so concerned to stress its active, radical being-in-the-world, its hermeneutical engagement, that it is in danger of forgetting to be active in the world.

Conspicuously absent in Jung's essays are treatments of ideology (a problematic notion but one surely central to political theory) or the place of social power in shaping the life-world which we inherit. This is most plain in his critique of Foucault. As a phenomenologist Jung is attached to the notion of the independently acting, embodied, moral subject and has difficulty situating such subjectivity within a context of social power. He sees Foucault's undermining of the category of the subject as constituting a black hole in his work, suggesting that 'his idea of new subjectivity is left ungrafted to the analytics of power'. Jung still holds to the notion of power as an action that affects a subject, rather than recognising power as productive of subjectivity itself. The individualist, and very American, assumption of his phenomenology prevents him from adopting quite as radical a position as he thinks he has.

Furthermore, his explanation that Foucault's definition of power is 'extended to encompass a variety of *nonpolitical* human relationships including knowledge-claims and such institutions as the clinic, the asylum, the prison, the school, the church, and the family' (my emphasis) suggests an impoverished concept of the political. Does it make sense to investigate the ways in which human beings make their world without recognising the role of powerful, and political, social institutions?

That said, Jung shows how phenomenology quite properly returns the social investigator to a position of engaged observer. It is no good taking prescriptive stances if we have not tried to grasp the meaning that actions have for those who do them. Living in Belfast,

amidst a minor but murderous political conflict, one feels the need for more than elaborate assertions. There is not much point simply stressing the radical alterity of the Other when it is absolute blindness to the existence of the Other that is the problem. In such a situation political philosophy has to be more than just prescriptive and has to attempt to understand how people come to believe things so strongly that they will kill and keep killing until victory (which never comes). This requires a kind of phenomenological understanding that Jung advocates, but also necessitates an understanding of the social world in a way that political philosophy and individualist existential phenomenology cannot provide. This is the point where political philosophy has to give way to social theory.

There is a humanity and humility to Jung's work that is surely to be welcomed and this collection should act as an appropriate reminder that, however much we undermine the centrality of the subject, politics is about real people with real lives. That recognition is at least the beginning of political philosophy.

Alan Finlayson

Victim support

Marian Scholtmeijer, *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1993. x + 330 pp., £32.50 hb., £12.50 pb., 0 8020 2832 2 hb., 0 8020 7708 0 pb.

Scholtmeijer's study of animal victims in literature is an act of attention, conceived as an ethical gesture, a step towards ending victimization in life. Broadly, it involves subscribing to the view articulated by Michael Reid, in *Radical Philosophy* 64: recognition of the particular other as an end in itself. Certainly no coherent theoretical position is developed here which might intrude between the perception and the condemnation of animal suffering.

In practice, that absence makes reading problematic, and the impact of the attention is reduced by the diffuseness of the discussion. Scholtmeijer's declared aim is to arrive at 'a conception of nonhuman animals that disturbs or even militates against acts of victimization', but the kinds of conceptual and practical issues raised in these pages by Reid, Ted Benton and Tim Hayward do not trouble her survey. Rather, Darwinian theory is taken as a signal revelation, undermining human arrogance, and yet raising the spectre of universal amorality, as well as the possibility of sanctity for all living beings.

It would be charitable, I think, to see a strategy in the 'weak' position enunciated in such assertions as: 'We cannot bestow rights upon them, for they stand there watching us fully possessed of those rights already. In their very being animals repudiate our efforts to subjugate them to our cultural purposes.' Without wishing to argue with the opposition to exploitation, I suspect many readers will find that the deliberate refusal of the overtly political too often veers towards the sentimental. One looks to the index in vain for reference to Herbert Spencer or, say, Peter Kropotkin, let alone Marx. Rather, 'it seems fair to propose that Charles Darwin has had considerable influence upon Western culture.' Our consciousness of evolutionary continuity continues to unsettle us, but the forms of that consciousness remain vague.

