

The miracle of meaning

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, edited by Andrew Bowie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998. xl + 284 pp., £35.00 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 521 59149 X hb., 0 521 59848 6 pb.

Umberto Eco once defined a sign as 'anything we can use to lie with', though exactly what lying consists in he failed to make clear. To lie is not of course just to state an untruth, since I may believe my statement to be true; but nor is it just to state an untruth knowing it to be an untruth, as I may know that you know the same. That Heineken reaches parts of the body which other beers don't is not true, but it is not a lie either. Determining whether an untruth is a lie involves an appeal not only to the speaker's awareness of its untruth but to her intention to deceive. But lying is not just a question of deceptive intentions either, since I can also deceive someone by speaking the truth, or part of it, in a certain style. I may imply by my tone that I am being ironic, when in fact I am not. So lying does indeed involve stating what is not the case, as well as more subjective factors; and this is an interplay of objective and subjective which for the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher is present in all understanding.

Defining a sign as anything we can use to lie with is defining a thing in terms of its abuses, and something like this goes for Schleiermacher's theory of interpretation. Hermeneutics, he writes, 'rests on the fact of the non-understanding of discourse'. Truth, in short, is born of error: it is non-understanding which first breeds in us the need to understand our understanding. Here as elsewhere, 'theory' arises when our routine practices come unstuck, and so become freshly estranged. Postmodernists will be intrigued to learn from Andrew Bowie's excellent Introduction to this collection of Schleiermacher's hermeneutical texts that the problem of understanding from which he took off was a question of cultural otherness. In translating an account of the English colony in New South Wales, he began to worry about how to understand the alien religious notions of aboriginals. For Schleiermacher the theologian, however, there is a rather more pressing need for the art of interpretation, which is the fact that God has spoken to us, but in Aramaic. Hermeneutics has its root in the theological task of deciphering the scriptures – a paradoxical affair, to be sure, since the scriptures are sacred documents whereas interpretation

is a chancy, indeterminate, thoroughly secular business of which the angels presumably have no need. On the other hand, the imperfectness of our understanding has itself a theological root, and so is itself a part of revealed truth, rather than at odds with it.

Jesus is himself a text, version or discourse, the Word which incarnates the Father's own interpretation of himself, but one articulable only through our own postlapsarian languages, and so alarmingly ambiguous. Theologians today set notably rigorous conditions for identifying Jesus's *ipsissima verba*: such as whether a statement attributed to him would be a grave embarrassment for the early church, and so possibly included in the New Testament only on the grounds of its undeniable authenticity. Jesus almost certainly did not say 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life', any more than Oscar Wilde's dying words were 'Either I or that wallpaper will have to go', but he almost certainly addressed God as 'Abba Father', meaning something like 'Father dear', since we find almost no other instance of this usage in the Aramaic of his time. Anyway, including it in their writing, unlike sticking in the odd piece of anti-Semitism, is of no particular political or theological advantage to the Evangelists.

If theology and hermeneutics share a common root, it is perhaps also because there is something mildly miraculous about meaning. What bemuses linguists is how we come to understand each other at all, given the formidable obstacles to such an encounter. Schleiermacher, as Andrew Bowie argues here, does not propose 'empathy' as a solution to the problem – an egregious lapse of hermeneutical attention to his hermeneutics by, among others, Hans-Georg Gadamer. In any case, understanding by empathy dubiously assumes that the one to be understood is self-transparent. Schleiermacher, by contrast, is famously intent on understanding the author better than he understands himself, since hermeneutics can disclose the explanatory contexts of an utterance which were necessarily concealed from the speaker. Instead of empathy, he insists on the way that in any act of understanding,

'spontaneity' (meaning the mind's activity in rendering the world intelligible) and 'receptivity' (meaning the way the world is given to the subject) are only analytically distinguishable.

