REVIEWS

The Story of K

Michael Weston, *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. 200 pp., £37.50 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 10199 0 hb., 0 415 10120 4 pb.

Peter Fenves, *'Chatter': Language and History in Kierkegaard*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1993. 312pp., £30.00 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 8047 1107 1 hb., 0 8047 2208 0 pb.

He sounds almost too good to be true: a handsome if enigmatic young man, just turned thirty, who has published an astonishingly assured first book. Without any sign of strain, he surveys the history of sexuality, the limits of philosophy, the status of ethics, and the different kinds of representation involved in various art forms. And he writes incredibly well too: the explanations of rival concepts of repetition, reflexivity, temporality, everydayness, ghostliness, love, choice, and subjectivity ring out with such bell-like clarity that you forget yourself in the luxury of his prose. For our author is a storyteller: a genius in the theory and practice of narrative, as well as a virtuoso in the arts of philosophy. He develops his insights by telling stories, and stories about stories, and stories about stories about stories – and about operas, plays, and novels too. Instead of toiling through his arguments, we can simply surrender ourselves to his anecdotes. He may go on for a thousand pages, but we end up feeling brighter and less tired than when we started, as if we had taken a fresh springtime walk with the closest and easiest of friends.

But it is more than a hundred and fifty years since *Either/Or* appeared, and one may doubt whether it, or any other of Kierkegaard's works, has won more than a handful of the enthusiasts it deserves. The fact that Kierkegaard wrote in Danish has not helped: his works did not begin to filter into the hegemonic languages of philosophy until the end of the nineteenth century, or, in the case of English, until the middle of the twentieth. Heidegger's *Being and Time* benefits from several loans ('history', 'the moment', 'existence' or 'idle talk', for example), though Heidegger, unable to read Danish, never discussed Kierkegaard explicitly. In the 1940s and 1950s, Kierkegaard was increasingly recognized in France – by Wahl, Sartre and Levinas amongst others – as the founder of 'existentialist' thought; and this acclaim was echoed in England for a while, by such pioneers of Modern Continental Philosophy as Herbert Read and Colin Wilson.

But there is another twentieth-century Kierkegaard too, the one through whom W. H. Auden found his way to God in the 1940s: Kierkegaard as a personalist theologian, a theist for whom God is somehow an aspect of the 'ontology of the self'. You had, as Auden put it, Marx for the past, Freud for the present, and Kierkegaard for the future. Auden's Kierkegaard was a personal witness to religious experience, and a Continental counterpart to Cardinal Newman. Kierkegaard, Auden said, was 'neither a poet, nor a philosopher, but a preacher'.

For Michael Weston, too, Kierkegaard is mainly a religious thinker. But the argument of his deeply felt book is that, for all Kierkegaard's protean activity as an honorary participant in twentieth-century philosophy, the philosophers have not yet got his measure. Weston believes that Kierkegaard exposed the ridiculously threadbare objectivism of Western metaphysics, from Plato to Hegel, by constructing an ethical critique of philosophy as such, based on his devastating insistence on the philosophical 'who?' – on the eloquent bathos of the fact that even the most gleamingly up-to-date philosopher is really, like the rest of us, no more than an 'existing individual', a trembling fragment of mortal anxiety, and that all our philosophizing is just a vain evasion of our finitude. According to Weston, none of the supposedly post-metaphysical thinkers, with the possible exception of Levinas, can survive Kierkegaard's ethical scrutiny: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Derrida and all the rest, he believes, have done nothing but repeat, more and more furtively, the Platonic sin of philosophical pride.

For this reason, Kierkegaard himself is curiously absent from *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy*. After summarizing Plato and Hegel, Weston examines Nietzsche and a selection of twentieth-century anti-Platonists. One might have expected them all to come out as Kierkegaard's posthumous allies; but Weston feels obliged to send them all down with more or

less the same sentence, couched in a conditional past tense: Kierkegaard, it appears, would have seen through them all. He 'would have' exploded Nietzsche's account of religion, for instance; and the unfortunate Heidegger 'would have struck Kierkegaard as *comical*'. In the end, Weston thinks, all upcoming anti-metaphysicians would be caught with their fingers stuck into 'the metaphysical project which forgets that the thinker is an existing individual'. All of them 'would thus for Kierkegaard still embody the intellectual pretensions of metaphysics'.

In a forlorn but magnanimous conclusion, Weston admits that his book would have left Kierkegaard unsatisfied, since it tries to do the impossible – to describe 'the existential dialectic from outside'. And there is another reason why Weston's readers may be left feeling a little empty. We may accept the importance of recognizing 'the first-person position from which any individual must speak', even when speaking as a philosopher. But the matter can hardly be left there, since it leads to a riddle of its own: how can you ever be sure that you have really grasped your 'first-person position', rather than deluding yourself with some factitious but comfy fake?

Weston notes that Kierkegaard's marvellous diversity of styles and the celebrated doctrine of 'indirect communication' are connected with the elusiveness of this idea of the 'primacy of the I'. In particular, he recalls that Kierkegaard's writings appeared not in his own name, but over a fantastic array of riddling pseudonyms. (*Either/Or* alone consists of a mixture of mysteriously interconnected letters, essays, lectures and aphorisms, together with an editorial preface, a journal and a sermon, ascribed to six different fictional authors.) So Kierkegaard's path to the self did not take the familiar Rousseauan route through confession or personal self-exposure; and it is a disappointment that Weston did not take the chance to explore this enticing paradox.

The missing dimension of Weston's philosophical study is supplied, at least in part, by Peter Fenves's self-consciously literary one. As one would expect from a multilingual deconstructive critic, Fenves fixes his attention on Kierkegaard's work as an author. He provides painstaking studies of parts of *Fear and Trembling* and *The Concept of Anxiety* and a range of occasional works. His attention to detail, and his exemplary explanations of Kierkegaard's response to Kantian ethics and his relations with his contemporaries in Danish literature, put most other work on Kierkegaard in English to shame, as does his principled insistence on constantly going back to the Danish text.

'Chatter' is a remarkably acute and well-informed book, therefore; but the puzzle is that it is not much better. Part of the problem is the elaborate grooming of the sentences, crammed with quotation marks, hyphenations, and interlinguistic knowingness. Under this treatment, Kierkegaard's paradoxical transparency soon becomes crazed and opaque, like a windscreen hit by a stone. Fenves transmutes it into a form of 'textuality' which teems with shifty puns and agile riddles, like a slice of high old modernism. He thinks that 'another ordeal' can be equated with 'the ordeal of the altogether other', for instance, and that 'avoiding communication' is the same as 'communicating avoidance'. No doubt there is logic of a kind in such transpositions; but it may not be Kierkegaard's kind, or that of many of his readers. There is a casual violence in Fenves's way of foisting it on Kierkegaard's writings, and commandeering them as vehicles for yet another load of deconstructive banter.

Heraclitus, as Kierkegaard once recalled, summarized his doctrine in the unimprovable formula: One can never step into the same river twice. Poor Heraclitus, though: he had a clever disciple. 'The obscure Heraclitus had a disciple who did not stay standing there, but went further, and added: One cannot do it even once.' The result was to change a doctrine of universal variousness into a doctrine of universal sameness: no longer an affirmation of flux, but a denial of it. 'Poor Heraclitus', Kierkegaard concludes: 'to have such a disciple!'

