Letter to Jane: on transference

Jane Gallop, *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 1997. 104 pp., £28.50 hb., £8.95 pb., 08 223 1925 X hb., 08 223 1918 7 pb.

Jane Gallop is an American academic whose writings on psychoanalysis, feminism and related topics are as dazzling in their intelligence as they are scintillating in their wit. Their humour is part of the thought processes embodied in her texts. A careful argument, proceeding by tentative steps, will finally reach an explosive and paradoxical conclusion, inducing a burst of laughter. It is in the laughter that one may experience the spark of illumination. In the example she offers of intellectual enquiry as a succession of delights, with hard thought rewarded by a whoosh of joy, she is one of the few worthy successors to Roland Barthes. And it is from Barthes that she has learned the technique of introducing disconcertingly personal remarks, with precise appropriateness, into the flow of lucidly abstract reasoning.

Barthes declared the relationship between writer and reader to be inherently erotic. Awareness of this fact enables a skilled writer to explore and expand the field of textual seductions. One writes (as Barthes also emphasized) in order to be loved. In the rhythms of her thinking, in the contact (intimate yet elegant) she establishes with her reader, Gallop is a very sexy writer.

For my part I can think of no one I would prefer, had the opportunity arisen, to supervise my academic work, both because of the topics Gallop discusses and her approach to them. Nor am I alone in this feeling of intellectual and emotional attraction. One of Gallop's graduate students, soon after first attending her lectures, became 'jittery with excitement' (so Gallop tells us on p. 54), and 'blurted out that she wanted me to be her advisor' – a relationship to which Gallop willingly agreed. Two years later, however, this same student made an official complaint of sexual harassment against her. The University authorities proceeded to investigate this and another, similar, complaint. In the North American media there was a fair amount of interest in this unusual accusation of sexual harassment brought by female students against a noted feminist intellectual. Now Gallop has written a book about the affair. In a society where the judgements of the media often count for more than the decisions of judicial authorities, such a text inevitably has the status of a public defence against public accusations. Only because Gallop is a well-known intellectual, however, can she publish her own hundred-page account of the matter. The two students involved have no such access to an international audience. Their voices are silenced, or made available only through Gallop's quotations. This difference in power between the disputants in the case, a differential on which it turns, is exemplified by the very existence of the book that discusses it.

The legal process through which the students sought redress was itself, however, a form of silencing of their distinctive experiences. Gallop notes that the official complaint forms completed by the two students (acting, no doubt, on legal advice) were virtually identical in their wording (pp. 77–8). The *specificity* of the experience of each was thus erased. The individual and particular difficulties of their respective encounters with power and desire had been subsumed under the generic category 'sexual harassment'.

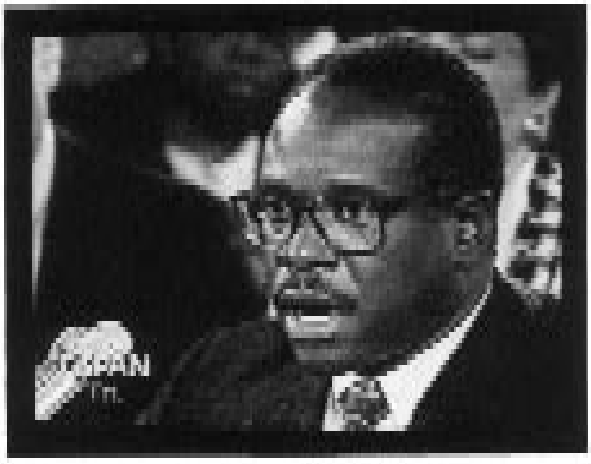
Precisely such a subsumption was already implied, however, in the feminist analyses which originally led to the recognition of sexual harassment as a crime. Gallop's summary is succinct:

> Sexual harassment is a feminist issue, not because it is sexual but because it disadvantages women. Because harassment makes it harder for women to earn a living, feminists declared it a form of discrimination against women. This framing was so persuasive that, within a few years, harassment was added to the legal definition of sex discrimination (p. 9).

As a feminist category, therefore, 'sexual harassment' identifies a structural imbalance of power between men and women in their working and studying environment, and seeks to correct this. Yet the use of the accusation by two female students against a female professor goes further than this: it seems to question the structural imbalance of power between teachers and students in general.

The imbrication of power, knowledge and desire in any and all teaching situations has been recognized

Hero



Lech

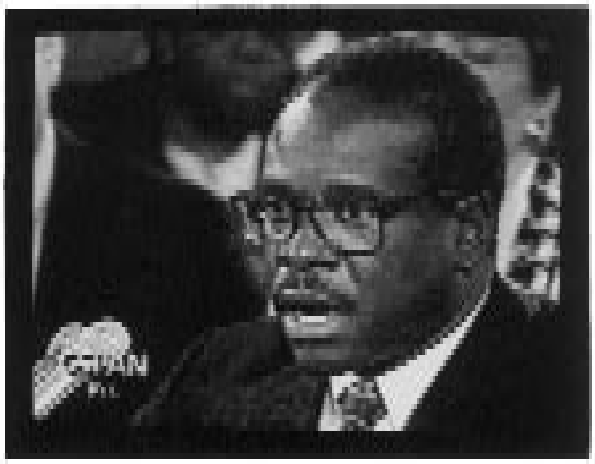
(and recognized as problematic) at least since Plato. Gallop is well aware of this fact, and also knows that psychoanalysis has given a particular name to this effect: transference.

Patient and analyst, student and teacher, undergo a process of amorous entwinement at the end of which, in the ideal and perhaps mythical case, the patient is freed from his or her obsessions, and intelligent autonomous understanding is induced in the pupil. Both Plato and Freud add an important proviso to their accounts of this process: it only works if the two partners refrain from consummating their ardour for each other in a direct and physical way. Freud took great pains to warn psychoanalysts not to engage in sexual congress with their patients, an act which would be the opposite of therapeutic. Plato ends *The Symposium* with Alcibiades telling of his failed attempt to seduce Socrates – a failure which increases his respect for the noble imperturbability of the philosopher.

Despite a passing reference to Plato (p. 59), Gallop remains strangely silent about these classical claims for restraint, which are not based on any disapproval of sexual activity *per se*. Her book celebrates her own occasional experiences of sex with her teachers at university (escapades which have clearly not impaired her intellectual development) and, in the past, with some of her own students.