A child who comes to apply linguistic rules must already, at the cost of infinite regress, have grasped something of the relation between word and world in a ruleless way; and here we are brought up against Schleiermacher's doctrine of 'feeling' or intuition, which Bowie wishes to salvage from some Romantic mystification. On the contrary, this unschematizable intuition is in the first place one of our radical dependence on the world, a dependence (Bowie might have added) with distinctly Protestant connotations, and to this extent runs counter to Idealism. Our making sense of the world presupposes our prior bound-upness with it, a theme which will be inherited by Heidegger. Hegel, the great merchant of mediation, was predictably hostile to the immediacy of this feeling, which for Schleiermacher himself has theological overtones of a ground to the relationship between mind and world which cannot itself be mediated. The Absolute in which concept and object achieve identity is for him the ground of our knowledge, but thereby inaccessible to it.

For Schleiermacher, then, the particular and the universal converge only asymptotically, in an Absolute which transcends them both. But if we take the act of interpreting discourse as a paradigm of our knowledge of the world – a move which Bowie might perhaps have questioned more than he does – their capillary interaction is everywhere observable. Grasping the particularity of another's discourse presupposes universal rationality as a regulative idea, and the impulse



behind this view is an ethical one. Hermeneutics is both a grasping of the facts and a will to acknowledge the reality of the other. Part of that understanding is to understand the impossibility of any absolute version of it, for the dialectic between universal and particular will never be finally sealed. But if what one might call language as event and language as structure are never finally reconcilable, this is not to suggest, as it is, say, for Paul de Man, that the relationship between them is purely aporetic. Language is a structure that generates events which have the power to transform that structure itself, the most prototypical of which events are known as poems. And, in a broader context, this unfinished dialectic is known as human history.

Andrew Bowie's reclamation of Schleiermacher is thus much more than a scholarly salvaging of a philosopher more referred to than read. It is a key intervention into the increasingly sterile altercations between semanticists and intentionalists, humanists and post-structuralists. As such, this is a volume whose significance lies far beyond its apparently academic purposes, and the editor is to be commended on his painstaking labours of translation and annotation. He is also to be mildly upbraided for being too uncritical of his subject – a familiar psychological tendency when one is presenting a much-travestied thinker for positive reevaluation. Bowie's Introduction, which illuminatingly embeds Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in the context of German Idealism, breathes hardly a word of the fact that his thought may display the occasional deficiency. Schleiermacher, as Bowie deftly shows, is no unconstructed intentionalist, a kind of dry run for E.D. Hirsch; on the contrary, he is subtly aware of how our intentions, like our desires, are in some sense bestowed upon us by a language we never got to choose. Even so, he tends at times to view language in pre-Wittgensteinian fashion as being a kind of translation of thought, so that the task of the hermeneuticist is to reconstruct or dredge to consciousness the thoughts underlying the utterance. But the spatial metaphor of thought as lying 'behind' utterance has always been obfuscatory, just as the equally spatial images of signs 'buttoning down' on things, or 'floating off' from them, have been. It is not helpful to think of the words 'Smother it with goulash' as concealing the thought 'Smother it with goulash', as Bowie would be the first to agree. Nor is it especially helpful to conceive of all texts or discourses as complex unities, another dogma to which Schleiermacher is occasionally prone. But the editor's rather too unreserved promotion of his author is a minor lapse when compared to the service which this volume renders to the history of ideas.

Terry Eagleton

Absolute forgiveness

H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder, I: The Pilgrimage of Reason*, Hackett, Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1997. xvii + 658 pp., £99.00 (2-vol. set) hb., 0 87220 278 X.

H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder, II: The Odyssey of Spirit*, Hackett, Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1997. xiii + 909 pp., £99.00 (2-vol. set) hb., 0 87220 279 8.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) is one of the most important, difficult and endlessly fascinating works of philosophy ever written. It has been the subject of several influential commentaries, most notably the monumental 'genetic-structural' account by Jean Hypolite (1946) and the equally extensive 'existential-anthropological' account by Alexandre Kojève (1947), both of which have governed the interpretation of Hegel's text in France and the USA since the Second World War. Of the commentaries written originally in English, Quentin Lauer's meticulous textual study is probably the best regarded. No commentary currently available to the English-speaking reader of Hegel, however, can match Henry Harris's new two-volume study, *Hegel's Ladder*, for detail, scope and sheer erudition.