It would be a bit unfair to compare Fenves with that kind of disciple, of course. For one thing, his versions of Kierkegaard are nothing like so reductionist as the old personalist, existentialist and religious ones. And in any case, the real argument of his book – hidden in a few paragraphs of the introduction, and some lengthy endnotes – is that reduction is impossible anyway, that nothing can be totally comprehended in terms of anything else. His aim is to issue a challenge to all those who, as he sniffily puts it, 'make a profession of professing to "fuse horizons" and "listen to the other".' Thus he comes on as a champion for literary deconstruction in opposition to philosophical hermeneutics, for Paul de Man against Hans-Georg Gadamer.

That is why Fenves links his commentaries with the theme of 'chatter'. He admits that 'chatter' does not correspond to any particular concept in Kierkegaard's Danish, but he is unfazed, even encouraged, by the disparity. He would not expect Kierkegaard to have a definite word for it, since *chatter* (like the all-too-familiar differance, which Fenves is too fastidious to mention) is meant to be a non-word for a non-thing, a word that cannot be raised to the dignity of a concept. *Chatter* cannot be a concept, he says, because it 'brings into question, if only in a playful manner, the ability of speech

to distinguish itself from, say, involuntary movements of the mouth and the noise of certain animals'. (This is an unpersuasive argument, it seems to me; in fact it is obviously circular, but let that pass.) Chatter, Fenves concludes, jams the mechanisms of metaphysical rationalism, 'and makes the very conceptuality of every concept, its ability to single things out, undecidable'.

Kierkegaard, according to Fenves, had the proto-deconstructive forbearance to write nothing but chatter, thereby avoiding all the traps of 'disjunctive judgement'. And his exemplary 'suspension' of all decisions, Fenves thinks, is at last 'made accessible to reading once texts are recognised as performances of this very suspension, once they are all, in other words, consigned to the category of "chatter"'.

The hypothesis that Kierkegaard wrote nothing but chatter may, I suppose, go some way towards explaining his stylistic variousness. But if we take Fenves at his word, the explanation obviously goes too far: if 'texts' in general are 'consigned to the category of "chatter"', then any old text could have been used to make the same point, and Kierkegaard need never have bothered to write such wonderful books. And as far as the argument about 'hermeneutics' and 'deconstruction' is concerned, Fenves's invocation of 'chatter' goes no further than a perfectly classical begging of the question. No doubt Kierkegaard can be interpreted as a chattering deconstructionist rather than an irenic hermeneuticist; but the question remains, whether that makes him say something truer, or at least more worthy of our attention.

In a footnote, Fenves takes shelter behind one of Paul de Man's attacks on the ideals of mutual understanding that underlie hermeneutical ideas of 'dialogue' and the 'logic of question and answer'. De Man regarded all such ideas as dangerous, suffocating, unethical; they demonstrated a culpable lack of curiosity – 'bordering on outright dismissal', indeed – about 'what has, somewhat misleadingly, come to be known as the "play" of the signifier, semantic effects produced on the level of the letter rather than of the word or the sentence and which therefore escape the network of hermeneutic questions and answers'. But if Kierkegaard needs to be rescued from those who trade in words and sentences, it does not follow that he should be handed over to minute literary critics who have eyes only for the subatomic world of letters and punctuation marks. If we want to account for the 'semantic effects' of Kierkegaard's writings, not to mention their exuberance, clarity and beauty, we might do better to look in the opposite direction, where Kierkegaard himself pointed us. We might move back towards the great spaces where the pertinent units of analysis are larger than the sentence, not smaller: back, that is, to the Kierkegaardian arts of narrative, to the telling and retelling of stories.

Like the one in *Either/Or* about the man who had a little document containing a message on which the happiness of his whole life depended. 'He would stare, more or less anxiously, but the more he stared, the less he could see. Sometimes his eyes filled up with tears; but the more that happened, the less he could see. With the passage of time, the writing became fainter and less distinct; till finally the paper itself crumbled away, and he had nothing left but eyes blinded with tears.'

Jonathan Rée

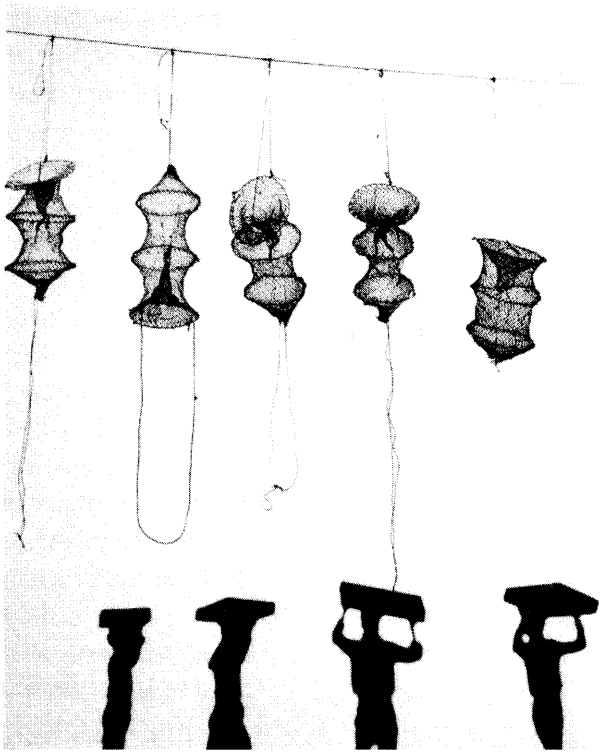
The pedagogy of philosophy

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, Verso, London and New York, 1994. x + 253 pp., £39.95 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 86091 442 4 hb., 0 86091 686 3 pb.

Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski, eds, *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. ix + 343 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 90504 4 hb., 0 415 90505 2 pb.

The underground train is taking you, rather fast (this is Paris, not London), towards the skyscrapers of La Défense and, a little further west, the University of Nanterre. On the seat facing you, a bespectacled yuppie, complete with tailored suit and regulation tie, is reading Deleuze and Guattari's latest book, *What is Philosophy?* The incongruity of the scene induces a smile – after all, this is a book explicitly written against yuppies, who, with their culture of advertising and marketing, have kidnapped the very term 'concept' to denote the sales promotion of their marketable 'ideas'. Your smile turns into a grin as you imagine that this enlightenment-seeking yuppie bought the book because of its title, because he wanted a textbook, a primer in philosophy. And what he got is a book that reads like the third volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Already you see the puzzled look on the yuppie's face, as he reads page after page of vintage Deleuze...

In an important sense, however, your smile is mistaken. This *is* a primer in philosophy. It wouldn't



perhaps be my first choice for a beginners' handbook, as its style makes none of the usual concessions, but it does raise, and seek to answer, the same questions, in the same order. The question in the title must be taken literally, and it receives a straightforward answer. Philosophy is the specialized subject of the friends of the concept, whose task it is to create concepts (with their tools, out of raw material, polishing their end-products – the philosopher is not a marketing analyst, or a magus, but an artisan). This of course is not enough. The next question in sound pedagogy is 'what is a concept?' (and it is to be noted that in this book Deleuze and Guattari do not avoid the question of the 'is', the question of essence – no deconstructive shilly-shallying here; a plain answer to a plain question is what a textbook requires). A concept, then, has three determinations: it is a fold on a plane of immanence; it is a multiplicity of elements; and it is embodied in a conceptual person or personae. The first part of the book develops these three determinations in order. And the second describes what lies outside the philosophical fold – namely science, logic and art, as the fields of functives, prospects, and percepts and affects respectively. This demarcation of the field of philosophy is coherent and systematic – witness the titles of chapters in the second section: 'function and concept', 'prospect and concept', and so on.

