REVIEWS

Biographemes

Louis-Jean Calvet, *Roland Barthes: A Biography*, translated by Sarah Wykes, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994. xiv + 291 pp., £25.00 hb., 0 7456 1017 X.

In 1968, Roland Barthes solemnly announced the death of the author in a short article that echoed the obituary for man penned by Foucault in the final lines of *Les Mots et les choses*. To give a text an author, claimed Barthes, was to give it a final signified, to impose closure on the otherwise infinite and unfinished play of writing. In the preface to *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, he expressed the wish that, were he dead and a writer, his life would be reduced by some friendly biographer to a few details, tastes and inflections, to a scattering of 'biographemes'.

Barthes himself accomplished that task in 1974 with his *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, an elegant little book made up of artfully selected fragments from a life. The original French edition is surrounded by ironies that inevitably disappear in the English version (*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*). Barthes' self-selected biographemes appeared in a collection which originally used the generic title *X par lui-même* ('X by Himself'): extracts from a writer's works were presented with a commentary and introduction so as to provide a portrait of an *écrivain de toujours*, a writer whose work's resistance to time gave him or her textual immortality. Barthes was, of course, familiar with the conventions of the series: his *Michelet*, his second book, appeared in the same collection in 1954. In writing – or assembling – the fragmentary *Roland Barthes*, he knowingly and no doubt ironically constructed himself as a classic author to be read alongside Balzac, Diderot, Sartre and Zola, to take only a few obvious names from the catalogue. Playing with authorship, or writership, appears to have been an integral part of the pleasure of the text.

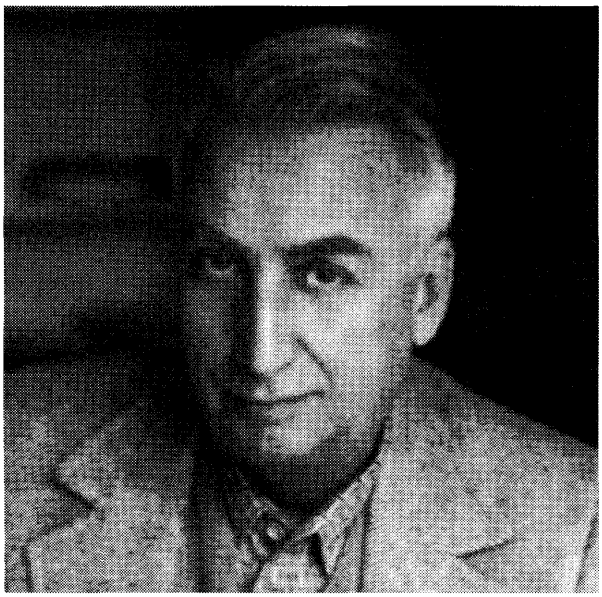
The fragment was a genre at which this ludic author excelled. Barthes could coin aphorisms, as when he remarked of Communist Party stalwart Roger Garaudy that 'Of course we must allow for mediocrity; in the case of Garaudy, it is impressive', but in many ways the polished fragment is his hallmark. All Barthes' books, from *Michelet* onwards, began life as fragmentary notes on collections of index cards which were gradually reshuffled until the book finally took shape. Assembled into the numbered paragraphs of *Elements of Semiology*, or of the important essay on 'The Old Rhetoric', the fragments take on a veneer of scientificity; elsewhere, they look more like elegant little playthings. fittingly, *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse*, that most preciously melancholic text, was, in terms of sales, by far his most successful work.

The twin themes of the death of the author and the death of man emerged against the general backdrop of high structuralism, with its emphasis on the impersonality of the text, and of the theoretical anti-humanism of the 1960s. Rather than being a creative subjectivity, the author was an intersection or a knot in what Kristeva termed intertextuality, word without end, world without end. At least four of the theorists who were most closely associated with that current are now the subjects of biographies: Foucault, Althusser, Barthes and Lacan. Death, biography and publishing strategies have turned them into authors. Novels by Philippe Sollers and Julia Kristeva have turned them into semi-fictional characters. Barthes is now the author of an ongoing Complete Works. Whether or not this new emphasis on biography – and this telling choice of subjects – reflects anything more than a shift in fashion is difficult to say, but it certainly casts an ironic light on the death of the author.

And yet, the thesis was perhaps self-defeating. When, in February 1969, Foucault addressed the Société Française de Philosophie on the topic of 'What is an author?', he recommended anonymity as an ethics and aesthetics of writing. 'What does it matter who is speaking, someone said, what does it matter who is speaking?', asked Foucault, and then made it clear that he was quoting Beckett. The author's death certificate was, after all, signed by an author. To cite Beckett once more, 'I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all.' But Malone is still speaking at the time of the book; still, but not quite, dying; still speaking in spite of all. Even at the time of their pronouncement, the obituaries appear to have been premature.

One of the inherent problems with biography is that it transforms necessity into contingency. The child who was born in Cherbourg in November 1915 must become the Roland Barthes who died after a pathetic road accident in 1980. The provincial boy whose father was killed in a sea battle during the first World War (leaving

Barthes, or so he claimed, with 'no father to kill, no family to hate, no milieu to reject: great Oedipal frustration'), must become the distinguished professor who taught at the Collège de France from 1977 onwards. Yet much of Barthes' life appears to have been a matter of extreme contingency. Unlike Sartre, Barthes never seems to have elaborated any 'project'. Tuberculosis prevented him from sitting the entrance examinations that might have given him a passport to the École Normale Supérieure, and thus frustrated any hopes of a classic academic-intellectual career. Barthes never took the *agrégation* that might have led to a university career, and never completed a doctorate. He took a Sorbonne degree in classics, began to teach in schools, but was soon back in the mountain sanatorium near Grenoble, seriously contemplating the prospect of spending his entire life there or in similar institutions.



Barthes' postwar career seemed to lie in cultural diplomacy, and he took posts in Romania (whence the staff of the French Institute were expelled for being imperialists), and then Alexandria. Back in Paris, Barthes worked mainly as a literary journalist and, together with Bernard Dort and *Théâtre populaire*, played a major role in popularizing Brecht. Journalism did not lead to any great success: when *Writing Degree Zero* was published in 1953, its author had been reduced to giving French lessons to foreign students at the Sorbonne in order to survive. The rise to eminence was neither necessary nor easy.

In theoretical terms, it is usually the chance encounter that provokes the next shift of perspective. A discussion with the linguist Greimas introduced Barthes to Saussure, but the use made of the signifier/signified opposition in *Writing Degree Zero* is loosely intuitive rather than rigorous. Like his fragments, Barthes' theoretical systems always appear to be in the making, or the remaking.

Calvet's biography is enjoyable and in many ways informative, but it rarely succeeds in going beyond the standard biographemes. It provides a good overview of an unexpectedly uncertain career, but does not really venture into the institutional sociology that might explain why so many significant figures in France spent so long on the margins before becoming master-thinkers. Nor does it explain precisely why Barthes, as opposed to, say, Gérard Genette or Tzvetan Todorov, achieved such remarkable status.

In purely human terms, the Barthes that emerges from these pages is not always an agreeable one. Whilst he obviously had a gift for friendship, Barthes' distinguishing feature was a talent for grumbling in a manner reminiscent of a gallic Philip Larkin. Calvet's description of the boredom endured by Barthes during the trip to China organized by *Tel Quel* is memorable: China was quite simply 'insipid'. Yet it is difficult not to sympathize with Barthes' relish for the pleasures of food, drink, and the fastidious arrangement of his work space. And it is impossible not to share his relish for the pleasures of the text. It is now rather difficult to endorse or credit the scientific ambitions of structuralism, and indeed of Barthes. Whilst *Elements of Semiology* and 'Myth Today' remain important texts, the dream of scientificity has faded badly: it is hard indeed to imagine *The Fashion System* being read with great pleasure by anyone. What once looked like a proto-scientific understanding now looks like a hedonistic flirtation with concepts, a loving fascination with neologisms and the stuff of language, though it never extended to any enthusiasm for learning foreign languages. The *Mythologies* remain a delight, not least because of the dislike expressed there for the 'bourgeoisie', nicely described by Calvet as a half-flaubertian, half-Marxist concept. Barthes may have flirted with Marxism, but probably had more in common with the author of *Bouvard and Pécuchet* than that of the *Communist Manifesto*. flaubert's obsession was with stupidity, Barthes' with 'neurosis'– a category so elastic as to be applicable to everything from the emphatic expression of feelings to political militancy and even his own boredom.