This study is unfortunately not always as lucid or readable as one would like, and certainly does not make Hegel's dense arguments as immediately transparent for the beginner as does Lauer (or Findlay or Kaufmann). But Harris provides what is without doubt the most thorough, well-researched and thoughtful study of the *Phenomenology* in English to date. He identifies more of Hegel's oblique references than anyone else; he draws more parallels between the various sections of Hegel's text than anyone else; he relates Hegel's text to its intellectual background better than anyone else; and in many cases (though not all) he understands the logic of Hegel's argument better than anyone else. In short, in spite of its flaws, Harris's commentary is a splendid and quite awe-inspiring achievement – the magnificent fruit of over thirty years of study that will be savoured by future generations of scholars and students for many years to come.

Harris proceeds by providing a short 'analysis' (sometimes only four or five lines long) of each of the 808 paragraphs of Hegel's text, and by following each analysis with a detailed 'commentary' (sometimes running to several pages) on the relevant paragraph. He is thus concerned to explore and clarify the structure not only of Hegel's phenomenological argument, but also of Hegel's *text* as a whole. Indeed, one of the most original and useful features of Harris's approach

is that it is just as sensitive to the literary character of Hegel's book (to its style, organization, use of metaphor, and wide – if often hidden – references to other literary sources) as it is to its philosophical merits.

Beyond the voluminous paragraph-by-paragraph analysis and commentary, which make up the bulk of the two volumes, *Hegel's Ladder* also includes a short but helpful Introduction outlining the genesis of Hegel's text and its relation to the work of Reinhold and Fichte, a 'Concluding Intermezzo' at the close of volume one, a concluding 'Ritornello' at the close of volume two, almost 250 pages of scholarly, polemical, entertaining and always fascinating notes, and an invaluable 84-page bibliography listing virtually everything of any merit that has been written on the *Phenomenology* since 1960 and several works published before then. There is an excellent analytical index and a separate index for all the secondary works referred to in the notes. These two volumes are hardly cheap (at £99 for the set), but what the reader will get for her money is a complete study pack for the *Phenomenology*.

Harris's approach to the *Phenomenology* is twofold. On the one hand, he seeks to bring out the 'methodic continuity' of Hegel's text, and, on the other hand, he endeavours to 'put the pictures back' into the *Phenomenology* by supplying philosophical, historical and literary examples that will enable the reader to form a concrete mental image of the modes of consciousness under discussion. On the whole, despite not always achieving the clarity of exposition one would prefer, Harris succeeds in making the logical continuity of Hegel's argument eminently intelligible. He explains many of the transitions between different forms of consciousness well, and offers particularly fine accounts of the transitions between 'reason' and 'spirit' and the 'beautiful soul' and 'religion'. He points to numerous important, but easily overlooked, parallels between various sections of the text, and is especially illuminating on the ways in which the dialectic of 'perception' reappears in 'observing reason', in the relation between Antigone and Creon, and in the 'moral will'. He also offers persuasive arguments to explain why Hegel included some of his more

idiosyncratic analyses, such as those of physiognomy and phrenology.

The problem is that some parts of Harris's own text are bristling with examples and cross-references to such a degree that there is simply too much for the reader to absorb. Furthermore, the judgments Harris makes on the figures to whom he refers are at times so elliptical, and the connections he draws between them at such a high level of generality, that it is often very hard to evaluate his claims properly. For those of us who lack Harris's extraordinary erudition, parts of his leavened prose actually prove to be no more easily digestible than Hegel's unleavened original.

At the heart of the *Phenomenology*, according to Harris, is the insight that a 'rational individual can exist only within the life-sphere of a substantial community of essentially similar individuals'. Harris's Hegel is thus an unequivocal communitarian. 'Spirit', for him, is not a transcendent entity governing the lives of people from on high, but is simply the 'identical self-structure', or 'sense of common 'substance', that all the members of a community share. The distinctive feature of Hegel's communitarianism in the *Phenomenology*, however, is that it is not presupposed from the outset, but is a position at which he arrives, having started from its polar opposite. Hegel actually begins by considering the character of *individual* consciousness, self-consciousness and reason by itself, and by demonstrating (over scores of dense pages) that individual consciousness has to be embedded in a public, communal life, if it is to be capable of genuine objectivity, rationality and truth. Existing in a community is thus, for Harris's Hegel (as for Habermas), a transcendental condition of understanding one's ideas to be objective and true. If one could not understand that one's ideas demand recognition from *others*, as well as oneself, one could not conceive of those ideas as objective rather than merely subjective.