The mark of successful pedagogy is that the pupil shows she has understood what the textbook taught by applying it to an example (Deleuze and Guattari provide such exercises by offering a number of examples, set in smaller type). Let me have a try. The concept 'significant form' recurs in discussion of aesthetics, often as a quasi-meaningless tag. It was invented by Clive Bell, in *Art* (1914), and taken up by Roger Fry in *Vision and Design* (1920): the task of the philosopher of art is to create aesthetic concepts. The concept can be described as a specific fold on a plane of immanence, as an event on a horizon – a particularly apt characterization for a concept based on the opposition between figure and background. The word 'form' is the name of the plane of immanence, folded in various ways in the course of a venerable philosophical tradition. Thus, the folding takes an entirely different shape in Chinese aesthetics, with its insistence on insipidity or flavourlessness (see F. Jullien, *Éloge de la fadeur*, Paris, Philippe Picquier, 1991), as opposed to the strong flavour of Western form or figure – the plane of immanence is the locus for such opposite foldings. And the word 'significant' in our concept is the name for the multiplicity of elements that make it up, which can be summarized along three oppositions: emotion vs. intellect, expression vs. impression, and form vs. representation. Significant form is emotional, expressive (the Post-Impressionists rather than Monet) and non-representative (Cubism rather than pre-Raphaelitism). Lastly, the concept is embodied in the two conceptual personae of the artist whose emotions are translated into form, and the audience which re-creates the emotion out of the form – two personae locked into what might be described as pragmatic exchange. Thus reconstructed, the phrase 'significant form' is no longer a critical tag, a butt for the philosopher's mockery (the notion has widely been said to be either empty of meaning, or caught in irrepressible circularity) – it is a concept, reorganizing the plane of immanence, producing effects of knowledge and truth.

My exercise in applied Deleuze–Guattarism is no mere pastiche. It shows that the answer the authors give to their basic question is indeed coherent and systematic – this is the pedagogy of territorialization: triangulating the field through a network of oppositions that will end up in a correlation (Deleuze's philosophical style is based on the systematic exploitation of correlations, i.e. of series of parallel oppositions), both within philosophy and outside it. I have deliberately constructed my model answer in the field not of philosophy proper, but of art criticism, in order to point out that this book also contains the elements of an original aesthetics, in terms of percept vs. perception.

You cannot, however, triangulate Deleuze and Guattari. This is why, in the end, your yuppie will be disappointed. The text deterritorializes itself according to its own lines of flight. The textbook soon becomes Deleuze and Guattari's version of *The Songlines*: the

fulcrum of the book is the one chapter that lies outside the systematic scheme outlined above. It occurs in the very centre of the book (Chapter 4 out of seven), and it is entitled 'Geophilosophy' (a trendy idea – see Massimo Cacciari, *Geo-Filosofia dell' Europa*, Milan, Adelphi, 1994). The other of the concept makes its appearance here – it is called 'figure', and another correlation is produced (figure vs. concept, transcendent vs. immanent deterritorialization, etc.). This provides a displaced answer to the classic question: is (why is ...) philosophy Greek, in essence as much as in etymology? The word 'fulcrum', however, as applied to this chapter, is misplaced: it does not give balance to the book; it deterritorializes its problematic. The utmost hubris for a philosopher is to ask such a basic question as 'what is philosophy?': the highest praise that can be given to Deleuze and Guattari is that they have answered the question, but also displaced it.

One last word, on the translation: we all know how easy it is to ruin a book simply by translating it; there is only one thing to be said about this translation – it does full justice to one of the few contemporary books of philosophy that are sure to last.

Deleuze is not an easy philosopher. Yet it is difficult nowadays to imagine the bewilderment of readers of my generation, who discovered Deleuze in the late 1960s. Not only does the accumulation of the oeuvre give a sense of perspective, but help is widely available. *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, the first collection of essays in any language to be devoted to Deleuze, so the editors claim, is particularly good at this. Deleuze is a compulsive creator of concepts: the various essays in this book carefully unfold and explicate them (they do not always stop short of complicating them). The breadth of Deleuze's oeuvre is emphasized, and the possible application to other problematics (for instance, feminism) is of particular interest. May I single out for praise the excellent essay by Todd May on difference and unity in Deleuze? The most welcome essay, however, is Padiou's, on *Le Pli*, where he lucidly expounds the contrast between Deleuze's and his own philosophy. Padiou is Deleuze's philosophical other – his natural opponent – because he occupies the same ground, and is of equal philosophical stature.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

Revolutionary roots

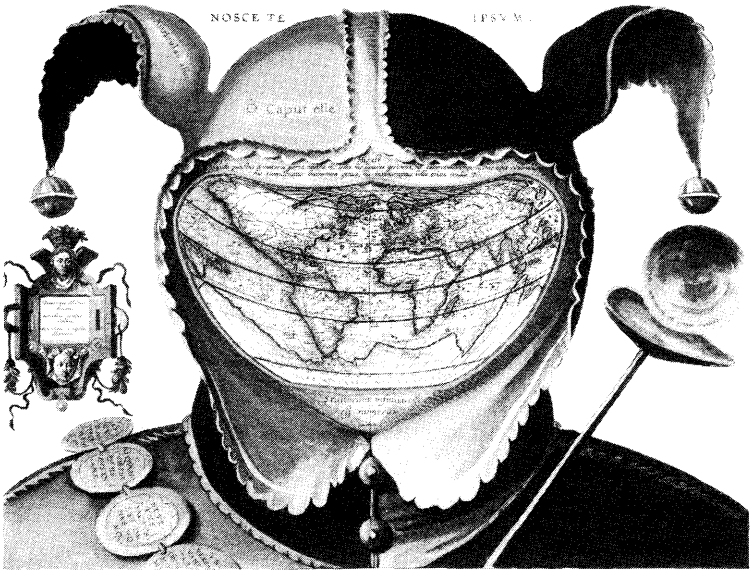
Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993. xx + 734 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 521 37319 0.

Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492–1992*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, xv + 262 pp., £19.99 hb., 0 631 17398 6.

Brenner's work already has an established place in the Marxist historiography of Britain. His 1976 essay 'Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe' set out a Marxist account of the decline of feudalism in England. It differed from the linear economism of English historians of the 1950s, such as Habbakuk and Postan, in showing how political struggles by more or less self-conscious class groupings undermined the feudal economy. According to Brenner, feudal landholders who adapted to commerce allied themselves with new commercial interests to impose the political demands of the market upon the state. In this formulation, the *roots* of the crisis lay in material conditions – the inherent weakness of surplus-extraction under the feudal mode of production, yet *political action* was essential to bring change about. By 1985, the lengthy discussion of this thesis merited a book in its own right: Aston and Philpin's *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*.