'Hysteria' could also take the form of gay militancy, especially as practised by the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire in the early 1970s, and Barthes remained relatively quiet about his sexual preferences. No great revelations are forthcoming from Calvet, who refrains from prurient speculation. He endorses the widely held view that Barthes was very anxious to

conceal his sexuality from his beloved mother, whose death in 1977 inspired the haunting *Camera Lucida*. The bald statement that there is no link between Barthes' sexuality and the content of his texts is, however, both disappointing and debatable. *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse* is remarkable for its indeterminacy at the level of gender and sexual orientation, and the texts published in Barthes' lifetime contain only one direct allusion to homosexuality, namely the passage on 'The Goddess H' (homosexuality and hashish) in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. There is, however, a definitely erotic feel to many of the texts, and not least *S/Z*. It has been convincingly suggested by Diana Knight, in her 'Roland Barthes: An Intertextual figure' (in Michael Worton and Judith Still, eds, *Intertextuality*), that the notion of cruising can be seen as an almost theoretical concept that is central to Barthes' aesthetic of reading and writing. Barthes picks up concepts, flirts with them, has crushes on them, and then moves on.

For Barthes, every biography was a novel that dared not admit it. Calvet, who is certainly a friendly biographer, courteously disagrees, arguing that, however much interpretation his work contains, the task of the biographer is to uncover and narrate the history of a life that has already been written. A novel, in contrast, is at once a formal creation which works on language and a product of the imagination. The distinction, couched in rather naive terms, masks the problems posed by the similarity between the two genres. Barthes is surely right to argue that a biography imposes closure, if only because of its linear and temporal structure. It follows a chronological thread, very similar in most cases to that of the *Bildungsroman*. And it uses many of the devices analysed by Barthes in his studies of narrative, especially the reality effect created by descriptions. Calvet is very good at describing the mountains surrounding the student sanatorium of Saint-Hilaire du Touvet, where Barthes spent so much time, but seems unaware of the role played by his own observations and imagination in guaranteeing the veracity of statements such as 'Time passed slowly' – a classic intervention by a supposedly omniscient narrator. And what is the reader to make of the sentence: 'One can imagine what Roland's adolescence must have been like'? Perhaps it is easier to write the biography of a structuralist than to make full biographical use of structuralism's insights into the nature of narrative.

David Macey

Balance-sheets and blueprints

John E. Roemer, *A Future for Socialism*, Verso, London, 1994, viii + 178 pp., £34.95 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 86091 428 3 hb., 0 86091 653 7 pb.

John E. Roemer, *Egalitarian Perspectives: Essays in Philosophical Economics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. xi + 356 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 521 45066 7.

Erik Olin Wright, *Interrogating Inequality: Essays on Class Analysis, Socialism and Marxism*, Verso, London and New York, 1994. xiii + 271 pp., £34.95 hb., £13.95 pb., 0 86091 408 9 hb., 0 86091 633 2 pb.

Along with G.A. Cohen, Jon Elster and Adam Przeworski, John Roemer and Erik Olin Wright have been prominent members of the 'September Group' of Anglophone Analytical Marxists, formed in the wake of Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978), and committed to the reconstruction of historical materialism and the foundation of a feasible socialism. In an autobiographical 'prologue' to *Interrogating Inequality* which occasionally verges upon an exercise in *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, Wright supplies some intriguing insights into the ethos of a collective that has conferred upon itself the sobriquet of the 'Non-Bullshit Marxist Group'. 'Actually,' he parenthetically confides, 'there was a discussion once in the group as to whether this was *non*-bullshit or *no* bullshit, there being a very subtle nuance in the distinction, but I can't reconstruct the philosophical debate.' Very droll, no doubt. Yet this is precisely the kind of self-satisfaction, when allied to a casuistry parading as rigour, a zeal for academic respectability, and a rebarbative diction of 'utility fines' and 'opportunity costs', that has incited the polemical counter-charge of bullshit without the Marxism.

In the case of Elster, who has apparently departed the ranks of the Septembrists – possibly because the strain of refraining from 'bullshit Marxism' proved too great – the reaction is arguably warrantable. As Marcus Roberts has demonstrated in a review of *Political Psychology* (*RP* 68), the upshot of Elsterian 'rational choice theory' is trivial, where not risible: a rational mountain has delivered an optional mouse. In the cases of Wright and

Roemer such a verdict would compound, rather than correct, their *déformation professionnelle*. Still, there is something at once ingenuous and troubling about Wright's measurement of the 'impact of Analytical Marxism' (in chapter 8) by predominantly academic criteria (including the elevated university posts occupied by its protagonists). Meanwhile, the sole evidence cited for its salience in 'general discussions on the left' is the utilization of the concept of 'contradictory class locations' in a document issued by the rapidly disintegrating British Communist Party in 1988. (Even this has an air of bathos, given that the concept, coined by Wright, predates his transfer from Althusserian to Analytical allegiances.)

Amour-propre apart, *Interrogating Inequality* is a consistently stimulating and rewarding collection of essays, dating from 1979 to 1993. It contains one classic piece (chapter 6), in which Wright deploys the Althusserian thesis of the interpenetration/articulation of modes of production in any historical social formation, to scan the immanent tendencies and potential trajectories of capitalism. Affiliated to the duly revised historical materialism outlined with Andrew Levine and Elliott Sober in *Reconstructing Marxism* (1992), Wright embraces Marxism as 'a broad framework for linking [socialism's] moral concerns with inequality to the theoretical tasks of explanation and the political tasks of transformation'. He is at his strongest precisely where his fellow Analytical Marxists are at their weakest: in seeking to forge the requisite links between evaluation, explanation and transformation. This is evident, for example, in his rejoinder (chapter 7) to Robert Van der Ween and Philippe Van Parijs's projection of 'A Capitalist Road to Communism' (reprinted in Van Parijs's *Marxism Recycled*, reviewed by Andrew Collier in *RP* 71). While endorsing the normative rationale for 'basic income grants', Wright convincingly refutes their sustainability in the context of an economy dominated by 'private' ownership/control of the means of production.

Wright's balance-sheet of 'Marxism After Communism' (chapter 11) argues that, instead of establishing the societal viability of socialism, classical Marxism restricted itself to predicting the *non*-viability of capitalism: the former, however, cannot be inferred from the latter. Accordingly, amid the debris of historical Communism and the disarray of actual social democracy, the scene is set for clarification of the normative foundations of socialism, and depiction of the institutional contours of some viable instantiation of it. As their confidence in historical materialism has waned, these have become the principal preoccupations of the surviving Septembrists. Promise has thus far exceeded performance, notwithstanding the admirable efforts of David Schweickart (whose *Against Capitalism* is reviewed in *RP* 72). Whatever their other demerits may or may not be, prospectuses for 'market socialism', as the only realistically conjecturable species of the genus, suffer from a disabling weakness: the absence of any *politics* of a viable socialism. Falling squarely within the terms of Wright's critique of schemes for a basic income under capitalism, they are, for all their self-attribution of economic realism, marked by political utopianism: advancing a more or less desirable goal with little or no specification of its possible constituency, agency or strategy.

Intent upon 'sketch[ing] blueprints for a feasible socialism', John Roemer acknowledges the problem and addresses it – after a fashion: 'for any end state of a social process to be feasible, a path must exist from here to there, and so at least a rough sketch of possible routes, if not a precise map, may reasonably be asked of someone attempting to describe the final destination.' In the event, in lieu of a rough sketch, Roemer merely points at various places on the map (the ex-USSR, China, Scandinavia, etc.), concluding – like Schweickart, and with identical implausibility – that Eastern Europe offers the most fertile soil for the transplantation of this hybrid. As to his version of the market-socialist model, it is sketched in the final chapter of *Egalitarian Perspectives*, a volume explicitly located 'in the context of contemporary political philosophy' (i.e. the egalitarian liberalism of Anglo-American academic political philosophy). Replete with axioms and theorems – including the splendid 'Perversity Prevention Axiom' ('PP' for short) – Roemer's 'essays in philosophical economics' chart his itinerary from an alternative Marxian theory of exploitation in *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (1982) to a normative theory of distributive justice. They are not for readers whose standards of clarity and rigour fall short of disembodied algebraic exercises. However, given Roemer's conclusion – 'the problem of real distributive justice is sufficiently complex, given the complexity of the real world, that there is no single correct way of implementing it. We must give up the elegance of simple and precise characterizations, associated with axiomatic allocation mechanism theory, if we are to be honest about the problem of distributive justice' – those who never adopted such elegant characterizations in the first place will be spared his 'disappointment'.