Gallop did not, in fact, have sexual intercourse with either of the students who accused her of harassment. She was, however, found guilty of the 'less serious' charge of conducting a 'consensual amorous relation', which 'did not involve sex acts', with one of them (p. 34). Hence she was found guilty of encouraging that state of transference which, her own psychoanalytic beliefs would imply, is a necessary condition of all productive teaching (p. 56). The university judges love (the 'amorous') to be less serious than sex: an attitude not conducive to understanding the transferential process. Psychoanalysts are trained in handling the transference (which is not to say that they always do so successfully); teachers might well benefit from similar instruction. Knowledge is not a commodity, neutrally passed from one mind to another. As Gallop realizes, the distress of her experience – and (though she doesn't mention it) the distress of her students' experiences – is a position from which new knowledge can be produced: 'The spectacle taught me a thing or two' (p. 7).

The students, too, learned something about power. It would seem that Gallop, whom they loved, was no longer supporting the direction their intellectual enquiries were taking. 'More than once I told the student her work was not satisfactory; she did not accept my judgments and became increasingly suspicious and angry' (p. 55). Since Gallop was supervising her studies, this negative judgement could determine both the student's grades and her academic future. What do you do when someone you love has that degree of power over you? What the student did was try to break off the relationship completely, her accusation of harassment conveying the request that Gallop no longer supervise or direct her studies. To make the break in this manner, with its invocation of legal procedures, was obviously aggressive. But could such a break ever be made without aggression? 'Because so much passion had been invested in our relationship, the failure was particularly dramatic', says Gallop (p. 55). If all teaching involves transferential love, then such explosions are an inevitable danger.



Victim

Pawn

Margaret Stratton, *Justice on TV*, from *A Guide to the Wasteland*, 1991–1993

Was Gallop right in her low opinion of the student's work? We don't know. To form any judgement ourselves, examples of the students' writings would have had to be included in Gallop's book. But, as I have said, their voices are silenced. At one point Gallop does, however, quote a single sentence from the harassment complaint of one of the students, and disdainfully refers to 'the student's stylistic proclivity to pulp fiction' (p. 98). The sentence is a description of a kiss between the two women in the public context of a gay bar: 'She mashed her lips against mine and shoved her tongue in my mouth.' Gallop brings her skills in literary criticism to bear on this sentence, analysing its rhetoric of 'a passive and innocent victim … violent verbs, images of forced penetration'.

Seven pages earlier, Gallop had given her own description of that kiss: 'Somehow the usual goodbye peck suddenly became a real kiss. I don't actually know who started it. I know it surprised me and seemed to occur simultaneously to both of us, as if spontaneously generated out of the moment' (p. 91). Gallop's prose here is equally influenced by pulp fiction, though her chosen genre is sentimental romance rather than an aggressive thriller. How can we, placed in the position of a jury, possibly decide which of these descriptions is the more accurate? Is the case (between a professor of English and her pupil) to be decided on the grounds of style? If the student's 'stylistic proclivities' were one reason for criticizing her academic work, might Gallop have been reacting with particular hostility because she shared such proclivities herself? (In the same way, in an earlier age, a female teacher might have reacted with particular horror to a student's lesbian advances if she were fighting against similar 'proclivities' within herself.)

The rhetoric of Gallop's prose contains the familiar defence, in cases of sexual harassment, that the other person started it, or was at least equally responsible. Such an appeal to equality denies the pertinent difference in status. As a teacher, Gallop has the more 'responsible' social position, and her actions will be judged by a more stringent standard.

In 1972 Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin made a film called *Letter to Jane*. The Jane in question was Fonda, who had worked with them the previous year on *Tout Va Bien*. Their 'letter' takes the form of friendly criticism, and is devoted, for its entire sixty-minute length, to an analysis of a single newspaper photograph of Fonda in Vietnam. Godard and Gorin question the value of her trip to Vietnam, which, like her involvement in their own film, was one of her radical activities during that phase of her life. Indeed, this was part of the problem: that the situation in Vietnam would be projected as a phase in the life of a film star, for the benefit of her fans. The photographers would be taking pictures of her, rather than the people she was talking to. This was not her fault, of course, but Godard and Gorin question whether her admirable intentions sufficiently took into account the nature of her own status as a media star. We might equally ask whether Gallop, in her actions with respect to the students, and in publishing her book, has sufficiently taken into account her own status, as both teacher and writer.

Jane Gallop is less widely known than Fonda, but she has her fans. This new book of hers, as well as being her most personal text, has a photograph of her on the back cover for the first time. Thus this is the first time her readers have known what she looks like. Given the transferential nature of reading, is this a further step towards seducing us (the neck of her

shirt open, her lips slightly parted, her eyes direct and appealing)? In the course of the text, however, she warns us that she no longer has affairs with students, and has been monogamous for several years. The reason for her monogamy is that she is 'madly in love with the man I am still happily with today' (p. 48). Gallop testifies to the power of love, which can override all other temptations for a bisexual feminist of liberal sexual views, such as herself. This power alone might be sufficient to weigh against the power differential of a teacher and a student.

One target of the polemical aspects of her book is the policy now being adopted by most American universities forbidding all sexual relationships (even consensual ones) between students and staff. The fact that a particular form of sexual relationship is forbidden, or even illegal, will not of course prevent it from taking place. (The history of homosexuality is sufficient proof of this.) But the context in which it occurs will be significantly different. A professor who sleeps with a student risks losing his or her job – risks scandal, unemployment, loss of status. Perhaps only the power of intense love would be sufficient to impel such a risk.

In his consideration of Kant's ethical theory (*Seminar VII*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 108–9), Lacan comments on the well-known passage in which Kant contends that no one would commit fornication if they knew that a hangman's noose awaited them as a direct consequence (whereas they might, in such circumstances, perform a moral action). Kant knows nothing about love, declares Lacan. He does not understand a romantic love which would itself be a categorical imperative, embracing death if necessary to attain its aim. A myriad texts (both popular and classic) invite us to view in a favourable light those acts of love which lead to personal and professional ruin.