Reid locates within human maturity the capacity to conceive 'the internal perspective' of an animal, to make 'an imaginative construction of the experience of the other' within maturity. Scholtmeijer looks to literature for an accumulation of such projections; so, 'by its very nature, literature cannot help but grant some degree of autonomous identity to animals.' As an authentic product of civilization, I take it, fiction embraces the internal perspective, while being simultaneously conscious of 'the estrangement of culture from nature', in which language is a crucial factor. Sensing tensions, taut to the point of breaking her argument, Scholtmeijer assumes a stance in which what animals mean is less important than *that* they mean. What *this* might mean is not entirely clear. At one point we are told that 'modern fiction restores value and meaning to the total animal', soon after that 'humankind is obliged to seek out significations in itself which may meet up with the animal state of being'. The nature of such an encounter remains open to speculation, but it must of necessity redress that anarchy by which Scholtmeijer initially characterizes the history of human thought on animals.

Forty pages afford a brief history of the animal victim; a further forty pages are devoted to some theoretical considerations of cultural context – the criteria for selection of materials are not clear, the result appears rather haphazard. The case studies that follow create similar unease: the range of authors is broad, but more precise cultural and historical placement would have provided, I think, the necessary justification for an implicit *universal* framework of evaluation. Scholtmeijer assumes thematic categories – the victim in the wild, in the city, in relation to human sexuality, myth, and literature itself. Again the rationale raises significant questions. It is good to see literary criticism responding to concerns voiced in this book; the ethical thrust is to be welcomed. But *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* lacks

a coherent political dimension, and consequently remains suggestive where it might have been incisive.

Julian Cowley

Heart of darkness

Stjepan G. Mestrovic, *The Barbarian Temperament: Toward a Postmodern Critical Theory*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. xviii + 326 pp., £37.00 hb.; £13.99 pb.; 0 415 08572 1 hb., 0 425 10241 3 pb.

Probably the best way to view Stjepan Mestrovic's latest book is as a companion volume to his recent *The Coming Fin de Siècle* (1991). For, like that work, *The Barbarian Temperament* is concerned with the transition from modern to postmodern civilization. Indeed, the key question he addresses is whether modern civilization represents the pinnacle of human achievement, or merely the modern face of barbarism. Specifically, Mestrovic wants to argue that, whilst the advanced societies may like to claim the civilizing process as their own, in the century of the Gulag, the Holocaust and the Gulf War, it is difficult not to conclude that barbarism 'lies at the heart of modernity'. However, according to Mestrovic, barbarism has taken on new forms in the present period. Moreover, it can be seen in a variety of guises, ranging from the appearance of AIDS and emergence of widespread drug abuse, to over indulgence in conspicuous consumption and environmental destruction on a planetary scale.

Drawing on a number of nineteenth-century thinkers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Freud and Veblen, as well as on more recent theorists like Horkheimer and Baudrillard, Mestrovic's main aim is to lay the foundations for a postmodern critical theory which eschews Enlightenment values. Given the sort of intellectual company he keeps, it is hardly surprising to find that Mestrovic rejects philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Marx and Habermas, together with their efforts to construct a vision of social order based on rationality. Central to Mestrovic's standpoint, then, is the idea that individuals are fundamentally irrational beings. Crucially, he is attempting to develop a theoretical perspective which can account for the irrational condition and behaviour of both individuals and society.

In so doing, Mestrovic employs the concepts of compassion and empathy derived from Schopenhauer's essay *On the Basis of Morality* (1844) and, to a lesser extent, Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* (1874). He seeks to link these writings on the existential plight of the suffering individual with the works of Horkheimer and Baudrillard on mass society and the soul of modern America. Mestrovic's purpose is to fathom the continuation in advanced capitalism of both egoistic individualism and social conformity. However, he has little time for either the liberal individualism of Fukuyama or the late Christopher Lasch's writings on the culture of narcissism. Instead, Mestrovic focuses on the nature of individualism through a detailed discussion of the neglected writings of Durkheim, Freud and Veblen. These authors are, of course, renowned for their willingness to face up to the dark side of modernity, and its manifestations in social life in the shape of suicide, latent aggression, near-mindless consumption and so on.