Brenner's present hefty study, largely based on his earlier research, applies the same style of analysis, both political and Marxist, to the politics of London in the period immediately prior to the English Revolution of the 1640s. At its core is an examination of how 'new merchants' formed alliances with established rural aristocratic interests and directed political pressure on points of leverage within Parliament and the City. Hence the title. What distinguishes Brenner's 'new merchants' was their interests in the Americas: an area which fell outside the sclerotic, if profitable, framework of the trading corporations operating in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Far East. The new traders were not regulated under royal privilege, and so did not, like the insiders in the older corporations, enjoy *direct* benefits from the monarchy. Instead, according to Brenner, they organized politically on the margins of the monarchical state, in alliance with a commercially enterprising minority of the landed aristocracy. They embraced religious radicalism and assiduously worked

their way into positions of influence in the Corporation of the City and in Parliament. They were even prepared to enlist the support of the City populace, for (to adopt Gramsci's expression) theirs was a political 'war of position', which was to weigh crucially upon the crisis which enveloped the English state in the mid seventeenth century.



Brenner traces the political manoeuvrings through which, in a welter of conflicting information and ideologies, the merchants sought the best for themselves and their type of colonial commerce, which was to dominate British capitalism for centuries to come. Though new merchants had little need of the old-style, state-sponsored monopoly, they did have an interest in the character of the state. What they required – and got in full by the time of the 1688 settlement – was a modernized legal framework for property, and an aggressive, centralized state which kept its hands off the free market at home, but developed diplomatic and military means to defend English trade around the globe. Even today, that notion of British 'national' interest – a centralized *laissez faire* state and the freedom for business to range freely over a deregulated world – is still with us.

Part of Brenner's agenda is to reinstate a Marxist interpretation of the English Revolution. In different ways, historians from R. H. Tawney to Christopher Hill and Lawrence Stone once interpreted it as the product of the rise of the bourgeoisie. But their 'social interpretation' had long been challenged by 'revisionist' critics, who brought out factors in the revolution that did not fit with class or economic explanations: the complex connections between the classes; the role of religious belief; poor political leadership; a failing state organization; shortcomings in the political culture. Revisionism thus made it more and more difficult to speak of England's as a 'bourgeois revolution' – to the point where Christopher Hill himself opted for the cautious formulation that '*nobody* willed the English Revolution'. Thus, having completed the historical analysis, Brenner counterattacks the claims of revisionist historians such as J. C. D. Clark, Conrad Russell and John Morrill, who 'take it for granted that the failure of the traditional social interpretation means the impossibility of *any* social interpretation'. The manoeuvrings of the 'new merchants' reveal an *interplay* between evolving economic conditions and self-conscious political groupings which can once again license a social interpretation. As with his earlier case on feudalism, Brenner's strategy in support of Marxist history is to combine the political and economic.

But revisionist historians have not been slow to point out difficulties in Brenner's case. First, these 'new' merchants often turn out to have their fingers in the same pies as *old* merchants. Many straddle Brenner's groupings, so that it is hard to place them in identifiable contending battalions. Yet this kind of problem is quite usual when social categorizations are mapped onto sets of individual actors. One can rarely trace the social groups clearly, much less identify their intentions or detect their hand directly in the outcome of a revolution. This difficulty seems to derive, then, from an overambitious interpretation of categories such as 'bourgeois revolution', which suggest a revolution owned by a clearly identifiable social group.

Second, say the revisionists, while Brenner does show how his 'new' merchants were then undermining the monarchy in the 1640s, so were numerous other groups, starting with the established aristocracy and its 'old' commercial friends and allies. The monarchy found these others every bit as resistant to forced taxation. On the other hand, the role of some of these groups would seem quite compatible with the Brenner thesis, even if they fall outside its scope. Brian Manning, for example, has shown – from a Marxist perspective – how the provincial urban poor were reactive: when others created circumstances that threatened them, they swung local resistance against the monarchy.

A third factor raised in the revisionist case is the very real problems experienced *within* the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English state, with its confused loyalties, limited resources and erratic leadership. Given that, it is misleading to suggest, as does Brenner, that the revolutionary crisis came from outside the state. This

takes me to the Tilly volume, in which a leading historical sociologist of state-building develops a model for occurrences of revolution across the entirety of European history. To balance a view which finds the origins of the English Revolution outside the state, one could follow Tilly and identify strategies originating within the state which were amenable to the progress of particular rising social groups, such as Brenner's new merchants. The English post-revolutionary government, for example, reprovisioned the navy and fought two wars against Holland, seeing off the less centralized rival to England for global commercial dominance. That strategic choice favoured the new merchants, but is also eminently susceptible to Tilly's way of thinking: namely, that European states were seeking new accommodations with rising capital.

For Tilly, the long growth of state power in Europe occurs in dynamic relation with changing patterns of contention arising in the different European societies. Conflicts between society and the state take different forms in the different parts of Europe. So he has chapters setting out the distinct 'paths' to state formation, each achieved against a distinct pattern of revolutionary upheaval: an Iberian path, a Dutch path, a French, a British, a Russian, and so forth. In France, for example, the state first consolidated centralized, national rule. Only later, via the revolutionary cataclysm of 1789, did it reach an accommodation with capital and the peasantry – giving it almost unrivalled access to the finance and the manpower needed for warfare. On the British mainland, on the other hand, from the mid eighteenth century, contention was increasingly channelled through non-violent politics, while revolutionary situations persisted (indeed, intensified) in Ireland.

Along each revolutionary path to state formation, a distinct compromise is struck between capitalism and the coercive power of the developing state. Where commerce was weak or dependent (as in Hungary, Russia or Spain), coercion by the state and aristocratic landholders effectively stifled capital, retaining extensive social control, but over an impoverished serf or peasant economy. Where state coercion and the autonomy of capital were in balance, as in England or France, an accommodation could be reached – which Tilly calls 'capitalised coercion': at the price of ceding some freedom to capitalism, the state gained access to large financial resources for its coercive activities. Thus, Britain's revolutionary path placed it 'astride both coercion and capital'. Its revolutionary upheaval formed 'a compact, financially effective state, containing royal power, placing a parliamentary coalition of landlords and merchants in substantial control of national affairs, leaving landlords and parsons the regulation of local business ... advancing the conditions for agrarian and then industrial capitalism'. That is very much the state which Brenner describes emerging from the manoeuvrings of the new merchants. the difference is that Tilly's more abstract historical sociology makes plainer the compromise that had to be brokered *between* the state and forces in society at large.

Noel Parker

Science and the 'other'

Sandra Harding, ed., *The 'Racial' Economy of Science: Towards a Democratic Future*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993. viii + 526 pp., £35.00 hb., £17.99 pb., 0 253 32693 1 hb., 0 253 20810 6 pb.

Sandra Harding, whose previous works have been at the forefront of feminist interrogations of science, turns her attention in this volume to the Eurocentrism of the scientific enterprise. It has now become commonplace that a conception of scientific knowledge as purely reflective of nature is untenable: 'In science, just as in art and in life, only that which is true to culture is true to nature' (p. 337). Once it is recognized that the subjectivities of knowledge producers are implicated in the knowledge produced, a critical assessment of scientific enterprises requires a careful unpicking of the subjectivities implicated within it. Unsurprisingly, as this volume reveals, the dominant subjectivities have not only been male, but also European, white and inextricably bound up with the workings of international capitalism.