I would not wish to advocate such extremes of masochism. If a student wholly consents to a sexual relationship, there is no reason why it should ever come to the knowledge of the authorities. But by agreeing to such a relationship, the teacher puts power into the student's hands. The imbalance of power between them (with the professor able to determine the student's grades) is violently tilted the other way (with the student able to ruin the professor's career). For good or ill, the student would be granted an immense sense of their own erotic power. Hence in academic institutions this restrictive rule not only invites transgression (as rules are apt to do), but alters the context and possibilities of transferential relationships. It acts against the power relations inscribed in the educational system, in the same way that feminism acts against the power relations inscribed in the gender system.

Few would disagree with Gallop when she contends that 'sexual harassment is a feminist issue not because it is sexual but because it disadvantages women' (p. 9). But she goes on to argue that 'sexual harassment is criminal not because it is sex but because it is discrimination' (p. 10). She justifies this contention by reference to the American legal code, which identifies harassment as a subcategory of sex discrimination. Others might argue that the behaviour has been generally recognized as criminal, not because it is sexual, or because it is discriminatory, but because it is harassment of a subordinate by someone in power. Hence the category begins to 'drift from its feminist frame' (p. 11). Such a drift (which Gallop deplores) enables the analysis of justice initiated by feminism to be deployed in other social fields. It is difficult to see why this should be inimical to the feminist project itself.

In an ideal world, men and women, students and teachers, would engage in free and equal sexual relationships, impelled by pleasure and tenderness. Recognizing the inequalities in our present world is a necessary precondition for bringing that ideal a little closer.

Peter Benson

Morality, blood and shit

Amitai Etzioni, *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, Profile Books, London, 1997. xxii + 314 pp., £12.99 pb., 1 86197 039 0.

After his lightweight and largely unconvincing *The Spirit of Community*, Etzioni has consolidated his reputation as the leading figure of the communitarian movement with a more searching text. Heavily referenced, repetitive, and prolix at times, *The New Golden Rule* nevertheless engages more deliberately with the debate between individualism and social conservatism in political philosophy, and attempts to promote communitarianism as a viable middle way.

Etzioni writes from a position he himself describes as 'neo-functionalist', citing Durkheim and Parsons among other communitarian ancestors. His concern is for societal equilibrium – for an acceptable balance between social order and individual autonomy. Up to a certain point, he argues, autonomy and order,

rights and responsibilities, are mutually beneficial, with the growth of one side of the social formation enhancing the other. Autonomy contributes to societal order, for example, by making a social system 'metastable', enabling it to adapt spontaneously to changes in the external environment or its internal composition. Order contributes to autonomy, on the other hand, by humanizing people's animal instincts, protecting them from irrational drives and whimsical motivations, and lending self-discipline and communicative coherence to their actions.

The constant maximization of either of these terms, however, takes society beyond the 'mutually enhancing zone of inverting symbiosis', leading to sharp and undesirable conflict. While Etzioni regards Britain as a 'relatively communitarian' society, his belief is that from the 1960s to the 1980s the USA suffered from a growing deficit in moral order. The incessant growth in individual liberties over this period consequently undermined the moral infrastructure that undergirds those liberties. The result was excessive individualism, anti-social behaviour, litigiousness, and even 'anarchy'. In other societies, such as conservative East Asian states, social order is prioritized to the detriment of people's liberties. Such countries suffer from excessive collectivism and border on authoritarian – even totalitarian – regimes.

Etzioni's 'golden rule' is basically to minimize the conflict (which he concedes can never be eliminated) between order and autonomy, essentially by persuading people to meet the 'virtuous' demands of social order *voluntarily*, and by limiting these demands to the affirmation of *core values*. This means, he explains, avoiding the forcible imposition of external duties by instead increasing 'the realm of responsibilities one believes one should discharge and that one believes one is fairly called upon to assume'. This enhancement of responsibility is not produced by resource allocation and practical empowerment, but rather by 'the moral voice of the community, [by] education, persuasion, and exhortation'. Indeed, in Etzioni's account it is precisely because order in 'good communitarian societies relies heavily on normative means' that 'the social order of good societies is a moral order'.

Etzioni also believes that communitarianism offers a more realistic view of human nature. For Enlightenment liberals humans are inherently benign creatures requiring only the right environment for them to flourish. For social conservatives individuals are 'fallen' beings whose greatest weapon against the temptations of sin is discipline and punishment. Communitarianism, Etzioni maintains, takes a 'dynamic' or 'development' view of the person. It acknowledges that humans are born savage, but believes they can attain a modest level of virtue given the right socialization and normative environment. Not only must society's values be fully internalized in childhood, however, but they must also be continually reinforced amongst adult communities. This is because there always remains an unsocialized 'animal base' or 'residue' of anti-social predispositions which, if left unchecked, will steadily degrade 'the good and virtuous character of those who have acquired it'.

The range of values which a communitarian society can sustain, without subjecting its members to coercion or requiring of them heroic self-discipline, is therefore limited. Even so, these values must, Etzioni argues, be 'thick' rather than 'thin' values. That is, they must be anchored in precontractual commitments and cultural attachments, and not simply accepted by people for tactical or procedural reasons, or 'because they fear public authorities or are driven by economic incentives'.

The 'core values' outlined by Etzioni as lying at the heart of a communitarian moral order include a normative commitment to democracy 'as the best system there is'; the shared conceptions of minority rights and liberties enshrined in the US Constitution and Bill of Rights; respect for other cultures and communities; a willingness to divide one's loyalties between the different layers of society and to accord priority to the overarching community on certain issues; a rejection of the kind of exclusionary identity politics which denies the reality of multiple group membership; and a commitment to a shared core language.

Etzioni is particularly sensitive to the charge of moral relativism which liberal communitarians like Walzer have encountered. He argues that a community's values may be regarded as valid so long as they have been democratically endorsed by the members of that community and, additionally, so long as they do not violate a higher set of society-wide, and ultimately global (universal), normative criteria (such as the satisfaction of basic welfare needs). The widespread acceptance of some concept of human rights, however variable in precise definition, suggests to Etzioni that the basis for a global set of core values already exists.

Lastly, and most dubiously, Etzioni crowns his moral hierarchy with a final touchstone. In defiant challenge to the liberal rationalist, he observes that certain values 'present themselves to us as morally compelling in and of themselves'. One perplexing example of this, which clearly fails to explain Etzioni's equation of normative values with societal order, is that 'we have higher moral obligations to our own children

than to the children of others'. More ambitiously, Etzioni returns to the 'golden rule', initially justified by a functionalist argument which, the writer concludes, is in fact 'secondary': 'The needs for voluntary social order and for well-protected opportunities for individuals to express themselves speak compellingly for themselves.… The validity of the dual primary concepts … is self-evident.'