Where *Egalitarian Perspectives* sometimes amounts to what oft was thought, but ne'er so ill expressed, *A Future for Socialism*, mercifully free of algebra, is a lucid

defence of market socialism against the pervasive criticism – famously advanced by Hayek in the 1930s – that it is an 'oxymoron'. Roemer's advocacy of a form of socialist economy which will combine 'both efficiency *and* equality', by conjugating competitive markets with popular ownership rights, and which consequently rules out labour-management of firms, is rooted in a redefinition of socialism as a left-liberal egalitarianism. The principal value of socialism, it is said, is 'equality of opportunity' for 'self-realization and welfare'. 'What socialists want' turns out to pertain to the egalitarian theories of justice associated, most notably, with Rawls and Dworkin; and – or so we are assured – '[t]hrough these academics, many more millions will eventually be influenced, as these ideas are examined in the classroom and as they make their way into popular culture and policymaking.' In view of Rawls's palpable lack of influence to date upon policy-makers of the centre-left, in stark contrast to the posterity of Hayek on the right, Roemer's credulity puts one in mind of Bertrand Russell's judgement of J.H. Thomas: that capitalism would last until doomsday if he was all that confronted it. At any rate, as John Gray has argued in *New Left Review* (no. 210, 1995), *A Future for Socialism* attests to the well-nigh uncontested hegemony of liberal thought in the English-speaking world.

Even were we to settle for Roemer's 'revision of the standard models of what constitutes socialism', we cannot (or should not) underestimate its corollary: the momentous redistribution of existing capitalist wealth entailed in the proposal for an equalization of property rights via the issue of share coupons. The transition to 'people's capitalism' (to borrow Wright's apt characterization of Roemerian market socialism in the same issue of *NLR*) proves to be no less imponderable than the received roads, parliamentary and revolutionary, to socialism. fleeting reflections on the demise of formerly existing socialism, and credence in the healthy functioning of Scandinavian social democracy, certainly inspire little confidence in Roemer's engagement with the 'complexity of the real world'.

In these and other respects, the underlying historico-political innocence of what Gray maliciously dubs 'socialism with a professorial face' takes its toll. Perversity prevention of a different order seems indicated.

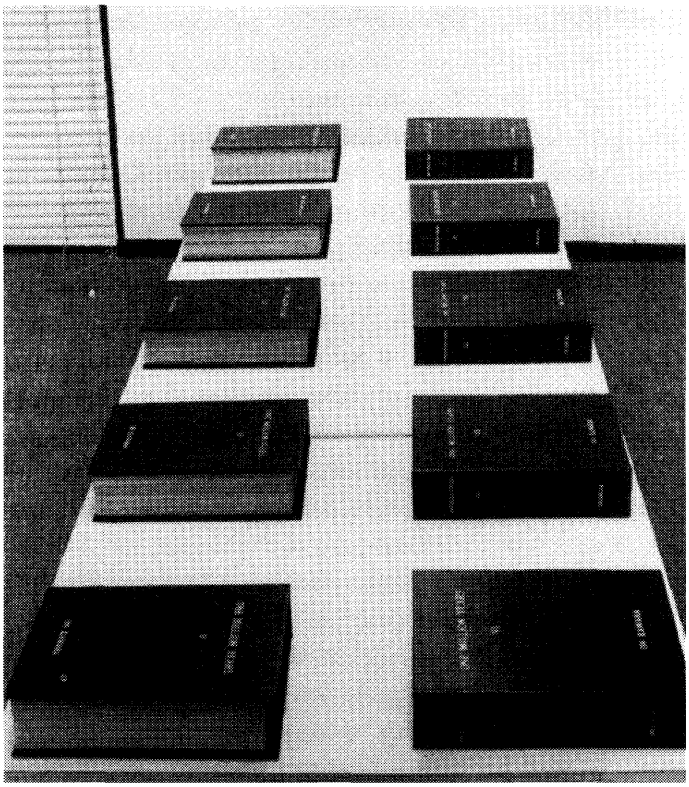
Gregory Elliott

From the inside out

Ronald Dworkin, *Life's Dominion: An Argument about Abortion and Euthanasia*, HarperCollins, London, paperback edition, 1995. 272 pp., £7.99 pb., 0 00686 309 4.

The appearance of Dworkin's book in paperback is greatly to be welcomed. It has already been much noticed, but it deserves an even wider readership, and I hope that it will get it, since it is especially readable and illuminating and is about an immensely important topic – our moral attitudes to life and death, as exemplified in the debates about abortion and euthanasia. Dworkin describes it as an example of 'philosophy from the inside out'. Rather than formulating a general philosophical theory and then 'applying' it to specific practical issues, the book proceeds in the opposite direction, starting with the concrete problems, trying to make sense of them and working out the theoretical positions which enable us to do so. The richness of the theory which Dworkin develops thus lends support to the view that perhaps all the best philosophy is done from the inside out. It is 'applied philosophy' in the best sense – the application of philosophical argument and understanding to the things that matter.

Dworkin claims that the dominant formulations of the opposed and entrenched positions on abortion (and, to a lesser extent, euthanasia) are misleading. They misrepresent the real moral concerns of the people who occupy those positions. The dispute is standardly presented as an argument about rights, about whether a foetus has rights and whether abortion violates such rights. Dworkin thinks that this is a misunderstanding of the argument, partly because, if it did have that character, the anti-abortion position would hardly even be plausible. At least until the late stages of pregnancy, a foetus does not have a sufficiently developed nervous system to possess any form of consciousness; hence it cannot have interests, and therefore cannot possess rights, including a right to life. Dworkin also suggests that if we look at the complex attitudes of the opponents in the abortion debate, we find that, despite their overt rhetoric, this is not what they are really disagreeing about. Many of those who defend the permissibility of abortion nevertheless regard it as morally problematic, as a serious and difficult decision for any woman to take – which it would not be if the matter could be settled simply by recognizing that the ascription of rights to the



foetus makes no sense. Likewise, some at least of those who oppose abortion nevertheless accept that it is a matter for the individual conscience and that the law should not impose a particular decision – a view which they could not coherently take if they really thought that abortion is murder, the violation of a person's right to life.

Dworkin suggests that the abortion argument is really about a quite different idea: not the right to life, but conflicting interpretations of the idea that life itself has intrinsic value, that life is 'sacred'. Attitudes to abortion can be located on a spectrum according to the degree to which they emphasize the *natural* or the *human* contribution to the intrinsic value of life. Those who oppose abortion do so because they think of human life as primarily a natural product, whose value we dishonour by destroying it at any stage of its biological development. Others accept abortion because they put more emphasis on the human investment in a life; for them the destruction of foetal life is less of a loss, and the blighting of a woman's life by being forced to bear an unwanted child is correspondingly more of an offence against the value of life. Both sides to the dispute, however, share the same underlying belief, that life is sacred. And though the former position, emphasizing the natural dimension of life, may tend to (but need not) go with an orthodox religious stance, the whole dispute is in a wider sense a religious one. This leads to Dworkin's main practical conclusion: that since the disagreement is between conflicting interpretations of a fundamentally 'religious' idea, it would be wrong for any one resolution of the disagreement to be legally imposed. In this sense, the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe* v. *Wade* was correct, reflecting the constitutional liberty of all citizens to make their own choice of religious beliefs.

I have two doubts about Dworkin's argument. The first concerns his separation of the idea of the 'right to life' from the idea of the intrinsic value of life. His explication of the latter is wonderfully impressive and convincing. He does full justice to the complex phenomenology of attitudes to death and killing – to our sense of what it is that is lost when a human life ends, to our sense of why some kinds of death are especially tragic, and to our understanding of why (as in the euthanasia debate) the manner of a person's death is important for their sense of their life as a whole. But, precisely because of the power of his account, I am not sure what room is then left for any separate account of a *right* to life. I am inclined to see this as confirming my own doubts about whether the concept of 'rights' adds anything substantial to our moral understanding. Dworkin, of course, has his own theory of rights, which he has expounded elsewhere. For him the fundamental right is a right to equality, the right of all persons to equal concern and respect. One can see how that conception of rights might be *superimposed* on a deeper understanding of the intrinsic value of life. On the basis of the latter we can see how, if a person is the subject of rights, their right to equal concern and respect must incorporate a right to life. But the right to life would then not be something quite separate from the intrinsic value of life. The account of the one would have to build on the account of the other. It would be interesting to know how Dworkin himself would explain the relation between them.