The turning point in Hegel's *Phenomenology* – when consciousness first begins to recognize that objectivity can only be found in that which demands public recognition within a community or 'spirit' – is the point at which consciousness tries and *fails* to find objectivity in the immediate, sensuous presence of physical things. This occurs, famously, in phrenology, in which consciousness endeavours abortively to find its own objective character embodied in the shape of the skull. In a brilliant echo of Hegel's reference to Golgotha at the end of the *Phenomenology*, Harris thus concludes that 'it is from this "skull-place" [of phrenology] that the infinitude of the Spirit foams forth'. The first volume of Harris's study ends, con-

sequently, with Hegel's account of phrenology. (This volume is entitled 'The Pilgrimage of Reason', by the way, because its theme is the way in which conscious, finite Reason ends up 'pursu[ing] its search logically to its own tomb'.)

The second volume moves on to consider Hegel's discussion of the simplest form of self-consciously communal or 'spiritual' reason, in which conflicting aspects of its identity are understood to be immediately embodied in different individuals (such as Antigone and Creon); and, following this, the realm of culture, in which communal reason is understood to be self-creating. In religion, Harris explains, consciousness understands that it is not just part of a local, national community, or even of a developing historical culture, but that it is actually part of the infinite community of humanity as a whole. That is to say, religious consciousness recognizes that 'the humanity of the spirit is founded in, and begins from, the clear consciousness of being identically (or "substantially") an ingredient in the great community of the living and the dead who make up the total fabric of Reason'. This infinite community constitutes the 'substance' or sustaining ground of individual identity and is, in Hegel's view, that which is truly *divine*. Indeed, Harris argues, there is no other God than this for Hegel. Religious believers may assume that they are worshipping one or more transcendent entities; but, according to Hegel, what they are actually doing is giving expression, in their respective conceptions of God or the gods, to the ways in which they understand the 'divine' character of humanity as a whole. 'What "God" *represents*', Harris writes, 'is ourselves as a universal community in our environment as a totality.'

Christianity is the 'absolute religion', according to Hegel, because in it human beings give explicit pictorial expression to the truth that spirit, or the 'infinite community of Reason', is the only deity there is. Christianity also recognizes that this infinite human community comes to be more and more conscious of itself *as* a unified community, as human beings renounce the desire to pass moral judgement on one another and accept one another, in a spirit of 'forgiveness', as *fellow* human beings. The fully self-conscious infinite community of humanity can only come into being, therefore, as the 'community of reconciliation or the 'community of universal forgiveness'. According to Harris, however, Hegel thinks that Christianity continues, in spite of its official universalism, to exclude non-believers from this community. Harris thus argues, controversially (and in my view mistakenly), that Hegel's 'manifest religion' is not historical Christianity itself, but a more all-forgiving variant of

Christianity that only began to emerge after the French Revolution in 'a few intellectual romantics', such as Novalis and Hölderlin.

The great merit of Harris's study of the *Phenomenology* is that it clearly acknowledges the enormous importance that Hegel attributes to religion in human experience. In this respect, it provides an important corrective to the more 'existential-anthropological' interpretations of Hegel's text afforded by Kojève and Kaufmann, which tend to downplay the religious dimension to Hegel's thought. But it also shows clearly just how mistaken Charles Taylor is to claim that Hegel pointed to a distinct 'self-positing Spirit' behind the historical activity of human beings. Harris insists that 'in some sense ... Hegel was promising that the end of the journey would be the coincidence of human conscious experience with the self-knowledge of God'; but this is because 'God' proves to be simply 'the community of rational self-consciousness' itself – the community which is the ultimate creative and sustaining ground of our existence. This community is located in nature, but beyond it, for Hegel, there is no further transcendent divinity. In fact, Harris claims, the *Phenomenology* shows clearly that 'all transcendence is to be done away with'. The journey begins as a pilgrimage; but it turns into an odyssey, once consciousness recognizes, in its passage through the Golgotha of phrenology, that its nature is not to be merely immediate, sensuous presence, but rather self-creating, spiritual life. Volume two of Harris's study, consequently, is entitled 'The Odyssey of the Spirit'.