The New Golden Rule is not an especially eloquent or well-constructed book, and Etzioni's arguments are most notably weakened by a loose and inconsistent use of what would otherwise be pivotal terms. Probably the greatest deficiency lies in the author's concept of the 'twin virtues' of social order and autonomy. The most obvious interpretation of this distinction renders it synonymous with the idea, popularized in the social sciences by the likes of Habermas and Gorz, of the differentiation of modern society into system and lifeworld, or heteronomous and autonomous spheres. Closer inspection, however, reveals this not to be the case.

Etzioni's dual concepts are in fact reducible to an unsatisfactory division between the 'social' and the 'individual'. The social refers, in his account, to action which is congruent with the central cultural, legal and regulatory institutions of society – action which meets that society's functional need for stability and continuity. Society's needs define, *a priori*, such action as virtuous, though Etzioni of course objects to compliance not based on conscientious consent. The individual, on the other hand, is essentially synonymous with the negative concept of liberty – with the freedom to 'do your own thing'. Etzioni regards this individualism, so long as it is enjoyed within specified boundaries, as both a valid achievement of modernity and, more noticeably, as a functional prize conducive to societal flexibility and therefore stability. Etzioni's declared interest in the mutual importance of social order and autonomy is therefore false. Societal reproduction is the primary virtue, while 'autonomy' is negatively portrayed as a capricious anti-social individualism tolerated by society within limits. The reader might presume that when Etzioni talks about autonomy he is actually referring to people's voluntary consent to the norms and laws (the 'duties') which maintain social order. But since he defines a 'good society' as one in which most people ('as many as 98 percent'), 'most of the time', 'abide voluntarily by the mores', this interpretation cannot be correct. Such a society would clearly cease to have the balance between equal order and autonomy which Etzioni advocates.

By refusing to formulate a positive conception of autonomy, Etzioni thus disguises the fact that social systems *exceed* the communicative horizons, the personal responsibilities and moral autonomy of individuals. In doing so, he fails to recognize that it is the *defiance* of social norms and regulations by individuals trying to transform society (and themselves) in responsible and collective ways which is the cradle of morality. Indeed, were Etzioni more alert to *the scarcity of moral autonomy* in modern societies – of the practical responsibility that comes from being able to understand, want and reconcile the intentions and the consequences of one's actions – then the activity of transforming, rather than merely reproducing, society would surely claim a higher moral standing.

Industrial capitalism revolutionized humanity's struggle with the environment, but magnified its productive power and efficiency at the cost of alienation, inequality, and a continual reinvention or 'modernization' of scarcity. The revolutions that destroyed the feudal order did indeed give birth to a cultural conception of the citizen which eventually mitigated the worst excesses of capitalism with civil, political and welfare rights. But the legal, political and social institutions of modernity, if they were to be at all effective, in turn had to confer on individuals an abstract social identity, to address them as universal and impersonal beings. Hence morality in the modern world is necessarily an incomplete and ambiguous ideal. It refers not to obligation and obedience, but to the complex and contradictory struggle to push back the apparatuses of society, to enlarge the space and capacity for civilized and autonomous social relations, to challenge not simply inequality with justice, but also equality with reciprocity, societal rights and duties with concrete personal responsibilities, abstract individualism with autonomous forms of solidarity and friendship.

Instead of Etzioni's invocation of the 'moral voice' (which says 'I ought', as he puts it, rather than 'I would like'), we need a conception of moral autonomy which takes account of the paradoxical nature of modernity. We should avoid the complacency with which Etzioni cherishes the sense of 'ennoblement' conferred by acts of 'value affirmation' – fighting for one's country, he suggests, or giving to charity, protecting the environment, or volunteering to work in the Third World. Can one really go to war without feeling diminished by the deaths of the innocent? Can one help the poor without exonerating the rich, boycott the tyrant without afflicting the tyrannized, preserve nature without destroying jobs? Can one transform the world for the better without an instrumental attitude, without creating enemies and choosing sides, without tarnishing the purity of one's intentions by treating some people as things?

Instead of Etzioni's championing of the noble patriot, I prefer Zygmunt Bauman's observation that 'one can recognize a moral person by their never quenched dissatisfaction with their moral performance'. Or else there is Hoederer in Sartre's *Les Mains sales*, a Communist risking coalition with royalist and liberal politicians to form a front against the Germans. He knows he cannot claim moral purity. 'My hands are filthy', he admits. 'I've dipped them up to the elbows in blood and shit. So what? Do you think you can govern and keep your spirit white?'

Finn Bowring

Renewing aesthetic theory

Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997. xxi + 366 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 8166 1799 6.

Aesthetic Theory is Adorno's late *magnum opus* and among the most significant works on aesthetics of the twentieth century. Written over a period of almost fifteen years, it was posthumously published in 1970, a year after Adorno's unexpected death. Although partly unfinished, it is for the most part the highly crafted product of a career dedicated to thinking about art as a crucial feature of modernity. Not only does it rework Adorno's previous research around new categories – specifically mimesis – but, in an extension of his preoccupation with the problem of philosophical presentation, it offers a radical restructuring of the philosophical text.

Most explicitly, *Aesthetic Theory* is an attempt to establish why and how it is through modern autonomous art that truth and freedom are to be revealed in developed capitalist societies. For Adorno, capitalism involves the instrumental reduction of consciousness to the identity of the value form of capitalist exchange. Autonomous art – art which has an identity independent of predetermined needs – therefore becomes a crucial source of resistance and critique of the instrumental identity of capitalist society. Autonomous art is thus true in a double and inflected sense: in its non-identity with capitalist society, it bears the scars of capitalism's usually concealed antagonism; in the self-identity it constructs as the condition of this non-identity, it indicates a truth that does not as yet exist – a utopian glimpse of freedom. It is through this complex diagnosis of autonomous art that Adorno draws on the traditional category of mimesis to transform Plato's classic delimitation of art as a mere semblance or illusion of truth.