Many of the contributions show how these origins are displayed in the science that is done. One of the myths which gets hammered in the process is that of 'pure scientific knowledge', pursued independently of its applications. Whether state or, increasingly, privately funded, the direction of research reflects the projects and desired applications of its funders. Examples discussed, apart from the notorious spending on military and defence-related research, include the Green Revolution, management of agriculture and forestry; the development of contraceptives, functionalist models in anthropology, and Nazi medicine (see the articles by Bunkle, Shiva, Levins and Lewontin, Proctor, Stauder, and Third World Network). What is evident here is that the people most affected by such research have no part to play in producing it and no influence over its direction. The voices and knowledge of those working the lands,

tending the forests, consuming the contraceptives, or living in the environment in which polluting waste is dumped, have no way of infiltrating the scientific community. What becomes clear in these articles is that the benefits from such projects are experienced disproportionately in the North, and the casualties from them are located disproportionately in the South and amongst non-white groups within the North (Grossman). The political issues are urgent and concern the control of the direction of research by those whose lives are affected by it.

The articles in this collection, however, also suggest that the integration of presently marginal voices into the mainstream of our scientific projects is not only a political, but also an epistemological, necessity. This, of course, is one of Harding's own recurrent themes. The marginalization of voices means that knowledge is lost, possible and productive means of understanding the world excluded. This theme is reflected in the volume by the ways in which the West has ignored scientific contributions that have originated from outside its own projects (Needham, Weatherford and Third World Network). The discounting of such knowledge is accompanied by a denial of the contributions made by other cultures to the present science of the West (Bernal). The changes that are required here, to improve both the quality of people's lives and the quality of our knowledge, involve issues of access to the scientific community and control over the direction of research. Both issues are addressed in the book. One section explores the barriers to participation in science by black people within the West. Other sections show that, even in places such as India, where there is a large and flourishing scientific community, objectives are set by the economic domination of the West; and the legitimacy of the knowledge produced is established by reference back to Europe (see the article by Goonatilake).

The 'racial' economy of science, moreover, is displayed not only in the way in which science is harnessed to reinforce the domination of particular groups, but also in the contribution science makes to the creation of a distorting ideology by means of which such domination appears legitimate. A key component here has been the construction from within science of the conception of 'race', the view that human beings can be divided into distinct racial groups with individuating physiological and psychological characteristics. Section II of this volume, entitled 'Science Constructs "Race"', rehearses the sorry history of this enterprise. There is a striking parallel with the construction of gender differentials, with an even flimsier set of biological credentials on which to base them. Indeed, the analogy which is drawn in much of this work between women and peoples who are not white, in terms of physiological characteristics such as the shape of their skull, and psychological characteristics such as their emotional nature, lack of rationality, sensuality, childlikeness, and so forth, makes it quite plain that what is going on is the creation of a collective 'other' to the paradigmatic human, who is both white and male. Nor are these processes within science confined to the past, as the discussions of contemporary sociobiology make clear. Reflections on this particular range of scientific theories, and resistance to them, bring into play a number of issues which are key to any radical reassessment of the scientific enterprise. Although some data were deliberately distorted, most of the work was produced by scientists who were not so much dishonest as informed by preconceptions that constructed the similarities and differences their theories set out to prove, affecting even the shapes which they saw in their drawings of skulls. Such preconceptions prevented the recognition of that multiplicity of similarities and differences between peoples which prevents any structured organization into hierarchical categories. Early resistance to this work was strongly hampered by the presumption that science was/should be *value free*, and the belief that only people with the mark of the scientific professional could have criticisms worth attending to. The recognition of the ideological nature of these theories, by those who were categorized by them as 'other', therefore made little impact on the scientific community (see the article by Stepan and Gilman).

Given its manifest androcentrism and Eurocentrism, what should our contemporary attitude be towards science? Clearly, we are no longer able to share the optimism displayed in an article by Joseph Needham, who suggests that 'democracy [is] the practice of which science is the theory' (p. 439). However, to adopt a simple anti-science position is not only to ignore the important role that scientific methods have played in exposing scientistic ideology; it is also to ignore the empowering role which scientific discoveries (not always dignified as such) have had, and can have, on people's lives. Can we create an alternative science? Donna Haraway, in her article, signals the pitfalls of one such approach, which sees oppositional groups as able to offer some unitary alternative to the models of our ideologically flawed science. Her example is feminist work in social science and animal studies, which has used as a resource 'Eastern' methodologies emphasizing interaction and empathy – models which can nonetheless be used to produce masculinist science. In attempting to democratize scientific practices, and to anchor them in

local and indigenous projects, we must expect a multiplicity of differences. Such differences, however, cannot yield closed and impenetrable perspectives. The interdependencies of the world economy, the interwoven history of colonizer and colonized, and constantly shifting cultural identities require us to confront and negotiate these differences without the present structure of centre and periphery. Creating the political possibility for such negotiations is necessary for epistemological progress and, interconnectedly, to improve the quality of life on earth.

Kathleen Lennon

Times of iron and fire

Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, two volumes, translated by Raymond Rosenthal, edited by Frank Rosengarten, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994. 374 and 431 pp., £27.50 each volume, hb., 0 231 07552 9 and 0 231 07554 5.

Eighteen months after his arrest in November 1926, Antonio Gramsci – together with thirty-two of his fellow Communists – was brought before Mussolini's Special Tribunal in Defence of the State, which proceeded to convict him of 'conspiratorial activity, instigation of civil war, justification of crime, and incitement to class hatred'. In accordance with the prosecutor's injunction to 'prevent this brain from functioning for twenty years', Gramsci was condemned to a prison term of 20 years, 4 months and 5 days; given his fragile constitution, this was tantamount to a lingering death sentence.

Gramsci is invariably associated with the motto 'pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will'. But in a letter of December 1929 to his younger brother, Carlo, in which he invoked Romain Rolland's couplet, Gramsci commended the figure who 'will never again despair and lapse into those vulgar, banal states of mind that are called pessimism and optimism'. In the event, 'stoic serenity' of this order eluded him. Stoicism, not serenity, characterized his temperament. 'You are not faced abruptly with an instant's choice on which to gamble, a choice in which you have to evaluate the alternatives in a flash and cannot postpone your decision', he wrote of the revolutionary vocation in conditions of fascist incarceration:

> Here postponement is continual, and your decision has continually to be renewed. This is why you can say that something has changed. There is not even the choice between living for a day as a lion, or a hundred years as a sheep. You don't live as a lion even for a minute, far from it: you live like something far lower than a sheep for years and years and know that you have to live like that. Image of Prometheus who, instead of being attacked by the eagle, is devoured by parasites.

The image would return, to savage effect, in a letter to his devoted sister-in-law, Tania Schucht, dating from January 1932:

> One ends up by becoming micromaniacal ... at feeling one's nerves continually scraped by so many small things and small preoccupations. On the other hand you see what happens: Prometheus in his struggle with all the gods of Olympus seems to us a tragic Titan; Gulliver bound by Lilliputians makes us laugh. If Prometheus instead of having his liver devoured every day by the eagle had been nibbled by ants, he too would have made us laugh. Jove in his day was not very intelligent; the technique for getting rid of one's opponents was not yet very developed.

The opera buffa Jove of the Piazza Venezia got rid of this opponent. His technique sufficed to induce the cerebral haemorrhage from which Gramsci died, six days after his (reduced) sentence expired, on 27 April 1937 – the very date on which his father anticipated his return home to Sardinia. In the interim, however, the sentence had not prevented that brain from functioning.