There is much to be said in favour of *The Barbarian Temperament*. It is a provocative and timely contribution to postmodern critical theory and raises a number of questions many would prefer not to be asked at all. But a few doubts remain. For instance, just how original or contentious is the thesis that modernity has never fully abandoned barbarism? After all, Benjamin and countless others have discussed the issue at length. Secondly, and despite Mestrovic's claim that his position is a controversial one, the fact is that within the parameters of postmodernism it is hardly controversial at all. Indeed, for postmodern sociologists like Zygmunt Bauman it is almost a guiding principle of enquiry. A final criticism concerns the sheer scale of Mestrovic's ambitions. Thus he claims he not only wants to 'complete' Horkheimer's affinities with Schopenhauer, but also to supply what he calls a 'depth' sociology and psychology to the works of Baudrillard, as well as subverting the traditional view of both Durkheim and Freud! This is something of a tall order, to say the least. Still, if critical theory's reach does not exceed its grasp, what's a postmodern philosophy for?

John Armitage

The Empire writes back

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993. xii + 570 pp., £35.00 hb., £13.95 pb., 0 7450 1490 9 hb., 0 7450 1491 7 pb.

What comes after Empire? That is the question posed by this impressive collection of essays and extracts. In their comprehensive Introduction, Williams and Chrisman

distinguish between colonialism as physical presence and imperialism as political influence. The editors are aware of the problems implicit in the term 'post-colonialism', which implies 'a dual sense of being chronologically subsequent to the second term in the relationship and of – on the face of it – having somehow superseded that term'. Williams and Chrisman suggest two significant dates. On the one hand, 'the formal dissolution of colonial empires' began in 1947, and on the other, 'Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, single-handedly inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry'. These two moments point up one of the central problems of post-colonialism, namely the relationship between events and texts, between political activists and cultural theorists.

Post-colonialism is rapidly becoming, not simply a branch of literary or cultural studies, but virtually an academic discipline in its own right, an armchair empire with its own journals, conferences, coteries and canon. On the one hand, there is the apparent 'end of Empire'. On the other, there is the rise of post-colonialism as an internationally marketable commodity, an intellectual subject – as an individual and as an institution. Both of these developments can usefully be thought under the heading of 'the end of English'. It is no accident that the teaching of 'new literatures' is central to the post-colonial project, or that these 'new literatures' are taking their place in enlarged English departments (enlarged in terms of scope if not staff). 'English' denotes the most pervasive academic discipline and the most powerful colonial nation in history, and is the key to the double identity of post-colonialism. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge ask: 'Does the postcolonial exist only in English?' They have in mind language, but could just as easily be speaking of literature.

It goes without saying that all of the contributors to this volume are writers, but can one readily group the professors of literature with those whose lives were dedicated to struggle of a more immediate kind? Fanon, for example, is clearly an 'intellectual subject' of a different sort from later critics like Said, Bhabha and Spivak, who are firmly ensconced in academia, and whose theoretical sophistication arguably limits their audience. Under the umbrella of 'post-colonialism', calls for revolutionary violence sit awkwardly alongside readings of Victorian novels. Of course, there is always the risk of appropriation and reappropriation in any political enterprise. In the disputed territory of academic study and armed struggle there is always a complex dialectic between the role of a Reader such as this one, and the social and political text to which it refers. The conjunction of 'Literature *and* Empire' or 'Culture *and* Imperialism' ignores exactly this interface. As Derrida has remarked, 'there's no racism without a language', and who better than teachers of literature to tackle the racism of language?

But who speaks for post-colonialism, and in what language? Both bell hooks and Houston Baker have warned against the colonisation of anti-colonial criticism by the university, where the tendency to posture, pigeonhole and provide overly elaborate 'readings' is part and parcel of the 'post'. When the Empire writes back it does so in the privileged language of the academy. Post-colonialism, when it is thoroughly academicised, reduced to 'theory' and 'discourse', comes to herald, not the end of empire, but the setting up of another outpost.

Willy Maley

Telling ourselves stories

Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993. x + 249 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 04197 X hb., 0 415 04198 8 pb.