My second doubt concerns Dworkin's claim that his account of the abortion argument may render the disagreement less intractable. He is anxious to stress that 'our common commitment to the sanctity of life' is 'a unifying ideal we can rescue from the decades of hate' (p. 101). The sharing of this common value is important because 'it contradicts the pessimistic conclusion that argument is irrelevant and accommodation impossible' (p. 24). But on the traditional interpretation of the abortion debate, the interpretation which Dworkin thinks is misleading, the disputants presumably also espouse a shared value: the right to life. It's just that one party to the dispute thinks that foetuses have a right to life and the other party thinks that they don't. It is therefore not clear

how Dworkin's identification of the shared value of the sanctity of life can by itself advance the prospects for rational argument and accommodation. Moreover, just as the conservative view that a foetus has rights can, as Dworkin thinks, be shown to be simply mistaken, so also the conservative view on abortion which appeals to the relative importance of the *natural* contribution to the value of a human life may turn out to be equally mistaken. I am inclined to think that it is. Those who think that foetal life is sacred simply in virtue of its natural, biological dimension must presumably regard all biological life as sacred – insects, grasses, viruses, the lot. Dworkin's own discussion suggests to me that such a position is incoherent, and that the natural dimension of human life has value only as the material for the creative shaping of a life by human agency. This is not the conclusion Dworkin intends to draw. He wants to exhibit the plausibility of both sides of the disagreement. Still, it may be that the scope for rational argument is no greater and no less on the one interpretation of the dispute than it is on the other.

Having said that, I want to add that it is Dworkin's commitment to the possibility of rational argument that is in the end so impressive. He sets out to understand why people disagree on abortion and euthanasia, what the disagreement is really about, and how the argument can be advanced. In this I think he succeeds marvellously. His book is a refreshing antidote to MacIntyrean pessimism and to the postmodernist celebration of unreason. It deserves to become a classic of moral philosophy, and the appearance of this paperback edition will help it on its way to being recognized as one.

Richard Norman

Straight Sex

Lynne Segal, *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure*, Virago, London, 1994. xvi + 318 pp., £8.99 pb., 1 85381 802 X.

In the early years of second-wave contemporary feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminism drew at least some of its inspiration from the sex-radicalism of the era. Influenced by those who argued that sexual repression was one of the central causes of human malaise, yet powerfully motivated, as well, by the growing demand for sexual equality and the recognition that male radicalism often left little space for women, many feminists not only demanded an end to the oppression of women but also asserted women's right to sexual pleasure and fulfilment in relationships with men.

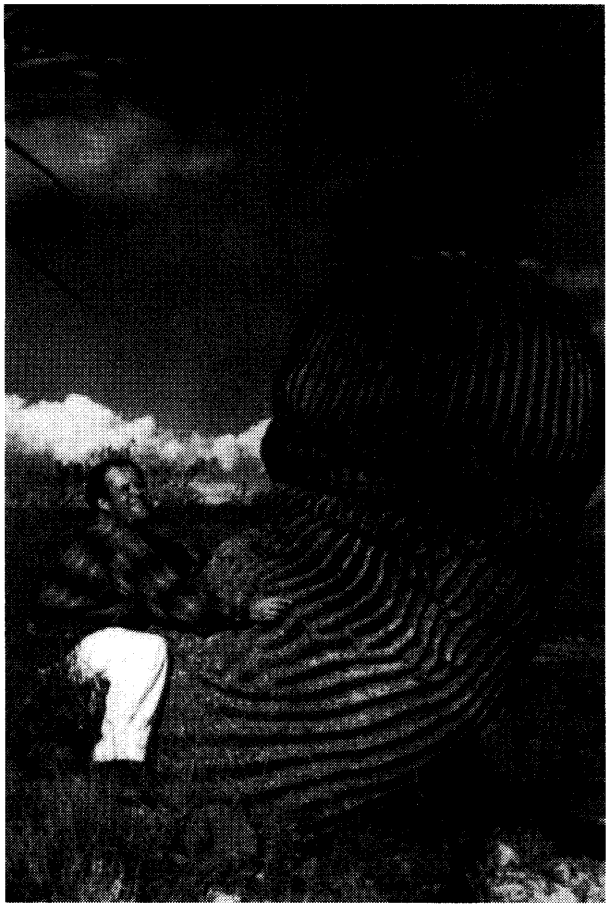
The central question Segal asks in this book is why, in more recent years, heterosexuality has become an issue on which feminist writers, if they are not wholly disparaging, are mostly either apologetic or silent. Ideals of 'sexual liberation' are viewed with cynical distrust. Women's heterosexual experience is often devalued; claims are made, for instance, that few women enjoy heterosexual sex. For some, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon, heterosexual intercourse is wholly incompatible with women's freedom or autonomy, and the 'institution' of heterosexuality is the central force which maintains the subordination and oppression of women. For these writers, sex with men is premissed on male activity and female passivity; and the 'meaning' of heterosexuality, for women, reduces to male violence, invasion and domination, and female submission.

Why has this happened? Segal draws attention to a number of factors. Whatever view one takes of the centrality of lesbianism to feminism, there is no doubt that feminism has been guilty of its share of hetero-sexism, and lesbians have frequently been marginalized or victimized by feminists as well as by the wider society. Those feminists, for instance, who opposed late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century views of female sexual purity or moral superiority tended to assume heterosexuality. Suspicion or dislike of lesbianism was evident in some 'pioneers' of second-wave feminism such as Betty Friedan, and lesbian writers since then have constantly noted the 'invisibility' of the lesbian in much feminist theory.

The critique of heterosexuality has also been fuelled by the inadequacies of much sex research. In the early years of the century, 'sexological' research firmly equated sex with gender, and sex research was often used to bolster conventional and oppressive gender arrangements. Kraft-Ebbing, for instance, not only equated sex with gender, but saw male and female sexuality as fundamentally opposed. Dominant traditions of sex research since then have tended to be behaviourist in orientation. The Kinsey Report, whilst decentralizing the penis and the sex act, was thoroughly biologistic. Whilst arguing for the centrality of clitoral stimulation to women's sexual pleasure, Masters and Johnson were firmly pro-marriage, and gave their work a heterosexual framework. They also claimed that, since masturbation was an effective route to orgasm, a coital partner was irrelevant to sexual pleasure or desire. Feminist sex

research, notably that of Shere Hite, has retained this behaviourist orientation. Hite showed that few women reach orgasm solely through intercourse; yet she ignored the fact that many of her respondents also said that they liked sex with men. Neither in the work of Hite, nor in that of her predecessors, is any account given of the social meanings and psychic dimensions of sexuality and desire. 'Sex' is seen as a matter of 'button-pushing', and despite Hite's commitment to sexual equality, the poverty of her conceptual framework means, so Segal argues, that she reduces the experience of sex to the presence or absence of orgasm. Following Hite (but despite some of the evidence Hite herself produced), feminist writing has often tended to take it for granted that women's experience of heterosexuality and vaginal penetration is usually negative.

Segal insists that the response to the inadequacies of dominant theories of sexuality and to the oppression of lesbians should *not* be to dismiss heterosexuality. Heterosexual experience, she argues, has always been more complex and contradictory than many contemporary feminist accounts would suggest. A central problem with utterly negative representations of heterosexual sex is that they frequently assume that dominant patriarchal representations of sex represent the 'reality' of sex for all women. But whilst dominant conceptions of masculinity may 'lean' on the kinds of attitudes to sex and to women with which feminists have taken issue, and may disavow anything seen as 'passivity', masculinity is a fragile and precarious construction, and male sexuality itself contains many aspects and elements which are remote from any dominant ideology of violence, invasion or domination.



There is, Segal argues, an urgent need to rethink not only heterosexuality but the nature of sexuality itself. The first task is to break the link between sex and gender. The second is to fracture the gendered dichotomy between 'active' and 'passive', and to recognize that the deep psychic roots and social meanings of sexuality, and its close links with human needs for intimacy with and connection to others, mean that there is frequently little that is firmly 'oppositional' about either sexual difference or the sex act, and that it is only in ideology that men are always 'active' and women 'passive'. Segal suggests that 'queer' theory has produced the most trenchant recent challenges to dominant conceptions of sex and gender. Accordingly, we need 'queer' traditional understandings of gender and sexuality.

There are aspects of Segal's book – in particular, its autobiographical elements – which may not strike many chords among those whose experiences during the early days of contemporary feminism were very different from her own. It would also be interesting to enquire about the experiences and attitudes to sexuality of very much younger women, for whom even the 1970s are 'history', and whose conception of 'feminism' often leads them to view it with some ambivalence. If Segal is right, this ambivalence may itself partly be due to the 'man-hating' reputation feminism has acquired as a result of negative attitudes to heterosexuality.