Largely isolated from his family, friends and comrades, and sustained by Tania Schucht and the admirable Piero Sraffa; subject to 'multiple censorships' and plagued by 'physical attrition' and 'psychic deformations' – physically wrecked, but morally unbroken, Gramsci achieved an 'iron coherence' equal to 'these times of iron and fire'. Its first, most obvious index, indispensable to the morale of anti-fascist resistance, was his refusal to countenance any appeal for clemency – a 'form of suicide' the leader of the Italian Communists rejected, despite his doctor's advice that it was imperative for his survival. Not content with such practical resolution, Gramsci sought to turn involuntary abstention from activism to innovative political account, embarking in February 1929 on what were to become the 2,848 pages of the extraordinary *Prison Notebooks*. Finally, in these *Letters from Prison* he bequeathed a desolate record of what he diagnosed as 'prisonitis', or the vitiations induced by the rigours of resistance to the prison regime.

Gramsci's letters frequently evince his profound resentments – above all, his 'sensation of being doubly

imprisoned' by the failure of his family to respond and correspond as he would have wished. And yet, if they divest him of the postwar halo of saint-and-martyr, it is to restore Antonio Gramsci to his true – enviable – human proportions, disclosing the qualities that made him something more than the 'average man' of his self-portrait. Alongside the familiar figure of the stoic, the letters reveal the solicitous son, offering reassurance to the mother to whom, unawares, he continued to send birthday greetings after her death; and the tortured husband and father, vainly seeking to communicate with the wife with whom all moments had, of necessity, been stolen; with the sons for whom he could not but be a 'phantom'. Gramsci, however, had no desire 'to fall into the pathetic', and sometimes discovered in ironic humour one form of insurance against his unavoidable lapses. (An indirect rebuke to his wife's slackly libertarian notions of child pedagogy makes for particularly amusing – not to mention timely – reading.)

There have been two previous English editions of Gramsci's prison correspondence, the more substantial of which is Hamish Henderson's translation of the original, bowdlerized Italian selection of 1947, reissued by Pluto in 1988 and containing 219 letters. Columbia University Press, already responsible for a new multi-volume translation of the *Prison Notebooks* (the first instalment of which appeared in 1992), has now released what it advertises as 'the complete and definitive edition' of the *Letters*, comprising two volumes and some 486 items. Notwithstanding an element of potential hyperbole in such claims, for serious readers of Gramsci in English it is indispensable. Raymond Rosenthal has produced a text whose fidelity to the original the present reviewer is not competent to assess, but whose merits as epistolary English prose are unmistakable. Frank Rosengarten has supplied an illuminating introduction, explanatory notes, brief biographies of the dramatis personae, a chronology of Gramsci's life, a detailed bibliography, and an analytical index to both volumes. The finished product is a credit to publisher, translator and editor.

Not least of Rosengarten's virtues is his avoidance of the temptation to render Gramsci more palatable to a contemporary readership by dissociating him from the history of Communism. (Contrariwise, the anti-Communist *canard* that the PCI 'abandoned Gramsci to his fate', is firmly refuted.) Gramsci would not have wanted his reputation redeemed at the expense of the great cause on whose behalf he forged it. For the qualities of Antonio Gramsci were inextricably bound up with those of the party he led, whose sacrifices in defence of the Spanish Republic against fascist international brigades, in the final months of his life, laid the foundation for its subsequent hegemony in the Italian Resistance.

On the day this review is being drafted, in the year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of a war fought, so the official history has it, to defeat fascism in Europe, Mussolini's descendant, Gianfranco Fini, has been in Britain, addressing MPs in the Palace of Westminster, at the behest of Tories reverting to thirties' type. Signor Fini would have us believe that, thanks to a belated conversion job, he and his party, the National Alliance, are 'post-fascist'. The prototype, he maintains, has been 'consigned to the judgement of history'. So be it: that judgement can safely be assigned to Gramsci. Stripped of his parliamentary immunity, arraigned before a jury of *squadristi*, he delivered his verdict: 'You will lead Italy to ruin and it will be up to us Communists to save her.' Seven decades on, let it stand.

Gregory Elliott

King Cang

Georges Canguilhem, *A Vital Rationalist: Selected Writings from Georges Canguilhem*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, edited by François Delaporte, introduction by Paul Rabinow, Zone Books, New York, 1994. 481 pp., £24.25 hb., 0 942299 72 8.

Canguilhem is surrounded by paradoxes. Still comparatively unknown in the English-speaking world, his writings on the history and philosophy of science have canonical status in France. The extent of his reputation can be gauged by the appearance of an article entitled 'King Cang' (a pun on Canguilhem's nickname and King Kong) in *Libération* in February 1993: not many historians of science have been the subject of a three-page spread in a daily newspaper.

Whilst the broad outlines of Canguilhem's thought have, in part thanks to Althusser and Foucault, gained a certain currency, one suspects that few readers of *Libération* were truly familiar with the dauntingly dense essays he had produced since his doctoral thesis of 1943 on the 'normal' and the 'pathological'. Axioms such as 'theories do not proceed from facts' circulate widely and have fuelled many trite debates, but they are grounded in a real erudition and a stern intellectual rigour. The paradoxes are not restricted to the reception of the work. Canguilhem was in many ways a rationalist, but when he asked, 'Is not the value of life, along with the acknowledgement of life as a value, rooted in knowledge of its essential precariousness?', he came close to the melancholy of Freud's paper 'On Transience', or even to the tragic vision of a Pascal.

As an epistemologist of science, Canguilhem was the natural heir to Gaston Bachelard and the most distinguished representative of a distinct tradition that could, perhaps surprisingly, claim both Kant and Comte as ancestors. The Bachelardian notion of an 'epistemological break' which wrenches a science from its pre-scientific past is crucial to his vision of the history of the sciences. For both of them, sciences have a discontinuous history, rather than the smooth continuity of a complacent knowledge. As Canguilhem remarks of Descartes, there can be no history of a science without a 'rending of tradition'. To that extent, the history of a science is not a description of the progress of truth, but a history of errors overcome and illusions dispelled; it is, of necessity, a critical history. Nor is the object of this history identical with the history of the object of science: the history of a science such as crystallography is the history of an object – a discourse – that has a history; the science of crystallography is the science of a natural object (the properties of crystals) which is not a history, which has no history. The history of science is a history of the formation, deformation and rectification of scientific concepts; hence the relevance of Canguilhem to the Foucault of *Birth of the Clinic* and the Althusser of *Reading Capital*. The emphasis on the conceptual logic of scientific history even leads to a rejection of Kuhn's 'paradigm', disdainfully viewed as no more than a psychological consensus within a scientific community or even a laboratory, but is always tempered by an awareness of the importance of technology and of non-conceptual forces such as economic necessity.

Canguilhem's background was in medicine, and the history of the medical sciences is the primary object of the texts included in this volume. The history of medicine – viewed as an evolving synthesis of applied sciences, rather than as a science in its own right – is largely a history of concepts (and of the techniques they generate), and of problem-solving, but the impetus behind medicine itself is 'a duty to assist individual human beings whose lives are in danger'. Canguilhem's rationalism, then, appears to co-exist with an unexpected existential humanism.