Can we respect 'otherness', driving out the ethnocentric and patriarchal structures that pervade modern accounts of the self, while preserving the rational kernel of the modern project, thus clinging to the possibility of an enlightened and redeemed self? This is a question with a long pedigree. In recent years, however, a new way of approaching it has emerged. This derives from communitarian and hermeneutic thought, and its most challenging proponents are Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur. For Taylor and Ricoeur the self must be viewed as a narratively structured unity. In constructing our identity, they claim, we formulate life-stories which are amenable to interpenetration, by ourselves and others, through the mediation of the narrative function. By conceiving of the self as an ongoing narrative project, it is argued, both the problematic essentialisms of traditional accounts and the disabling relativisms of postmodern conceptions can be avoided. In *Rewriting the Self*, Mark Freeman offers an important defence of this hermeneutic project from the perspective of a 'humanist psychology'.

The rarefied atmosphere of this debate can obscure the insight that the concept of narrative identity gains credence to the extent that it applies to our everyday picture of who we are, how we got here and where we are going. To his credit, Freeman constantly reminds the

reader that, no matter how abstract discussions of the self become, they should always be grounded in an awareness of the actual life-stories informing our sense of identity. Ranging from discussions of St Augustine, Helen Keller and Sartre's fictional protagonist Roquentin, to Philip Roth, Sylvia Fraser and Jill Ker Conway, Freeman provides engaging and enlightening discussions that serve to enrich the debates on narrative identity.

Although Freeman broadens the scope of this approach to the self, he makes no major theoretical inroads into the concept of narrative identity (Ricoeur's work is often uncritically invoked to bolster his claims). It is not that Freeman is unaware of the numerous philosophical problems surrounding the concept of narrative identity – in many respects, his text offers a useful introduction to them – but that he fails to pursue the consequent debates. His discussion of the idea, raised by post-structuralists, that the self is 'a fictional extrapolation from the flux of experience' is one instance of his unwillingness to consider all the options.

Echoing Ricoeur, Freeman examines the profound sense of loss that ensues when the question 'who am I?' appears to have no answer. Yet, both Freeman and Ricoeur claim, there must nonetheless be an 'I' asking the question, and therefore the idea of a core self must be retained. The complex issues this raises are left relatively untouched. Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, has argued that if one assumes the question 'who am I?', then a response from 'some *one*', from an ultimately coherent self, is predetermined. In other words, Freeman's (and Ricoeur's) account can be said to beg the question of identity by the very nature of the question it asks. This is not to dismiss Freeman's work, but to suggest that for some readers it may be insufficiently searching. Finally, though, by providing many examples and insights into the 'everyday' importance of narrative in all our lives, Freeman has written a book that should not be ignored by anyone with an interest in the concept of narrative identity.

Iain MacKenzie

Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. x + 154 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 08801 hb., 0 415 08802 X pb.

When, in 1947, Heidegger wrote that 'homelessness' is coming to be the destiny of the modern world, he had in mind something other than economic destitution. In spite of all his conservative Black Forest attachments, Heidegger recognised that the forces of modernity impelled modern human beings to lead a loose and rootless existence. It is the fate of we moderns to be strangers and aliens to ourselves. It cannot be supposed that Heidegger simply lamented this process since, in many of his major writings, he grants a positive and privileged place to the experience of the unhomely (or the uncanny – *unheimlich*). It is only in recent postmodern times perhaps, however, that writers have sought to narrate this unhomely/uncanny experience which is the (post) modern human lot and to give it a new and distinct political imagination.

Iain Chambers seeks to give a certain poetry to the motion of postmodern nomadic life in this ramble through territories of space and of the mind (the book has a number of playful chapter headings, such as 'An Impossible Homecoming', 'Migrant Landscapes', 'The Aural Walk', 'Cities without Maps', etc.). He resoundingly affirms the plurality – of voices, spaces and times – opened up by the modern cosmopolitan dislocation of identity. It is necessary, he writes, to conceive of 'dwelling' as a 'mobile habitat' so that we inhabit time and space not as fixed, closed structures, but rather as provocative openings 'whose questioning presence reverberates in the movement of the languages that constitute our sense of identity, place and belonging. There is no one place, language or tradition that can claim this role.' I agree with Chambers that important intellectual and political lessons are to be learned from such a decentred, dislocated questioning of culture and identity.