Although partly anticipated by Benjamin, Adorno's account of mimesis is original in its redemption of this classical aesthetic term as the fundamental category with which to think the most modern autonomous art. Adorno argues that autonomous art's development of its own self-identity institutes an alternative to the instrumental form of identity which, for Plato, art merely fails to achieve. For Adorno, this alternative form of identity – based on the non-instrumental affinity between the elements of art's construction – is mimesis. Non-autonomous art subordinates mimetic identity-with to an instrumental identity-as. Thus, for Adorno, even art which is a vehicle for a politically emancipatory message participates in instrumental identity relations and, paradoxically, would even betray the explicit intentions of a message of non-domination. It is through this development of mimesis into a critique of rationality, and the emergence of a dialectic of mimesis and rationality as the dynamic formation of modern art, that *Aesthetic Theory* achieves its general philosophical significance.

If Adorno's status in Germany has been diminished with the ascendency of Habermas's refiguring of Critical Theory, in the Anglophone world his significance is growing fast, nourished by numerous translations and increasingly extensive critical literature. Robert Hullot-Kentor's new translation of *Aesthetic Theory* is an important contribution to these developments. In many ways it is the exorbitant fulfilment of what can, at least retrospectively, be read as the promise of his outspoken critique of Christian Lenhardt's previous English translation. (Lenhardt's translation was published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, in 1984. For Hullot-Kentor's critique and Lenhardt's reply, see *Telos*, no. 65, Fall 1985, pp. 143–52.) Thus, it bears the first major fruits of the highly critical reception of Adorno's rather pedestrian early translation into English: together with *Aesthetic Theory*, the translations of both *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics* – the three milestones of Adorno's work – have been fiercely criticized.

The basic charge involved in Hullot-Kentor's critique, which according to Lenhardt's reply should also be extended to his publisher, was that he had failed to take seriously crucial features of *Ästhetische Theorie* in an attempt to render the book consumable by an Anglophone readership: a readership which for Hullot-Kentor is crucially American. In particular, Lenhardt failed to reproduce Adorno's specific structuring of the text, although this was merely the most overt symptom of serious mistranslations of crucial ideas.

In an attempt to develop Benjamin's notion of a constellational structure for the presentation of ideas, Adorno radicalized his technique, partly used in *Negative Dialectics*, of structuring the text by extended paragraphs without headings, starting a new paragraph for each sub-section of the chapter, and a break in the page to indicate a new chapter. This austere text without headings is indexed by a contents page to enable readers to find their way around the text by page number. This was Adorno's manifest attempt to resist the inherent linear form of conventional philosophical presentation.

Lenhardt's translation completely ignored this. Not only did it entitle each new chapter and sub-section with their indexed headings, but it even numbered each sub-section, thereby actively enforcing a linear structure. Lenhardt's further attempts to domesticate the text involved cutting up the sub-sections into smaller paragraphs, thereby arbitrarily dislocating Adorno's lapidary syntax, which consequently often demanded conjunctive phrases that, in their purely lubricative function, were completely alien to the paratactical form of the original.

Hullot-Kentor is rigorous in his refusal of any such domesticating revisions, and attempts to reproduce the original in all its complexity and difficulty. All too aware of the appropriative function of translation, Hullot-Kentor's self-understanding of his task as a translator is conceived by analogy with Adorno's critique of non-autonomous culture and its deepening during his exile in America. Hullot-Kentor reads Lenhardt's translation as the tragically predictable appropriation of Adorno's achievements by an American mass cultural mediocrity. If Lenhardt was to claim that *Aesthetic Theory* was already outdated by the simultaneous translation of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974; trans. 1984), then for Hullot-Kentor, Lenhardt's lack of rigour had merely reinforced this obsolescence by misconstruing Adorno's originality as mere outdatedness. For Hullot-Kentor, *Aesthetic Theory*'s obsolescence has been accelerated by its consumerist renewal and his task is to redeem the originality of what appears obsolete, thereby enabling what Martin Jay refers to on the jacket as a 'second chance'.

Yet whatever the undoubted merits of Hullot-Kentor's translation – which needs to be assessed with greater expertise – his own theorization of it tends to deal with the problem of Adorno's obsolescence by internalizing obsolescence as a structural condition of Adorno's originality. This produces an interpretative model which threatens profound misinterpretations of the crucial historical temporality at stake in Adorno's thought.

Adorno's temporalization of his aesthetics explicitly and determinately privileges the temporal modality of 'the new'. Although redemption is an essential feature of Adorno's historical hermeneutics, the new is the privileged site of interpretation through which the past is redeemed. Hence Adorno's modernist investment in the most recent products of modern art. This is in marked opposition to Heidegger's hermeneutics of repetition and its radical conservatism. For Adorno, the homology of modern autonomous art and the accelerated newness of commodity fetishism is integral to *Aesthetic Theory*, and defines its refusal of the delusion that the art of the past has somehow resisted commodification. Autonomous art emerges through an internal disengagement with commodity fetishism.

If, as Hullot-Kentor writes, 'Much of what catches the eye as obsolete in *Aesthetic Theory* is what would be new if it were not blocked', that process of unblocking should occur through investigating new art, and not the radicalization of its obsolescence. Whatever difficulties this presents for an inherently conservative academic culture – which is finally no consolation for consumerism – if *Aesthetic Theory* is to become renewed most radically, then its distinctive conception of renewal needs to be recognized.

Stewart Martin

The elusive citizenship of the kingdom of ends

Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. xv + 273 pp., £35.00 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 521 55059 9 hb., 0 521 55960 X pb.

It may now be possible to tackle the stalemate between supporters of the humanist agenda of an ever-expanding 'party of humanity' and the motley crew of sceptics, ironists, communitarians, nationalists and feminists even, by the use of an interesting new conception: the notion of 'practical identity' introduced into moral philosophy by Christine M. Korsgaard, and received with incredulity by well-known philosophers in this gripping work. Edited by Onora O'Neill, it comprises the revised text of, and comments on, the 1992 Tanner Lectures on Human Values delivered by Korsgaard in Cambridge. The lectures seek an answer to the 'normative question': what *justifies* the claims morality makes on us? According to Korsgaard, it must be asked and

answered in the first person; any answer that justifies morality's claim on us must appeal to our sense of who we are. Thus, in order to understand how and why ethical concepts have a grip on me, I must appreciate the mediating role of my practical identity.