But the importance of the task that this book undertakes cannot be overestimated. Feminism needs to be able to speak to women in ways that recognize the complex and ambiguous nature of sexual need and pleasure. Segal's view is the antithesis of the kind of weak liberalism that speaks merely of 'freedom of choice'. *Straight Sex* asks us to recognize the ways in which women have indeed often been sexually oppressed and unable to 'speak' their own pleasure. But it refuses to accept that *nothing* has changed, and that the sexual oppression of women is so monolithic that no woman, ever, has been able to give or respond to a male sexual partner in ways which challenge old dichotomies. It asks that we engage in a radical rethinking of our concepts of gender and sexuality; not in the name of discovering some 'authentic' female sexuality which simply lies dormant, but in a spirit of hope that it might be possible, albeit precariously, to create ways of loving that refuse any traditional concept of gender as their basis.

Jean Grimshaw

The phantom of the ocular

Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1994. xi + 632 pp., £25.00 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 520 08154 4 hb., 0 520 08885 9 pb.

Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes* is an important contribution to the new history, philosophy and culture of vision. Vision has, of course, long been considered the most excellent of the senses. This is largely because, alone of the five faculties, only sight manages to present objects to us through a kind of temporal immediacy. However, *Downcast Eyes* is not centrally concerned with vision as a form of sensory experience. Rather, it explores what Jay calls an antivisual or *antiocular* discourse within twentieth-century Western, and particularly French, thought. Jay's contention is that contemporary French thought is suffused with a deep distrust of vision.

Accordingly, in the early chapters, Jay presents us with an extensive survey of philosophical and cultural approaches to the visual since the emergence of Cartesian perspectivalism. These chapters focus on what he calls the 'crisis of the ancien scopic régime' in late-nineteenth-century French philosophy, literature and art. Here, Jay draws on a number of subjects and thinkers, including the antiocular philosophy of Bergson, the novels of Proust, and the 'antiretinal' surrealists, Duchamp, Breton and Bataille, in an effort to glean the explicit manifestations of French antipathy to visual supremacy.

Jay then criticizes the conceptions of vision developed in the philosophical writings of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. They are significant for Jay because they both rejected Cartesian perspectivism and much of the ocularcentric tradition. Jay's argument is not that their phenomenological writings are markedly antiocularcentric in substance and tone, but rather that by adapting and developing the work of Husserl and Heidegger, they almost unwittingly furthered the downfall of the ocular tradition in France. For example, Jay suggests that Sartre's infatuation with vision arose out of his attempt to arrest the sway of the gaze, or what Sartre called 'the absolute look'. In Jay's view, Sartre attacked the power of vision in historical and philosophical discourse because it led, not to the magnification of our ability to see, but, rather, to an alienated, even reified, form of social existence.

Merleau-Ponty also criticizes ocularcentrism. But, as Jay skilfully demonstrates, unlike Sartre he simultaneously develops a specifically ocularcentric standpoint. Merleau-Ponty was not concerned with the indiscriminate rejection of modern vision, but with its restoration on post-Cartesian foundations. Casting aside both observational empiricism and intellectualism, Merleau-Ponty turned to the construction of what Jay terms a 'new ontology of sight'. This was clearly perspectivist in character, but also capable of incorporating the insights of the phenomenological tradition. In this way, Merleau-Ponty sought to capture something of the reciprocal nature of intersubjective visual relationships. Nevertheless, in the end, Merleau-Ponty too emerges as a fundamentally antiocularcentric thinker. As evidence for this claim, Jay cites the ontology of sight developed in *The Visible and the Invisible*, a volume which, while furthering Merleau-Ponty's theory of vision, concludes with a description of it that is far removed from that normally associated with speculation on the topic, even within the Continental tradition.

The middle and later chapters of *Downcast Eyes* concentrate on the antiocular features of the writings of social theorists like Althusser, Debord and Foucault. In addition, Jay concerns himself with the suspicion of vision he finds in the psychoanalytic work of Lacan and Irigaray, the cultural theories of Metz and Barthes, and the philosophy of Derrida.

Jay's ultimate purpose in tracing the hostility to vision in French thought is bound up with its repercussions for the debate over modernity and postmodernity. The decidedly anti-modern, phenomenological and ethical philosophy of the Talmud-influenced Levinas is essential for Jay's overall argument. By investigating the problem of the Other (or alterity), Jay suggests, Levinas has, along with others such as Foucault and Derrida, managed to throw into question the entire modernist epistemology founded on the perceptible differentiation of subject and object. In Jay's view, Levinas not only succeeds in reorientating Husserl's phenomenology and Jewish theology; he also reveals 'the unexpected links between the traditional iconoclastic Jewish attitude toward visual representation and a powerfully antiocular impulse in postmodernism' (p. 546).

Levinas's writings on alterity have also been the chief inspiration behind Lyotard's increasing interest in visual themes, and his final rejection of the phenomenological tradition. For instance, Jay sees Lyotard's attack on the rule of ocularcentrism, particularly in volumes such as *Discours, figure*, as, in effect, an attack on the very idea of rational vision. This is a plausible claim, since Lyotard has long sought to embrace the alterity of sight and

engineer a postmodern philosophy of vision which acknowledges the disjuncture between subject and object. Yet, as Jay recognizes, Lyotard's fundamental aim has been not to forsake the eye, but to defend it, albeit as a 'source of disruptive energy'.

In Jay's estimation, then, Lyotard's advocacy of a distinctly postmodern philosophy emerged out of his reading of Levinas's critique of ocularcentrism. One of the essential touchstones Lyotard determined for separating modernism and postmodernism was their particular stance towards the aesthetics of the sublime. Whereas modernism mourns the estrangement of appearance and actuality, postmodernism accepts the torment of visual impermeability. In short, it admits that visuality and rationality can never be reconciled. Such overt antiocularcentrism represents an inauspicious development as far as Jay is concerned. The founding of a postmodern conception of vision involves not only the renunciation of the truths of observation, but also the insights of the phenomenological tradition – a position which has, of course, been applauded in some quarters, and developed in recent years by other French thinkers like Deleuze and Guattari.

On the whole, Jay's analysis of the denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought is first-rate. There are, though, a number of outstanding methodological questions. For example, can one really characterize surrealism, or indeed phenomenology, as 'discourses'? Such terms may be useful when contemplating Derrida or Foucault. But Bataille? Sartre? On the other hand, Jay's discussion of the work of Levinas and Lyotard and, in particular, their impact on the controversy over postmodern vision, is very impressive. It is also problematic. Thus, in the chapter on Lyotard, Jay virtually ignores what he calls the 'faddish' figure of Baudrillard. The chief reason is that Baudrillard's hypotheses about vision run directly counter to his own.

In the final analysis, then, it is clear that Jay is fundamentally opposed to the antiocularcentric and anti-Enlightenment tendencies in contemporary French thought. His 'synoptic survey' of such propensities in the philosophy and culture of France is aimed squarely at combating the anti-modern, ahistorical and antiocularcentric philosophy of Lyotard. But whether Jay's admirable commitment to the ideals of modernity can halt the postmodern tide is another question.

John Armitage

My former self

Hilary Putnam, *Words and Life*, edited by James Conant, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1994. lxxvi + 531 pp., £35.95 hb., 0 674 95606 0.

Hilary Putnam has recently admitted to having grown 'tired of criticizing the errors of contemporary philosophers, analytic and non-analytic alike'. This book is the product of that revolution in his approach to philosophy. It is a collection of twenty-nine essays (five previously unpublished) which forms the companion volume to *Realism with a Human Face* (Harvard University Press, 1990). Two-thirds of the essays were written in the period 1989–93. Almost half of them are straight inquiries into the history of philosophy. All are conducted with constant reference to philosophers of other periods, and to the need for a rich historical dimension in philosophical inquiry. There are several essays, for example, on Aristotle, Wittgenstein, American pragmatism and Logical Positivism. Others engage with current issues of the philosophy of science and the interface between the philosophy of mind and language.

The most disarming aspect of the collection is that the philosopher with whom Putnam takes greatest issue is himself. Phrases like 'when I read the writing of my former self' occur frequently, and are invariably followed by expressions of distaste or disbelief. Putnam's initial reputation rested on distinguished contributions to the philosophy of science and his defence of scientific realism. Now, he thoroughly rejects the notion that the paradigm of philosophical methodology and its concerns are provided by the scientific disciplines. In the 1960s, Putnam developed the quasi-behaviourist views of Wilfrid Sellars into the account of mental states known as 'functionalism'. On this view, mental states are defined by their functional roles (what causes them, what behaviour they give rise to, how they affect other mental states, and so on). Functionalism, broadly speaking, is now the orthodox view in philosophy of mind. But Putnam entitles one of the essays in this volume 'Why Functionalism Didn't Work'.