Consciousness comes to understand rationally that the infinite human community is its home, when it follows the lead provided by Christianity, renounces the desire to pass moral judgement on what belongs to a different time or place from itself, and learns to reconcile itself with everything human. Absolute knowing, like Christian religious consciousness, thus rests on the acceptance that all modes of human consciousness are 'forgiven' and deserve to be understood for what they each uniquely are. Such knowing does not, therefore, seek to praise or condemn other forms of consciousness, or to subordinate them violently to a presupposed master-plan, but endeavours to render intelligible the distinctive character of those other forms in a 'spirit of charity and reconciliation'. Some anti-Hegelians will be surprised to find absolute knowing associated with 'loving comprehension' – rather than 'totalizing subsumption' – of the other; but, to my mind, Harris makes his case persuasively.

On reflection, Harris might perhaps be criticized for overly *humanizing* 'spirit'. He recognizes that Hegelian

'spirit' is indeed constituted by human social and historical activity, and that such human activity emerges in nature. But he seems to downplay the extent to which humanity brings *being* itself – absolute reason or the 'Idea' – to self-consciousness. In rejecting the idea of a realm beyond this world, therefore, Harris appears to deprive the (human) spirit of any absolute, ontological ground whatsoever. Be that as it may, Harris is surely right to emphasize the radically this-worldly character of Hegel's thought and the intimate connection between absolute knowing and the religious spirit of forgiveness and love. Indeed, reading Harris's magnificent study carefully reveals just how lovingly immersed in the riches of this world Hegel's thought actually is. For this, and for a lifetime devoted to illuminating the most demanding of all philosophers, Harris deserves considerable gratitude from all of us.

Stephen Houlgate

Thesis three: female

Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998. 236 pp., £49.50 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 7456 1554 6 hb., 0 7456 1555 4 pb.

Addressing feminists of both genders who are drawn to the seductions of Deleuzian 'lines of flight', but who want the specificity of female identity, *The Phenomenal Woman* proposes a feminist metaphysics that, counter-intuitively, 'takes the embodied female as norm'. It is Battersby's aim to redirect feminist theoretical discussion away from epistemology and back to ontology, to female selves and their phenomenal existence. As she 'turn[s] away from the epistemology of the subject, toward a metaphysics of the object', Battersby seeks an 'other' approach to being, time, space and identity to inform 'woman' in philosophy and women in the world.

To parry the huge bias in contemporary theory against any consideration of ontology, Battersby sweeps out the metaphysical attic, banishing both Aristotle's notion of nonrelational, unchangeable being and the noumenon of Kantian speculative metaphysics. Yet Kant is crucial to Battersby's feminist metaphysics; indeed the first piece of her ontological model, embedded in Kant's descriptive (as opposed to speculative) metaphysics, is what she terms his 'implicitly relational' framework of existence – the crosshatching of reason,

understanding, senses and imagination as structuring elements of 'self and not-self'. Of course, Kant's metaphysics requires serious refunctioning. Not only does Battersby add sexual difference to the Kantian frame, she rejects any notion of a 'permanent, underlying substrate' to female existence. With this modified Kant, Battersby uncovers a 'relational model of identity that can deal with the specificities and paradoxes of the female subject-position ... in western modernity'.

This move is typical of the strategy deployed in *The Phenomenal Woman*. Reading with and against Kant, Irigaray, Adorno, Butler, Locke, Hegel, Lacan, Bergson, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Wittgenstein, Haraway, and finally Kierkegaard, Battersby, by her own admission, 'raids the philosophical past', reading opportun-

istically through various systems and anti-systems, taking what she needs to construct her feminist metaphysics. From Locke, she takes nominal essences; from Wittgenstein, singularity; from Bergson, fluidity underlying reality; from Kierkegaard, becoming over being – a crude and incomplete list. With each philosophical encounter, Battersby explains the ontological model, or parts of the model, she is about to 'raid'. For the uninitiated reader, such glosses and explanations are invaluable. Yet the clarity of these parsings contrasts with the odd opacity of Battersby's own notion of female being.