That Korsgaard dares to introduce non-Kantian distinctions and concepts into an established discourse, while claiming to be a legitimate member of that very lineage, is in itself a reason why her book should be read. Her previous work, notably 'Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit', was a pertinent attack on the move to undermine the notion of identity by metaphysical arguments; she reminded us of the 'practical' basis of identity. Here is a thought-provoking philosopher who is generous in her sweep and undeterred in her pursuit of invigorating Kant's moral philosophy. Although more fully developed in her later book, the idea that people obligate us because they are people, and that this is the source of morality's hold on us, is a simple yet effective answer to the normative question: not all demands from outside of oneself are irksome constraints. The demands of love and attention, of engagement and reciprocity, are what make us human. Our human or moral identity induces our obligation to other people.

At first glance, the popular interpretations of Kant might make one cautious of Korsgaard's defence of a reconstructed Kantian moral philosophy. Does her appeal to practical identity really answer the objections of 'empty formalism' raised against Kant? Korsgaard grants that considering myself a legislative member of the Kingdom of Ends is *one among many* descriptions under which I can value myself. Our practical identities provide the content of our moral obligations. Being thus governed by the moral law, my self-identification as a human being is always, as it were, looming in the background. If it comes to a clash, Korsgaard would say that it is 'better for us to think of ourselves … just as human beings than, say, as men or women' (p. 117). However, in her constructivist mode, she also emphasizes that 'the fact that we can never escape viewing the world *from somewhere* is not a regrettable limitation' (p. 245). For example, presumably the fact that some of us are bound by our shared experience as women, and that for some of us this provides a vantage-point, is also not a regrettable limitation. So what is meant by 'better for us' would seem to be an expression of the *hope* of achieving an as yet distant humanitarian goal of equal respect and genuine reciprocity. In the interim period, there are good reasons to cherish our 'practical identity' – in the example to hand, as women, if that is a description under which we value our lives now.

The conception of practical identity, in my view, has enormous mediating potential. Ironists, while arguing against any essential identification, have reason to welcome the element of practicality in identification. Nationalists and communitarians, while resenting the implication that value-conferring identifications possess a merely 'practical' validity, have reason to welcome the element of self-identification. Feminists standing on both sides of the divide have reason to welcome the work of a woman philosopher who, although not explicitly acknowledging it, does seem to have taken on board their challenge to make moral philosophy relevant to the lives of people. Korsgaard makes moral philosophy relevant not by 'applying' ready-made concepts to neglected areas of concern, but by envisioning a revision of the concepts themselves.

One significant distinction that Korsgaard makes is between the categorical imperative and the moral law (p. 99). Whilst a mafioso might be categorically bound by his conception of the imperative to be loyal to his family, his loyalty cannot be a law. For it to be a candidate conception of the moral law, he must ask why he endorses his loyalty. This further reflection dictates a further endorsement – this time, of his identity as a human being who must respond to the needs of others for whom he is especially responsible. The step from his practical identity as a mafioso to his practical identity as a citizen of the Kingdom of Ends is thus possible. By granting rationality to the mafioso's 'practical identity' as a mafioso, Korsgaard elevates the role of 'self-identification' in grounding motivations to be moral.

G.A. Cohen, who introduces the mafioso example in his comments, complains that Korsgaard's arguments do not 'distinguish the Mafioso ethic from morality', and therefore fail to 'move us beyond the mere phenomenology of obligation to providing a more specifically *moral* obligation' (p. 187). His other main criticism is that the argument from practical identity might serve as a reply when a moral being is asked why she bothers to be moral; but it cannot be used to convert the 'radically disaffected' who asks 'why must I be moral?'

Similar doubts and criticisms are raised by Raymond Geuss. He rightly questions the underdescribed relation between moral identity and practical identity in these lectures. In his turn, Thomas Nagel claims that one's practical identity is the product of morality, not its source. Bernard Williams, whose *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* is the subject of a sympathetic discussion in the lecture on 'Reflective Endorsement', doubts whether 'the normative question' can be coherently asked such that it is 'rationally

inescapable' about 'ultimate justification', 'practically relevant' and 'the answer to which justifies by explaining' (p. 213).

In an extended reply Korsgaard points out that her picture of the pervasiveness of obligation as 'something we experience every morning when the alarm goes off' (p. 255) is truer to life than one in which moral obligation only occasionally intrudes to spoil the fun. It is tempting to respond that only in so far as we remain sane enough to set the alarm, connected enough to stop when we are called, reflective enough to question our codes, that obligations will weave their net. Moral obligation surrounds us only *after* it has made inroads into our selves. It is true that we cannot escape obligation and keep ourselves intact. But is it not my self that I sometimes want to escape?

All in all, this book offers a model of philosophy 'in action' with a variety of protagonists, intricate storylines, compelling arguments, challenging criticisms and ambitious reconciliations. It should be a spur to think philosophically about the nature of our moral obligations and their relation to our identities.

Meena Dhanda

Infinite variety

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks Volume 2*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996. xii + 736 pp., £40.00 hb, 0 231 10592 4.

The great project undertaken by Joseph Buttigieg of Notre Dame University, aiming to make a translation of Gramsci's complete prison notebooks available to an Anglophone audience, has now reached the second of five volumes planned.

A brief selection from the notebooks (written between 1929 and 1935) was first published in English in 1957, but it was the publication of Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* in 1971 that was fundamental to the diffusion of Gramscian notions in the English-speaking world. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, edited and translated by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, appeared in 1985, and in 1995 Derek Boothman's *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks* filled in the gaps left by the earlier selections, covering religion, education, economics, science, translatability and Croce's philosophy. All these volumes were published by Lawrence & Wishart.

In 1975 a complete critical edition of the notebooks, edited by Valentino Gerratana, was published in Italy, comprising all twenty-nine originals exactly as they were written by Gramsci and including all the notes, even though many were subsequently crossed out and incorporated into later notes.

The translation of this edition is faithful throughout and sensitively reflects Gramsci's style of writing. But what is most remarkable is the notes supplied by the editor. Joseph Buttigieg explains in detail every reference to an author, book, periodical or historical event. These notes are much more extensive than those in the Italian edition. As a result, the English-speaking reader is provided with the finest possible background for a full understanding of Gramsci's thought.