The realism/anti-realism debate presents the best example of Putnam rethinking Putnam as he simultaneously rethinks philosophy and the history of philosophy. The early Putnam was a scientific realist. He

thought that states of affairs in the external world exist independently of our ability to think or talk about them. Moreover, our statements describe those states of affairs. So we can assess them straightforwardly as true or false descriptions of how things are. In the early 1980s, Putnam rejected the second aspect of this account, while retaining the first. We cannot sufficiently distance ourselves from our own modes of thought and language to judge whether or not they accurately represent the world. Like Rorty, Putnam was impressed by the way in which we are held captive in language. We have no apparent access to a standpoint, over and above our engagement in the world, from which we can assess and describe that engagement.

Putnam now joins those who are sceptical of whether we can set up a proper debate over realism. His argument owes much to Wittgenstein and distances him from Rorty. The realism of metaphysical debate presupposes a more basic realism which is implicit in our ordinary practices as we engage with the world. This form of realism is inherent in what we think and do. It is unreflective and therefore offers no room for competing interpretations. The realism of metaphysical debate, however, thrives on opposition. Criticism of one thesis is construed automatically as support for another thesis. So Putnam advocates dissolving the whole debate. This is justifiable on the pragmatist approach that he adopts. The very grasping of concepts by which we describe the world requires that we be engaged in that world. So we must be ordinary realists before we can even engage with metaphysical questions. If the metaphysical questions derive their content from our ordinary practices, we have no reason to pursue them beyond those practices.

Putnam employs this dissolving strategy in a number of these essays. He is dissatisfied with various philosophical positions that now pass for orthodoxy. He is also dissatisfied with the very nature of a debate centred on rival 'positions'. This is partly because positions sustain contemporary debate artificially. But, more significantly, they tend to focus that debate on present concerns and either misread of 'actively repress' the past. The notion that accuracy about the history of philosophy is the very stuff of a philosopher's concern, rather than just a pleasant pastime, pervades Putnam's recent work. One example of this 'historicizing' is Putnam's careful recovery and delineation of the authentic views of logical positivists. Another is Putnam's subtle reflection on how to debate with Aristotle without being anachronistic. Clearly, Aristotle did not engage with the problems of how mind relates to body and to the world, at least as we understand those problems now. But Putnam suggests (in an essay co-written with Martha Nussbaum) that a naturalizing 'Aristotelian attitude' is the correct approach to resolving the tension. On this view, the common notion that mind and world are two utterly distinct realms to be brought into relation is rejected. The 'Aristotelian attitude' replaces this account with the single phenomenon of the human animal, whose active engagement with its environment is just naturally a 'minded' engagement.

Many of the views that Putnam now finds himself adopting (for how long?) are not unfamiliar. His account of intentionality owes much to John McDowell; his claim that Wittgenstein did not hold a crass 'meaning-is-use' theory has surely been the orthodox view for some time; his philosophical conservatism is Wittgensteinian; and his doubts about whether the realist debate is properly constructed have been aired for over a decade by Simon Blackburn and Crispin Wright, among others. But the book strikes one, nevertheless, as fresh and exciting. This is undoubtedly due to its highly critical approach to current analytical philosophy. Analytical philosophy seems recently to have been overcome by the need to reflect on and challenge its past. Putnam has earned the right to hit out at that past if anyone has.

Max de Gaynesford

Touching the other

Alphonso Lingis, *Foreign Bodies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994. xiii + 239 pp., £40.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 415 90989 9 hb., 0 415 90990 2 pb.

Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994. xi + 179 pp., £27.50 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 253 33438 1 hb., 0 253 20852 1 pb.

For centuries the human body was reviled as a site of sin, a disturbing interpretation, perhaps, but arguably preferable to the secular scientific explanations that replaced it. At least sin has the advantage of sounding like fun, a concept given little houseroom in the sanitized environment described by the natural scientist. But we should be thankful to Husserl, I think, for opening a further possible approach to the body – a phenomenological description of the body as it experiences and understands itself – and to Alphonse Lingis, too, for taking the call of the phenomenological movement to

heart, and taking us 'back to the things themselves' in these books.

Foreign Bodies examines, first, what our bodies tell us about ourselves. The text divides into four parts ('cycles') of three chapters each. The first chapter of each triad focuses on contemporary theoretical formulations of our experience of the body and how this is understood to have come about through evolutionary and cultural forces; the second explores alternative possibilities suggested in non-philosophical discourse, such as anthropology and literature; and a third then reflects on this juxtaposition. Lingis sets out from Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body as a structure forming norms of perceptual and behavioural competence, but accuses that analysis of emphasizing the practicable at the expense of alternative realms of experience: the 'unpracticable spaces' of, say, erotic obsession or the desolation of grief.

Inseparable from the competent body of the practicable world is another, then; exemplified, for example, in the strangely incompetent figure of the body-builder – absurdly gratuitous in an age when physical strength has been made redundant by the technology of industry and warfare. Parading the body as something that not only sees, but *is seen*, is not new. But Lingis wonders how much of the show is now distorted by the technology which, although initially devised as a tool for the extension of the body, promises to become a vehicle of alienation of our bodies from ourselves: 'Is our technological history making us into carnal orchids, showy sex-organs, that no longer rise on their own stems, blend their own saps, or impregnate one another?'

And social technologies, too, function as alienating forces, this time on our bodies as sensitive, sensual substances, inflicting and suffering pleasure and pain. Foucault explored the impotence consequent on the removal of the body's power from itself by power-structures built into the social framework, and urged as a counter-strategy the use of those structures against themselves by transforming bodily pleasure into art. Contrasting this with the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima's involvement with the martial arts leads Lingis to suggest, though, that pain and pleasure themselves belong to the forces of impotence. Always fleeting, they can be sustained only through resentment (pleasure, it is suggested, is not a passive contentment, but rather generates resentment at our inability to stop it passing); and that resentment – a secondary, reactive force leading us to formulate identities as vulnerable, needy, and so on – obscures a more immediate, primordial sensibility which actively greets the forces it encounters with blessing and cursing, laughter and tears.

Underpinning those misplaced identities is our sense of 'I', and the self understood by psychoanalytic theory in terms of libidinal impulse and conflict, over against which Lingis contrasts the 'fluid economy' of Melanesian cultures. Not only does their understanding of the body as essentially a conduit for fluids stand in stark contrast to the Western focus, in which substance and structure are essential, but their culture of homosexual passage to heterosexuality disrupts any reification of gender and sexual identity. But if the impact of Western culture on the Melanesians threatens to alter or destroy their fluid sense of self, what changes, Lingis asks, might a 'post-industrial revolution' wreak on our own sense of 'I'? Will psychoanalysis be eclipsed, as, with increased global communication and tourism, our own eroticism becomes infused with new and different forms?

A final part then turns to a Levinasian meditation on the *face* of the Other. Faces can be encountered as the surface of an organism, or as a surface of signs and indications, but most importantly they induce a *touch*; a contact that effaces materiality and indication and summons us. In appealing and contesting, the other arises in his or her alterity. But it is from the face of the other, too, that there arises the imperative that precedes all others – the touch of compassion which forms the bond between those who share no kinship, language or culture. This last theme runs through the collection of essays forming *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, which elaborates on that elemental bond formed as a response to vulnerability and frailty, in the recognition of the other as a site of suffering and mortality. This constitutes 'the community of those who have nothing in common, of those who have nothingness, death, their mortality in common'. But if it is the solemn theme of shared death that binds this collection together, both this text and *Foreign Bodies* are celebratory works for all that. Often exuberant to the point of extravagance, yet also thought-provoking and meditative, Lingis's work is above all *touching*, and offers a refreshingly idiosyncratic antidote to the idle talk that so often passes for philosophical writing. To write with such vitality about death and dying, life and living – about the matters which matter to us all – will always risk being not portentous but merely pretentious. In some admirable yet indefinable way, however, Lingis manages, at least most of the time, to pull it off.

Jane Chamberlain

Commonsense Freudianism

Sebastian Gardner, *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993. xv + 303 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 521 41090 8.

The generally unsympathetic treatment of Freud by Anglophone philosophers has moderated in recent years, and that owes much to the pioneering work of Richard Wollheim. It has, as a result, become possible to situate central psychoanalytic ideas within a richer, but still relatively orthodox, philosophical account of mentality and behavior. Sebastian Gardner's book is an exemplary defence of Freudianism in the context of contemporary understandings of irrationality. His central claim is that some irrational phenomena are inexplicable by commonsense psychology, yet can be explained by a psychoanalytic theory which extends, and is fully congruent with, that psychology.