Chambers writes in an engaging, poetic style. There is much to admire in the book. His 'philosophy', however, is thin and unoriginal. Although I enjoyed travelling along with Chambers, I didn't learn much that is new about the postmodern human condition. The author eclectically draws on a wide range of sources to give spice to his forays into the postmodern global landscape. In the process he gives his assent to many postmodern platitudes (about difference, otherness, and so on), including the scandalously stupid 'Heideggerean-inspired' thesis of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe that the Holocaust reveals the *essence* of the West (such a thesis strikes me as a kind of inverted Hegelianism gone slightly mad; it certainly doesn't offer an invitation *to think*). Perhaps what is most annoying about the vision of this book is that, like that contained in the work of several leading intellectuals who affirm their postmodern cosmopolitan existence, such as Said and Bhabha, for example, it is written from a privileged position – that of the free-floating 'bourgeois' intellectual who is free to taste the Turkish delights on offer in the wonderland of global capital. What I fail to see is how the rich, variegated experience of the postmodern intellectual can be equated with the miserable lot of the modern migrant worker. A certain blindness to the violent nature of these economic and political processes of modern migrancy is in evidence in much of the poetry of Chambers's book.

Keith Ansell-Pearson

Anthony Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1994. viii + 183 pp., £40.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 631 18846 0 hb., 0 631 18847 9 pb.

Anthony Elliott concludes *Psychoanalytic Theory* by insisting 'no single theory will have the whole truth.' Instead, in postmodernist vein, he celebrates the plurality of psychoanalysis as 'a critical reflection on the central modes of feeling, valuing and caring in modern societies'. Yet in his previous book, *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition*, Elliott adopted a rigorous criterion of the truth of psychoanalytic theories in terms of their adequacy in addressing the relative social autonomy and creativity of the unconscious. And it is precisely the continued, albeit implicit, adoption of this criterion in his present book that makes it such a refreshing, if not altogether easy, introduction to current psychoanalytic perspectives on self and society.

Elliott begins by presenting Freud in terms of his own position. He argues that, although Freud believed the instincts could be harnessed to society, he regarded them as also always outstripping and subverting its dictates. By contrast, Elliott maintains, Freud's followers – Fromm, Marcuse, Kovel and Lasch – are untrue to his work in variously falling into sociological, biological essentialist, or psychological determinism.

Elliott prefers the theories of Winnicott and Klein for recognizing the imaginative reworking by the unconscious of our relations with others. This is notoriously overlooked by American ego psychologists – Erikson and Kohut, for example – who treat the self as constituted simply by existing social roles, or as an effect of being mirrored by and idealising others. Ego psychology, as its Lacanian feminist and non-feminist critics point out, thereby ignores the radical decentering, misrecognition, and alienation of the self in the reflected phallocentric desire of the other. But Lacanians in turn overlook the agency of the self in misrecognizing and resisting such captivation. This oversight cannot however be remedied, Elliott maintains, by mistakenly valorising the inner world as self-validating: as Deleuze and Guattari assume in celebrating schizoid fragmentation against the paranoia which (they say) impels today's 'territorialization of norms'; and as Lyotard assumes in his Nietzschean advocacy of desire as libidinal will to power.

This objection, however, equally applies to Castoriadis's plea, with which Elliott approvingly finishes, for us to counter today's destructiveness by recovering our human imagination. How, though, are we to tell whether its productions are true or false? Elliott raises but in the end eschews this question. Not so psychoanalytic psychotherapists in seeking to help their patients become conscious of their unconscious imaginative creations, or fantasies, so as to test them against social reality, beginning with that of the therapist–patient relationship. Therapy, however, is no concern of Elliott. This is perhaps understandable given his political theory project. Nevertheless, it is a serious omission from what is otherwise an interestingly comprehensive up-date on psychoanalysis and its bearing on social challenge and change.

Janet Sayers