This second volume contains Notebooks 3, 4 and 5. The first volume (1992), comprising Notebooks 1 and 2, also contained a valuable introduction by the editor. Notebooks 3 and 5 are similar to 1 and 2 in that they contain a miscellany of short notes on an astonishing variety of topics. However, certain strands of Gramsci's multi-directional inquiries stand out, such as those on intellectuals, popular culture (mainly literature and journalism), Italian history, Americanism, and the Catholic Church (both as a religious institution and a formidable political-ideological force). Other topics include the Renaissance, the Reformation, language, Chinese and Japanese culture.

Notebook 4 represents a significant phase in the evolution of Gramsci's project because it contains the first short essays in which he developed his ideas on particular themes such as the nature of ideology, the relation between structure and superstructure, Machiavelli and other aspects of Marxist theory. (This notebook also contains the set of notes outlining his original contribution to the interpretation of Canto 10 of Dante's *Inferno*.) The short essays in Notebook 4 were all subsequently incorporated into longer essays in later notebooks. When Joseph Buttigieg's labours are complete, it will be possible to trace the evolution of Gramsci's thought on any particular topic, such as the role of intellectuals in society, the relation between culture and politics, or the critique of positivism. Meanwhile, we have the first five notebooks and these admirably illustrate the great range of Gramsci's intellectual interests and his remarkable knowledge of Italian history, literature, religion and language.

The notebooks also illustrate Gramsci's abiding preoccupation with history and his deep concern that Marxism should be purged of all residues of positivism, which he saw as the tendency to reduce Marxism to laws similar to those of natural science. In his view the people, through the development of a critical awareness, should become the makers of history, rather than be seen as unconscious actors in a mechanistic

drama that unfolds according to immutable laws. As he put it, when using the term 'historical materialism' one should remember 'to put the accent on the first term "historical" and not on the second which is of metaphysical origin'.

The fragmentary character of the notebooks has often been the subject of comment and it is particularly evident in these early documents, whereas some of the later ones, beginning with number 10, are devoted to particular themes. It is usually implied that this fragmentariness is a drawback forced on Gramsci by the difficult conditions in which he worked; and that it is an obstacle which the Gramscian scholar has to overcome, seeking to extract the main concepts from the many factual notes in which they are embedded. Joseph Buttigieg suggests, however, that the fragmentary character of the notebooks is due, at least in part, to the 'philological' method governing their composition. (Gramsci studied linguistics at Turin university.) He understood philology as a method of scholarship for ascertaining particular facts in their unique 'individuality'. Whereas the metaphysical impulse tends to absorb the particular into the general, history as conceived by Gramsci searches for ways to retrieve the fragment, to ascertain its specificity, and dwell on its difference. The complete text of the notebooks demonstrates what he meant by placing the accent on history 'in its infinite variety and multiplicity'.

Accordingly, in interpreting Gramsci's concepts it is always necessary to bear in mind the precise historical circumstances in which they are embedded, for if these are allowed to disappear the concepts are in danger of becoming dogmas. As Stuart Hall has said, they can be disinterred from these concrete circumstances and transplanted to new soil, but this has to be done with considerable care and patience.

Gramsci was not only responsible for what many believe to be the most significant developments in the Marxist theory of politics in the twentieth century. The practice of philological criticism in his prison notebooks also constitutes an important contribution to the elaboration of an anti-dogmatic Marxism.

Roger Simon

My brother's keeper

Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith, Athlone, London, 1996. xii + 191 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 485 11466 6.

Levinas's philosophy offers a powerful critique of the attitude of indifference to otherness, an indifference most concisely – and archaically – expressed by Cain's biblical question: am I my brother's keeper? This typifies Western metaphysics in its subordination of ethics to epistemology and ontology. Levinas recuperates the desire for the ineffable, what lies 'beyond essence', what disturbs the fragile unity of socialized beings, and the 'economic' totality of collective formations. With his prioritization of a 'face-to-face' ethics over a metaphysics which reduces the radical alterity of the other to a graspable and pliable material for conceptualization, the Heideggerian notion of 'being-with' becomes transformed into a 'being-for' the other. The relation to the other is neither symmetrical, nor reciprocal, for it has no ground and ultimate justification but the infinite obligation and responsibility of an I to a Thou, an I always undone, displaced and reshaped by the other.

Proper Names, translated with utmost care and acumen by Michael B. Smith, comprises two parts, one entitled 'Proper Names' and the other 'On Maurice Blanchot', which first appeared separately in France in 1976 and 1975 respectively. Many of the accompanying short essays review the work, or commemorate the death, of some of Levinas's predecessors and contemporary intellectuals whose thought he encounters as an event, as singular and irreducible to 'economic' representation as the individuals who bore the corresponding proper names.

The opening essay is a commentary on Shmuel Josef Agnon's poetry wherein Levinas studies the enigmatic ontology of what is beyond signification, of ethics, justice and the Holocaust, and the 'reverberation of being' in Agnon's texts. In 'Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge', he examines the constellation 'language, authentic life, and truth' in Buber, as well as some of his most cherished ideas concerning the I, the other, and their unthematizable encounter. The critique of the philosophy of consciousness and the subject–object model of thought received a decisive impetus from Buber's profound explorations of the I–Thou and the I–It relation. Levinas's objections to Buber's theory – that ethics should not presuppose symmetrical roles between the I and the Thou, and that science should not hastily be relegated to the sphere of the I–It – shed a revealing light both on his indebtedness to Buber and on his departure from Buber's theory, his shift to an ethics 'wholly otherwise'.

In the same vein, 'Paul Celan: From Being to the Other' affirms Celan's retrieval of an understanding of poetry as a modality of the world's openness to thought, as a seeking of the other in the mysteries

of the I–Thou. Elsewhere in the book, Levinas challenges the idea that philosophy, by its very vocation, is limited to the question of being ('Jeanne Delhomme: Penelope, or Modal Thought'). His insightful texts on Kierkegaard further elaborate the relation between thought and subjectivity. As opposed to immersing the subject in the undifferentiated unity of the Hegelian system, Levinas raises the Kierkegaardian positing of the I as an entity resistant to generality. To the idea of egotism as being's ontology in Kierkegaard, Levinas counterposes 'diacony' as responsibility to the other.