The phenomena he has in mind are distinguishable from self-deception, which involves a structure of motivated self-misrepresentation. They require the distinctive form of psychoanalytic explanation. Yet this in turn does not require the postulation of a second, unconscious mind, or the partition of the mind into subsystems. Freudian theory does not, therefore, fall foul of the celebrated Sartrean criticism that mental partition only leads to one of the mind's supposed parts displaying the self-contradictoriness that should properly be attributed to the whole.

The key to seeing psychoanalytic explanation as a natural extension of ordinary psychology, yet somehow foreign to its present forms of thinking, lies in understanding the role of wish-fulfilment and phantasy in neurotic symptom formation. Wishes, like desires, are caused by motivational states, and, when wish-fulfilment is blocked, phantasy serves to represent the world in a way by which, expressed in behaviour, the wish can be fulfilled. Ordinary psychology is extended in at least two ways. Unconscious mental contents are said to have a non- or pre-propositional form; and they give rise to behaviour other than by providing the person with a reason for action. There are connections between these contents which are not meaningful in the ordinary sense, and yet, when propelled by desire, serve to motivate behaviour. Thus, the activity which the unconscious motivates is purposive without there being the formulation of purposes.

All of this is argued for with style, great analytic skill, an assured familiarity with Freud and contemporary philosophical treatments of irrationality such as Davidson and Pears, and a clear-headed grasp of the overall thesis. Although Gardner favours Kleinian metapsychology, he is not greatly concerned explicitly to situate his own understanding of psychoanalysis in a broader post-Freudian context. His appendices, which include a brief 'taxonomy of metapsychologies', are unhelpfully brief. However, the implications of his central claim are fairly radical. If psychoanalytic theory is best understood as an extension of ordinary psychological explanation, then it is no more vulnerable to the charge of scientific inadequacy than is that form of explanation. In therapeutic terms also, 'psychoanalysis should make *as much* difference to mental life as self-understanding generally produces, and this is ... probably not a great deal.' Moreover, there is no reason to think that someone with a grasp of the appropriate psychoanalytic concepts, and the ability to adopt a third-personal perspective on themselves, should not be capable of self-analysis. The upshot is that the status of psychoanalysis both as a science of irrationality, and as a therapeutic practice, is radically challenged. On the other hand, Gardner clearly takes the status of ordinary psychology to be enhanced by its extension. The fact that it can now explain certain kinds of irrationality gives it a completeness it arguably lacked beforehand. This helps its defenders resist those critics who would insist on its being eliminated or, at least, complemented by a cognitive psychology.

There will be friends of psychoanalysis unhappy to see it 'tamed' by inclusion within commonsense psychology; and there will be enemies of ordinary psychology who doubt that psychoanalytic theory really can be brought into its fold. Gardner, as someone sympathetic to both ordinary psychology and psychoanalysis, has at least clarified what is at stake in the relationship between the two. He has also made the strongest possible case for seeing psychoanalytic theory as changing the way everyday psychology must understand our minds, but without requiring the overthrow of that psychology. This is, in short, the most ingenious attempt to endorse the Freudian revolution, but confine its effects within the court of commonsense psychology.

David Archard

Raoul Vaneigem, *The Movement of the Free Spirit*, Zone Books, New York, 1994. 302 pp., £22.50 hb., 0 942299 70 1.

Along with Guy Debord's classic essay *The Society of the Spectacle*, Raoul Vaneigem's *Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967) remains one of the most seminal and beguiling texts of that convulsive, anti-systemic decade. This is the only other book of Vaneigem's I have read. Published in France in 1986, it represents a quasi-fundamentalist entrenchment of Vaneigem's 1960s position. It is absolutely uncompromising. I find it interesting only as a sociological document, one that shows the extent to which the critical theory of the 1960s, under whose rubric I would include such figures as Debord and Vaneigem, has reached a cul-de-sac, literally a dead-end, as witnessed in Debord's recent suicide.

In *Revolution of Everyday Life*, Vaneigem combined Marx and Nietzsche in a far-reaching attack on the commodity (the society of the spectacle), producing an incisive critique of the nihilistic devaluation of all values brought about by the remorseless logic of capital's programme of global devalorization and deterritoriali-zation. It was a work, however, which, unlike the text under review, displayed a dialectical, and genuinely subversive, comprehension of the antinomies of the present. It was this kind of dialectical appreciation which saved it from a moralism of the most abstract kind. It is this Rousseauian-inspired moralism which now comes to the fore in Vaneigem's tracing of the movement of the free spirit. The thesis of the book is simple and straightforward, and dangerously so: the market economy destroys all human value and dignity, and can only be fought against in terms of an ethics of love. 'I take the demands of love', Vaneigem writes at one point, 'to constitute entirely, at all times and in all places, the sole alternative to market society.' This passage provides clear evidence of the absolutism of Vaneigem's position ('entirely', 'at all times', the 'sole alternative', etc.). It is almost tragic to see the extent to which Vaneigem has ended up propounding the vacuous mumbo-jumbo of New Age mysticism as a critique of the active nihilism of capital. He appeals to the homeostatic dynamics of Gaia (which I always took to be completely nonhuman: Gaia doesn't give a fuck about human survival); he speaks risibly and naively of an authentic human species creating, *contra* the market, conditions favourable to its own harmonious development; and, finally, he advocates his own 'back to basics' programme as a solution to the evil ills of the market, claiming that beneath the rubble of lies and fraud late-modern citizens are beginning to re-experience and re-value some of the 'plain truths of the distant past'. His nostalgia for things paleolithic leads him to claim baldly that 'economics has been the most durable lie of the approximately ten millennia mistakenly accepted as history'.

Vaneigem's commitment to harmony and equi-librium not only belongs to a historically redundant theoretical paradigm (the entropic one of modern critical theory); it also reveals a hatred of history and a desire to stop the wheels of life for ever. It is not so much love that Vaneigem desires, but death. In the face of the marketization of the entire globe, his opposition to the market has as much practical value and relevance as a recommendation to the Eskimos that, in the face of global warming, they should take up habitation on Venus. Moreover, the implementation of this Green vision of life would require a highly authoritarian politics, of the kind that would forcibly stop the spontaneous emergence of market exchange (amounting to nothing short of killing off civilization), and that would result in the unleashing of an unimaginable politics of hate. As a punk-child of the seventies, I was always deeply suspicious of the sixties' 'love and peace man' philosophy. I now know why.

Keith Ansell-Pearson

Christopher Bertram and Andrew Chitty, eds, *Has History Ended?: Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1994. 180 pp., £35.00 hb., 1 85628 959 1.

The nine essays in this book are divided according to the subtitle: there are three responses to Fukuyama, three reconsiderations of Marxism, and three explorations of the theory of modernity. Thus the range of topics goes beyond the specific issues raised by Fukuyama to the situation of the Left 'after the fall'. McCarney's and Elliott's contributions have previously appeared in journals; but they are well worth preserving between hard covers. A useful service provided by the book lies in a brief English presentation of his theory of modernity by Jacques Bidet; this involves a mix of Marx and Rawls, as Alex Callinicos points out in his review of it.

Compared with the sheer silliness of 'post-modernist' effusions, Francis Fukuyama is an interlocutor still worth addressing, and this book is likewise a serious contribution to radical thinking about our situation. Fukuyama's paper of 1989 and book of 1992 situated the victory of the West as of more than epochal significance. It marked no less than the end of history in so far as the problems of material satisfaction have been solved by capitalism and the desire for interpersonal recognition satisfied by the structures of liberal democracy. If this is true, then not only is there no longer any alternative, there is no need for one.

Although Fukuyama self-consciously situates himself in the context of Hegel's philosophy of history, the influence is highly mediated. In truth his guide to the subject is the idiosyncratic reading of it provided by Alexandre Kojève's lectures. In Joseph McCarney's excellent paper, attention is also drawn to the influence of Kojève's conservative correspondent Leo Strauss. A pivotal role in all this was played by Allan Bloom: pupil of Strauss, editor of Kojève, and teacher of Fukuyama.

Like McCarney, Frank Füredi

rightly points out that beneath Fukuyama's triumphalism there is an undercurrent of anxiety about whether the bourgeois life is worth living; this places him, it is said, in the tradition of downbeat 'endism', which represents the exhaustion of the capitalist project. *Our* problem, however, is whether the Marxist theory of history has been refuted by events, and, if so, what is to be done. (Incidentally, G. A. Cohen's version of historical materialism is once more subjected to criticism here by Paula Casal.) It is perfectly possible to find resources in Marx to mount a socialist critique of capitalism. Keith Graham argues that this will be all the easier now that the Leninist misappropriation of Marx is out of the way. But Graham does not rely in this on any theory of history. Although many contributors (including Chitty and Bertram) seek to turn Fukuyama's concern with 'recognition' against capitalism, they likewise avoid any strong claims about historical guarantees.