The subject matter of the present volume is wide-ranging, as Canguilhem moves from Aristotle to Comte, from the all-but-forgotten 'iatromechanics' of the nineteenth century to the more familiar Comte and Claude Bernard; from the history of cell theory to Crick and Watson's discovery of the double-helix structure of DNA. It is this that makes Canguilhem, like Foucault, so difficult to come to terms with: whilst the general principles are clear, few readers are equipped with the specialist knowledge required to take issue with him (after all, few of us have any intimate acquaintance with Xavier Bichat's pioneering work in general anatomy). And sadly, Canguilhem is more likely to be read by philosophers than by the scientists who might find in his work the stimulus to an alertly critical self-awareness.

The subtitle of *A Vital Rationalist* promises 'selected writings from Georges Canguilhem', and an edited volume of selected essays would indeed be welcome. *A Vital Rationalist* in fact consists of edited extracts arranged in thematic order. Sentences and even whole paragraphs have been cut and there is nothing to bring the elisions to the reader's attention. The complete abolition of chronology makes it impossible to trace the development of Canguilhem's thought, or even to begin to explore the fascinatingly complex relationship between Canguilhem and Foucault. There is no index. The otherwise excellent critical bibliography supplied by Camille Limoges claims that the crucial essay 'What is Psychology?' is included in this volume. It is not. Canguilhem's work was always characterized by a scrupulous attention to detail: King Cang deserves better than this.

David Macey

Michael P. Levine, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. xii + 388 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 415 07064 3.

Pantheism has not been fashionable in recent times, being accepted by neither theists nor atheists, and marginalized by the struggle between the two. It is usually dismissed out of hand by the Christian theists who dominate Western philosophy of religion. Levine, however, takes the possibility of a pantheistic interpretation of reality seriously, both as a philosophical proposition and as a faith with liturgical implications. He thus presents pantheism as a distinctive alternative to theism and atheism.

Levine's approach is primarily philosophical. He begins with an attempt to clarify what actually constitutes pantheism. Given the lack of serious writing and reflection on pantheism, this section is particularly welcome, drawing together much of the existing literature and providing critical accounts of the propositions represented. While no survey of pantheism can ignore Spinoza (and Levine doesn't), more interesting is the detailed consideration given to varied forces of pantheism drawing on the thought of (amongst others) Hegel, Taoism, Sankara's monistic Hinduism, and Theravada Buddhism.

Levine sets out a broad definition of pantheism as belief in an all-inclusive divine unity. He rejects as too narrow the common definition of it as the identification of God and the world, since this relies on terms rooted in theistic thought. That the world constitutes a unity – and that this unity can be experienced as divine – is the central claim of Levine's definition of pantheism. This counters the criticism that, for pantheists, 'God' becomes just another word for the world, with the result that pantheism is nothing more than atheism.

As an illustration of the widespread misinterpretation of pantheism, Levine questions its identification with monism. While some forms of pantheism (such as Spinoza's) may be monistic, this is not necessarily the case. In its assertion of immanence, it is often claimed that pantheism *must* deny the deity any element of transcendence. Levine argues that there are different types of transcendence. He claims that epistemic transcendence is more important than ontological transcendence, and supports this by reference to Confucianism and Taoism. Levine does not claim that pantheism is a solution to the problems of immanence and transcendence. Rather, he attempts to show that these problems are just as serious for theism, where they do not provide an insurmountable barrier to belief.

Using similar arguments, Levine rejects the accusation that pantheism is undermined by the existence of evil in the world. The problem of evil arises only if one posits an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity, and Levine's divine unity does not have to be a perfect being in this sense. In the light of this, pantheism is able to sidestep many of the criticisms traditionally levelled at it by its theist critics.

The final third of the book is devoted to two questions: What should pantheists not do? and What should pantheists do? Levine argues that worship and prayer are religious practices that are incompatible with pantheism. But when it comes to saying what kind of religious practice *is* suitable, Levine is less clear. While there is some talk of integrating, or living in accordance with, the divine unity (mainly drawn from Taoism), Levine does not significantly expand on this.

In short, this book gives a thorough account of pantheism in philosophical terms, but it leaves open a number of significant questions, and thus leaves philosophers of religion (and especially theists) with some challenging problems

David Webster

Conrad Lodziak, *Manipulating Needs: Capitalism and Culture*, Pluto Press, London, 1995. ix + 155 pp., £10.95 pb., 0 7453 0853 8.

This short book is written with endearing brevity and frankness. Its concern is the failure of the Left to capitalize on the contradictory social and cultural changes of the past thirty years. These changes, including those described by the proponents of 'postmodernity', have, in Lodziak's view, increased the difficulty of achieving a meaningful and satisfying life in our society, whilst also rendering untenable many of the ideological justifications for the prevailing patterns of domination.

Lodziak's main thesis is that the Left has failed to attract the disaffected majority to its political project because it has been indelibly marked by an influential trend in academic discourse: what Lodziak calls 'ideology-centred' thinking. This is the view that people's actions can be best explained by reference to their values and beliefs. Given the empirical evidence of widespread acceptance of the dominant ideology, the argument goes, the transformation of capitalist society must prioritize an ideological struggle aimed at political enlightenment. This is an understandable perspective for the social theorist, whose professional preoccupation with ideas inevitably leads to an inflated sense of their importance. But, Lodziak argues, this emphasis also informs both institutional and grassroots politics, and its patronizing and dismissive approach to people's experience is one reason why a coherent oppositional culture has failed to develop.

Instead of the 'dominant ideology thesis', Lodziak proposes that we view the reproduction of capitalist social relations in terms of the 'manipulation of needs'. Lodziak argues that people's actions can be best explained in terms of

the availability of resources. Their decision to act in a given way reflects both their *power* to conduct that activity and, more importantly, their *powerlessness* to act otherwise. The most important resource, in Lodziak's view, is *disposable time* (although energy, competence, money and love are also mentioned). The manipulation-of-needs thesis thus argues that it is essentially our material dependence on the capitalist wage relation which deters us from active political opposition. In structuring and fragmenting our so-called free time, it primes us for private consumption and directly restricts our capacity to use our time to develop our autonomy and engage in contestatory politics.

In contrast to much fashionable writing on the liberated modern consumer, Lodziak believes that advanced capitalism is characterized by an increasing deprivation of people's basic 'identity needs'. This undermines people's *capacity* for autonomy, exacerbating the scarcity of resources required to exercise that autonomy and making for an increasingly unsatisfying existence. Following Laing and Ernest Becker, Lodziak takes ontological security and a sense of significance as fundamental components of our capacity for autonomy. In his view, the de-skilling and de-professionalization of work, along with the paucity of work relations, have frustrated the possibility of meeting these needs in the employment sphere. Instead, they seek satisfaction in the private realm, through intimacy, leisure, consumerism, and often self-absorption. This inevitably leads to political abstinence and a privatistic orientation towards both superficial and overloaded associations, which may reinforce people's experience of meaninglessness.

Lodziak's argument is that the Left must endeavour to develop a 'culture for autonomy', a political movement that isn't merely an instrumental vehicle for the achievement of pre-established goals, which subordinates the autonomous contributions of the rank and file on its way. Instead, the movement should prefigure the kind of society and social relations it aims to establish. Political participation must itself provide the resources for people both to meet their identity needs – through warm and convivial relations based on co-operation, mutual support, and a respect for, and valuing of, each other's autonomy – and to facilitate and enlarge the range of their autonomy. A culture for autonomy, Lodziak argues, is thus the foundation for a culture of opposition. For in forging bonds of solidarity, expanding the sphere of mutual aid, and increasing people's collective self-reliance, our dependence on the capitalist system is weakened; and by creating an environment that enables political participation as a *way of life*, the prospect of sustained involvement in contestatory politics increases.