In her introductory chapter, 'Fleshy Metaphysics', Battersby outlines five 'features' of female being, beginning with 'natality', 'the conceptual link between "woman" and the body that births', which 'does not imply that all women either can or should give birth'. Also characteristic of the female subject-position, according to Battersby, is a certain inequality of power relations, contrary to the Enlightenment idealization of autonomous selves. Connected to this is a self 'scored by relationality' which attains distinctness only by patterning (repetitions) through time; in contrast to both the Kantian 'cut' between self and other and the 'subject' of much postmodern theory, formed by

forcibly abjecting an other. Fourth is the fleshy continuity of the female subject position, in opposition to the disembodiedness of most Western philosophy, and also as a challenge to body-thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze who continue to take masculinity as normative. Finally, there is monstrosity, or the links between the 'female human in our culture' and 'the



Christo, Wedding Dress

anomalous, the monstrous, the inconsistent and the paradoxical'.

In subsequent chapters all of these are taken up, but inconsistently – hence the opacity mentioned above. Fleshy continuity and the dependent body-that-can-birth are not explored fully in themselves, but function mostly as exit strategies from gender-blind philosophers on whom she otherwise depends – primarily Kant and Deleuze. However, her self–other adumbrations lead to important engagements with the concept of 'dissipative systems' from contemporary physics and with Adorno's notion of historically fluctuating matter. Similarly, 'monstrosity' inspires a rather devotional consideration of Kierkegaard, whose female figures are consistently ambiguous and relational. Overall the strength of *The Phenomenal Woman* lies in its helpful discussions of other metaphysical modellings in relation to Battersby's own project. The best chapter, 'Antigones of Gender', works the comparatist method brilliantly, opening up that overburdened daughter/martyr to original and inspired contemplation.

Battersby's most important feminist interlocutor in *The Phenomenal Woman* is Luce Irigaray. Irigaray's path-breaking *Speculum of the Other Woman* put the question of female ontology on the philosophical

map, challenging the unspeakable otherness of the female in Freud, Lacan, Plato, Hegel and Plotinus. Important critical tropes for Battersby, such as fluidity over substance, and relationality, were pioneered by Irigaray. In a wonderfully insightful reading Battersby demonstrates the distortions of epistemological readings of Irigaray (as in Judith Butler's otherwise fine chapter in *Bodies That Matter*), which ignore Irigaray's ontological innovations. One better appreciates Irigaray's distinctiveness in poststructuralist theory, Battersby argues, when it is viewed 'from the angle of metaphysics'. Indeed, Battersby seems content to make Irigaray's work the placeholder for the 'embodied female subject'. Yet she fundamentally differs with Irigaray's tendency, across her canon, to treat Western philosophy as monolithically invested in the exclusion of female being. Seeing patriarchy as a 'closed system', Irigaray 'sentimentalizes' women in an unhelpful way.

In contrast, Battersby's answer to oppositionality and the patriarchal symbolic is an eager embrace of the new science. In a move increasingly common among cultural critics lured by the metaphorical richness of chaos theory, she 'appropriates' current topographical models of reality. Contrary to the mechanical models which echo through the male imaginary, in which bodies are imaged as impervious containers 'free from contamination', the dissipative system allows us to imagine a body boundary as an 'event horizon, in which one form (myself) meets its potentiality for transforming itself into another form (the not-self)'. Well, fine. But just as Battersby asserts that Deleuze and Guattari's 'body without organs' fails to register material differences, one wonders if the appeal of 'dissipative systems' will also fade, under the scrutiny of, say, someone in feminist science studies who may show that, by the discourse of its modelling, topographical models assert conceptual identity through strategic exclusions of an 'other'.

Far more persuasive are Battersby's readings, not of a dissipative system, but of dissipative *history*, via the work of Adorno, who allows the author not only to retain a subject-object relation (against the prevailing subject-ness of epistemology), but also to specify (against psychoanalysis) different and changing subjects, objects and realities. Adorno's (and Horkheimer's) elaboration of instrumental and 'pseudo-individuals' under bourgeois high capitalism, and Adorno's notion of cognition's 'blind spots' as historically based, all give Battersby's ontology more inner dynamism

than the nomadology of Deleuze and Guattari. As with Kant, she can justifiably accuse Adorno of 'forgetting' – indeed, excluding – female phenomenology from negative dialectics, and more profoundly, she can separate her subject-object relationality and dependency from the antagonistic subject-object dualism Adorno retains from Kant, even as it changes historically. In this, Battersby's position resembles Rosi Braidotti's claims for current feminism's 'non-dialectical view of alterity, [which affirms] positive differences so as to posit new parameters for the definition of female subjectivity' (*Patterns of Dissonance*, 1991). Battersby, however, reaches this point in dialogue with an Adornian position she both needs and successfully sublates.