The Western world's obsessive attention to facticity, the choice of a conception of language either as disclosure or as ethical event, and the human face as proof of the existence of God are some of the issues Levinas unfolds with reference to Jean Lacroix, Roger Laporte and Max Picard. In 'The Other in Proust' he envisages the redemption of philosophy from the identification (Parmenidean in origin) of being and knowing. 'Father Herman Leo Van Breda' is a homage to the scholar who organized the Husserl archive at Louvain, and the final essay of the first part of the book focuses on Jean Wahl's way of drawing the contrast between feelings and concept.

The section on Blanchot comprises four readings of his texts. Insightful and sensitive, Levinas's interpretation takes up Blanchot's dichotomy between the categories of the Day, referring to law, power, social role, order, and all human activity apart from art, which is ranged under the categories of the Night. Transcendence and immanence, 'the frightfulness of the Neuter' (p. 154), the excluded middle, and the scattered discourses of a writing irreducible to totality, and the surplus of meaning that no world disclosure can fully grasp constitute the main focal points of these essays.

Both opponents and defenders of Levinasian ethics will find this collection useful and accessible; and those who are not familiar with his critique of metaphysics and modernity will be impressed with the incomparably seductive prose of a thinker who escapes categorization, equidistant as he is from both Cartesianism and post-structuralism, and scarcely representing any other '-ism' one might care to name.

Marianna Papastephanou

Rolling the state back in

Mark Neocleous, *Administering Civil Society: Towards a Theory of State Power*, Macmillan and St Martin's Press, London and New York, 1996, xii + 235 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 333 65854 X, 0 312 16155 7 (US).

Administering Civil Society offers a Marxist theory of the state, based upon a fundamental rethinking of the state–civil society distinction. Contrary to what the author perceives as a recent trend within political theory – a concentration on civil society – this work contends that the concept makes sense, and its use is legitimate, only if the concept of the state is also in operation. Such a claim situates Neocleous in opposition not only to those strands of Marxism that have sought to treat the state as an epiphenomenon of the economic base but also to theorists such as Foucault who have abandoned the distinction in favour of analyses of power within 'the social'.

Neocleous seeks to reassert the mutual indispensability of the twin concepts of the state *and* civil society, and to demonstrate the constitutive power of the state *over* civil society. This is combined with the claim that the former is actively fashioned through struggles within the latter, which give rise to a multitude of administrative functions designed to mediate and incorporate them within the bourgeois state.

The rethinking of the distinction and the mediating role of political administration is addressed in two stages. The first critiques the theoretical roots of the distinction within the Hegelian-Marxist tradition. Neocleous traces its development from its point of origin in Hegel, via its adoption by Marx, to its most elaborated form in Gramsci's writings. This allows him to offer a rich theoretical argument that engages critically with Lenin, Althusser, Foucault, and a number of contemporary left-wing writers.

Part two of the book illustrates the reconceptualization using the example of the English working class and its incorporation into the British body politic since 1832. As a method of constituting legal subjectivity, fashioning the market, and subsuming the working class, political administration is deemed to span the borders between legislative and judicial functions. This is a striking claim, for it means that modern industrial capitalism was not simply *perpetuated* by state power, but actively *fashioned* by it; and it was these same instruments – political administration – that were used to subsume working-class struggle.

Integral to this argument is the critique of such notions as 'social control' and 'labour aristocracy', which have featured in standard accounts of the lack of working-class revolution. The idea that a potentially revolutionary proletariat was 'controlled' by the ruling class is criticized for lacking specificity (in the explanatory and the historical sense), and as failing to conform to a historical materialistic analysis. The notion of a labour aristocracy (with its roots in Engels and Lenin) also runs into problems of definition and historical location. Indeed, it has been expanded to such an extent that any part of the working class that does not appear 'normal' can be sectioned off and blamed for undermining a proletarian revolution. Neocleous maintains that the theories of social control and labour aristocracy suffer from the same dilemma – namely, while both rely upon the ideas *of* struggle and the incorporation of the working class, they have difficulty in accounting *for* working-class struggle. Traditionally, the working class has been labelled supine, and whilst it may appear that to be incorporated the working class had to be a supine body, the reverse is the case: the working class was incorporated for the very reason that it was not. If it had not been incorporated, then it would likely have realized its revolutionary potential.

Neocleous's alternative reading of working-class subsumption is based upon a multi-layered analysis of the integrated parts of the development of the working class. This begins by considering bourgeois revolution and the development of citizenship, and is then linked with the rise of trade unionism, the family, the laws of contract, unemployment insurance, and the development of the Poor Laws, the Reform Act, and the workhouses.

This is a stimulating and insightful work, one that benefits from tackling head-on, in a refreshing and provocative manner, the issue of a Marxist theory of the state. Part of its attraction is its originality, which stems from its refusal to be drawn into giving merely another exegesis of Marx's thoughts on the subject of the state.

David Stevens

NEWS

Anniversary blues

Social Emancipation: One Hundred and Fifty Years After *The Communist Manifesto*
17–20 February 1998, Centro Capitolio, Havana.

From Enlightenment to Dialectics: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
26–28 February 1998, Columbia University/New School for Social Research/Goethe Institute, New York.

Anniversaries can be fraught affairs, as often melancholy as uplifting. Never more so than in Cuba today, a socialist system tottering on the edge of extinction. There was defiance in the very existence of the international conference on the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* in Havana – defiance of the forces that would deny Cuba a future, and also, thereby, of certain of the realities emerging within Cuban society.

Located in the Capitolio building, a 1932 replica of the Capital building in Washington, and coordinated by the Institute of Philosophy, a division of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, the conference was an official (not merely an officially sanctioned) event. The combination of architectural grandeur and lack of basic amenities (no running water), characteristic of Old Havana, was powerfully symbolic of the state of Cuba itself. As was the need for foreign currency, which seems, increasingly, to provide the organizational imperative behind even such politically significant events.

Predictably, papers varied wildly in character, quality and interest. Broadly speaking, there were three main types of presentation: (1) recapitulations of fixed positions, ritually presented as statements, without embellishment or critical intent; (2) analyses of the economic situation, both globally and in Cuba; (3) more theoretically and politically diverse discussions of different aspects of the text of the *Manifesto.* Participants were split more or less equally between Cubans and visitors, with three-quarters of the latter (about thirty-five) English-language speakers, from