Lodziak writes with honesty and conviction. Drawing on the words of writers as diverse as Habermas, Simmel, Erikson, Adorno, Freire and Gorz, he shows a canny ability to allow other voices to speak for themselves. This book is a rare attempt to bridge the divide between the intellectual and the activist. It would be unfortunate if it were neglected by either.

Finn Bowring

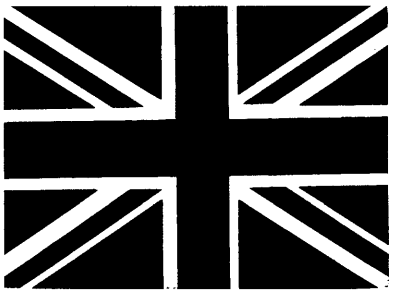
Steve Bruce, *The Edge of the Union: The Ulster Loyalist Political Vision*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994. viii + 176 pp., £6.99 pb., 0 19 827975 hb., 0 19 827976 0 pb.

Ulster Loyalism does not have many advocates in Britain today. Few Conservative politicians, and no cabinet minister, will declare fervent support for the Union. In liberal and social-democratic opinion, British encouragement of a united Ireland is generally thought to be the way of 'ending the Irish problem'. Among socialists, most political groupings on and beyond the left wing of the Labour Party have shared the republican view of Northern Ireland as a post-colonial rump, ruled by an alliance between metropolitan power and a local settler élite. And this has persisted, even though majority opinion in the Irish Republic, which never endorsed the methods of provisional Republicanism, has been increasingly inclined to dissent from their political rationale as well. However, in the climate created by the paramilitary ceasefires of 1994 (called after Steve Bruce's book was written), and in which some kind of accommodation between the contending parties is recognized as the indispensable condition of political development, even those least sympathetic to Loyalist perspectives will acknowledge the necessity of understanding their nature and their appeal.

The Edge of the Union, which follows Bruce's substantial accounts of evangelical Paisleyites and Loyalist paramilitaries (*God Save Ulster!*, 1986 and *The Red Hand*, 1992), is a timely, but limited, contribution to such understanding. Its authority depends heavily on Bruce's previous work: although he has returned to some of those whom he interviewed earlier, there is little extensive quotation from these more recent conversations. Despite his proclaimed intention of doing so, he hardly succeeds in maintaining a clear distinction between the exposition of Loyalist views and a more critical or objective discussion of them. He deplores the inadequacies of attempts to understand Northern Ireland simply as a colony, or to see its social divisions in purely economistic-Marxist terms, but his own approach, which privileges 'ethnic difference' as the explanatory key, tends to be equally one-dimensional. He insists that ethnic and national identities are actively formed and remade in social and cultural practice, and that 'the Irish nation' is no less a cultural construct than 'Ulster'. But the narrow geographical and

temporal focus of the book, which barely refers to events that have taken place outside the Six Counties or before 1920, does not allow any full sense to be conveyed of the unchosen conditions within which Irish people, North and South, have made their histories.

In my view, Bruce also fails to address in sufficiently complex terms the question of how far, and in what sense, those who adopt fundamentalist positions – and espouse, in the case of the paramilitaries, murderous tactics – can be taken to represent a much larger 'ethnic' constituency. He may be right to argue that those who express ethnic and communal identity in its most intransigent forms should be accorded particular attention in situations where such identity is constantly under challenge. Clearly, there is a continuum here, both socially and psychologically



(and among nationalists as well as unionists): there is instability and ambivalence, and extreme circumstances can engender for extreme tactics and discourses a support which extends well beyond the immediate circle of the 'operators' who carry out sectarian attacks. But Bruce's comparisons of Northern Ireland with former Yugoslavia – in both situations, conflicts about national identity and territorial sovereignty exacerbate the ethnic divisions upon which they feed – are of limited validity: in the Irish case, there has, mercifully, been much less social tolerance of the resort to arms.

For all its limitations, *The Edge of the Union*, as well as offering a necessary perspective on Northern Ireland, throws the light of actuality on contemporary theoretical preoccupations with the forms and claims of national and cultural identity. The bloody history which it chronicles should encourage us to consider how those claims are legitimately to be pressed, in terms of a much longer tradition of philosophical and ethical debate about the limits of governmental authority, and the justification for the use of violence.

Martin Ryle

Richard Wollheim, *The Mind and Its Depths*, Cambridge MA and Harvard University Press, London, 1994. x + 214 pp., £19.95 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 674 57611 X hb., 0 674 57612 8 pb.

Freud's hope that psychoanalysis would play a part in answering questions of a wider import than the problems posed by psychopathology is amply fulfilled in the writings of Richard Wollheim. The present volume of papers, written between 1975 and 1989, pursues themes which have marked him out as a distinctive voice in philosophy.

Wollheim's view is that psychoanalysis uses the same pattern of explanation as is found in everyday, 'common-sense' psychology. It involves psychological explanation of action through ascription of belief and desire, radically modified and extended; phantasies, instincts and mental mechanisms taking the place of instrumental belief in the belief–desire schema. This approach renders obsolete most criticisms of psychoanalysis in recent philosophy of science. What becomes clear is the apparently simple fact that Freud was a *psychologist*, despite his occasional tendencies to regard psychoanalysis as a place-holder for some neurological 'hard science'.

These issues touch upon what is most distinctive in Wollheim's approach to philosophy. Wollheim is a psychological realist. In the psychoanalytic version he has developed, this position entails that mental life is in full – indeed, florid – operation prior to the acquisition of language; and that non-linguistic mental activity continues to express itself throughout our lives. This is the particular contribution of Kleinian theory, and it enables Wollheim consistently and rigorously to adopt positions which go against the grain of much current thinking in critical studies. For example, Wollheim's account of artistic expression makes what is expressed a psychological state of the artist, which can be variably realized. In so far as the artist's intention is manifest on the surface of the work, it is available for retrieval by the spectator. It is hardly necessary to point out that this appeal to originary meaning has been heavily criticized of late; but Wollheim is unrepentant.

In this way, Wollheim's position draws its strength from his espousal, unique among philosophers, of a version of psychoanalysis which does not depict the unconscious as structured like a language, and which supplies the psychological infilling for his views on morality and aesthetics. The piece which stands as the paradigmatic expression of all Wollheim's main preoccupations is the first essay in this collection, 'The Sheep and the Ceremony'. Beginning with a story about Confucius, Wollheim weaves together a consideration of the role that ritual plays in giving meaning to life, his theory of expression, a reworking of Utilitarianism, the vicissitudes of the creative process, and the way in which morality is rooted in psychology. He concludes that moral philosophy undermines itself through its neglect of how it is that self-knowledge, with which morality is necessarily connected, is subject to the perversions of self-deception: 'The phantasy that morality marks the spot where human beings discard human nature'. In his handling of these variegated threads, in such a way that they combine to produce a coherent fabric, Wollheim raises the status of the philosophical paper, an all too often dull and lacklustre genre, to a level which approaches that of art itself.

David Snelling