Marxism without a theory of history to underpin its revolutionary aspirations is a much less exciting story. Taking history seriously, while taking on board the reality of the failure of 'historical communism', leads to deep pessimism. Such considerations inform Gregory Elliott's anguished reflections. One *ad hominem* point he is able to make is that it was the Soviet Union which (despite Stalin's misleadership) saved the world from fascism and thus made possible Fukuyama's self-satisfaction about the spread of liberal democracy. This irony does not help us much, given the failure of the Soviet proletariat thus far to map out any alternative to the project of capitalist restoration. Likewise it does not help to berate Fukuyama for refusing to recognize capitalism's responsibility for fascism, if that leaves us carrying the can for Stalinism. Those Marxists who had no *moral* responsibility for Stalinism (like Deutscher in his 'watchtower' or Mandel struggling to found a new International) still have *theoretical* responsibility for it. How can we possibly account for this derailment of our historical perspective?

One thing is certain: Fukuyama's triumphalism is misplaced; and as long as capitalism *cannot* solve its problems, the future remains open to alternatives.

Chris Arthur

William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994. x + 194 pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 0178 2 hb., 0 7456 0205 3 pb.

This book is written for those with no first-hand knowledge of Habermas's work and for those deterred from acquiring it by the sheer size and rather uninviting style of his most important books. Outhwaite's principal aim is to persuade potential new readers of Habermas that their efforts will be rewarded.

The author of a work of this kind has two main problems to contend with. first, a way of organizing the extraordinary breadth of the subject matter must be found. Habermas has been a prolific writer and his writings cover many disciplines. Outhwaite deals with this problem admirably. In seven shortish chapters, he manages to cram in the basic ideas of all of Habermas's works, from *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* to *Factizität und Geltung* (soon to appear in English under the title 'Between Facts and Norms'). The chapters are organized chrono-logically and thematize specific texts. *The Theory of Communicative Action* enjoys special attention, being the subject of the three central chapters. While this emphasis is matched by the status Habermas himself accords to that text, it also reflects Outhwaite's interpretation of Habermas as primarily a sociological theorist.

Besides the coherence of its overall structure, a notable strength of this study lies in its manner of situating Habermas's thought in relation to Marx and Weber. Outhwaite is also particularly adept at retracing the motivation behind Habermas's influential interventions in a series of disputes concerning the nature and function of the social sciences. Of course, a book of this length with so much ground to cover is bound to cover some of it pretty thinly. Readers with a non-sociological interest in Habermas are, I'm afraid, the ones most likely to be disappointed. Yet it may be that the deepest challenges both of and to Habermas's work lie beyond sociology. Indeed, in his concluding paragraphs, Outhwaite himself suggests that the living kernel of Habermas's thought may best be tested in its encounter with criticisms now coming from philosophers like Charles Taylor and Jay Bernstein, both of whom challenge Habermas's priority of the moral by appeal to an allegedly suppressed moment of the ethical. I think Outhwaite is correct on this point. It is a shame he leaves himself no room to substantiate it, though he does a service merely in making it.

If the task of doing justice to the full scope of Habermas's work in a short introductory text is hard enough to manage, the second problem I adverted to at the beginning – that of conveying the real complexity of Habermas's thought – may be insurmountable. Perhaps it is in order to minimize the risk of oversimplification – and the falsifications which follow from it – that Outhwaite resorts so extensively to quotations from Habermas's own texts. This may leave readers itching to get on to the original. If they should actually do that, the purpose of this book will have been realized.

Nick Smith

Gregory Claeys, ed., *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994. xli + 305 pp., £35.00 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 521 430844 hb., 0 521 45590 1 pb.

This is mainly a collection of eighteenth-century British utopian works which have been almost unknown or unavailable until today, though two of these texts are not utopias in the strictest sense, since they are not fictions. David Hume's 'Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth'

(1752) is a straightforward inquiry into what is 'the most perfect of all' forms of government. It discusses the main political issues debated at that time, and includes many references to Harrington's influential *Oceana* (1656), and to classics such as Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Plato's *Republic*. William Hodgson's *The Commonwealth of Reason* (1795) is also non-fictional. It consists of a 'Declaration of Rights' – tellingly 'founded on the broad and permanent basis of LIBERTY, FRATERNITY and EQUALITY' – with an explanation and commentary, which indicate the influence of the French Revolution on British political thought.

Three texts in the collection are anonymous. *The Island of Content* (1709) is a peculiar combination of Cockaigne and moral criticism of contemporary society; *A Description of New Athens in Terra Australis Incognita* (1720), a more traditional utopia, emphasizes the values of education, morality and religious unity; *Bruce's Voyage to Naples* (1802) is an ecological utopia, mainly concerned with animals, and strikingly relevant today. These three works reflect various concerns of the age, but they do not consider the means and methods of political action.

James Burgh's *An Account of the first Settlement, Laws, Form of Government, and Police, of the Cessares, A People of South America* (1764) refers to the contemporary political context, both in the text and in the author's own footnotes. It is a sort of organized 'robinsonnade', in which a group of selected Dutchmen found a community, and advance remedies for the faults and corruption of European society. Thomas Northmore's *Memoirs of Planetes, or a Sketch of the Laws and Manners of Makar* (1795) is a reasonably pleasant utopia, which first criticizes British society in a manner reminiscent of the second book of *Gulliver's Travels*, and then proceeds with a description of Makar sketching an ideal constitution.

Gregory Claeys provides a careful edition of the works and essential information in the accompanying notes. The Introduction highlights the major themes which occupied the political thought of the eighteenth century. Some of these – such as equality and communion of goods – are well known; others – such as the issue of 'primogenitureship' – less so. Claeys seems oblivious of literary categories; he assimilates such different genres as utopia, dystopia, philosophical tale, oriental tale, Cockaigne, and social satire. His 'Bibliographical note' does not mention important works such as Bazcko's, or approach non-political texts (for example Trousson's and Racault's); nor does it mention the generally accepted distinction between utopia and utopianism.

The strength of this book lies in the reprinted texts. They have little literary merit, as is often the case with works which deal with happiness and perfection, the weakest of all literary subjects. But utopias are not to be judged solely as works of literature; they are also an invaluable contribution to improving the world.

Adolfo di Luca

Brice R. Wachterhauser, ed., *Hermeneutics and Truth*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 1994. 255 pp., $44.95 hb, $18.95 pb., 0 8101 11438 hb., 0 8101 1118 7 pb.

'How should those of us who accept the inescapability of interpretation think about truth?' (p. 3). This is the question which this anthology addresses by collecting a series of essays dealing with the implications of the discovery of historicity and interpretative contextualization for the question of truth. The anthology opens with two essays by Gadamer, 'Truth in the Human Sciences' and 'What is Truth?', which predate *Truth and Method* and introduce the problematic of the relationship between truth and history developed at greater length in that text. 'What is Truth?', made available in English translation for the first time in this volume, contains a succinct but illuminating discussion of propositional truth in Aristotle, Hegel and Heidegger that maps the intellectual background from which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics emerges. The following essays, by a number of mainly German and American writers, strive to locate Gadamer's project in the context of both Heideggerian and Husserlian phenomenology and Davidsonian philosophy of language. The leading theme of the anthology lies in its exploration of the continuities between the hermeneutic turn in Continental philosophy and the linguistic turn in the Anglo-American tradition: the common, but often understated, move towards a metaphysics of meaning. These links are hinted at in Wachterhauser's Introduction, which highlights the similarities in the concerns of twentieth-century philosophy of language and Heidegger's fundamental ontology, with its emphasis on the question of the *meaning* of Being. They are also the object of Stueber's 'Understanding Truth and Objectivity: A Dialogue between Donald Davidson and Hans-Georg Gadamer', which upholds the hermeneutic claim to universality against the historicist twist it underwent at the hands of American pragmatists such as Rorty, by maintaining that the equation of the historically known with the historically relative rests on a version of the genetic fallacy. Mention should also be made of Warnke's essay, 'Hermeneutics, Tradition and the Standpoint of Women', which concludes the anthology's demystification of the relativist threat by defending the possibility of a feminist hermeneutics. The anthology represents a further step in the ongoing glasnost of the relationships between the Continental and Anglo-American traditions, and will be of interest to those who approach hermeneutics as a search for, rather than a relinquishment of, truth.

Giuseppina D'Oro