Battersby's dialogue with Kierkegaard is even more fruitful, and in Chapter 6, which treats elegantly of the different perspectives on Antigone in Irigaray, Hegel, Lacan and (implicitly) Butler, it is Kierkegaard who places Antigone alongside his daughter or woman figurations that stand for, variously, 'the transitional state between individualized self and lack of self'; 'singularity, both inside and outside norms of full personhood'; 'the embryonic'; and, most fecundly for Battersby, 'a workshop of possibilities'. The appeal of Kierkegaardian selves for Battersby is clear: in his texts woman is 'a fiction but also real', one who escapes 'predicates' yet who represents not mere otherness, but rather 'an ideal of identity without closure that is ontologically bound up with otherness, inheritance and an (ambiguous) past'.

Through these figurations, Battersby returns us to natality, her first condition of the feminist metaphysics. What is birthed, however, is another figure: the 'self ... within a multiple play of possibilities'. This accords nicely with new neurobiological findings of how women and men develop 'brain-maps' of the body 'as ways of ordering fluidity and diversity of sensations' (i.e. a multiple play of possibilities). That Kierkegaard turns out to offer the most supple model of female metaphysics and to anticipate current scientific findings may strike readers either as deeply opportunistic narrativizing or as powerful justification for Battersby's consistent claim, restated pithily in her closing sentence: 'The way on from postmodernism needs to be looped back through the philosophical past.' Certainly, any future argument for a feminist metaphysics will need to be looped back through Battersby's impressive *The Phenomenal Woman*.

Elin Diamond

'With that, then, it is over'

Theodor W. Adorno, *Metaphysik: Begriffe und Probleme. Nachgelassene Schriften. Abteilung IV: Vorlesung, Band 14*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1998. 319 pp., 68 DM hb., 3 518 58265 8.

In the essays and books Adorno intended for publication a density and openness of thought are moulded into one. But in the lectures that have been published posthumously, the open and the dense diverge, giving an impression of liveliness. Each new sentence can contain an unexpected turn, even for their author, announcing a surprising thought that is not always developed. Thus, what is striking about the lectures on metaphysics held in the summer term of 1965 and now carefully edited by Rolf Tiedemann, is the emphasis with which Adorno introduces the concept of the open. It is true that in the 'Meditations on Metaphysics', which conclude *Negative Dialectics*, meaning is said to be 'with the open, not the closed-in-itself'. Yet the definition of metaphysics is linked far more explicitly and diversely to the concept of the open in the lectures than in the 'Meditations', on whose manuscript the lectures are based.

The course begins with an attempt to determine metaphysics conceptually. The long first part analyses Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in an exemplary fashion in order to deal with various problems of traditional metaphysical thinking. Stringently and precisely, Adorno leads the listener/reader into what is intrinsically problematic about the concept that is being determined. From the start he stresses that critique, as the indispensable preparation for a possible metaphysics, threatens to step into metaphysics' place. One can understand this curious 'postponement and hesitating delay' as a consequence of the concept of metaphysics brought about by its essential disunity:

Metaphysics is, on the one hand ... always rationalistic as a critique of some view about what is in-itself, truth and the essential, in so far as this view does not justify itself in the face of reason; but on the other hand, it is also always an attempt to rescue that which the ingenuity of philosophers feels to be fading and disappearing.

Thus Adorno recognizes a critical and rescuing intention in the concept of metaphysics. The rescue does not follow upon critique like a sigh of relief. Rather,

the conceptual unity of metaphysics opens in the taut simultaneity of the diverging intentions. Because Adorno's thinking moves in an unsublatable tension, it opposes the two mortal enemies of philosophy: the false piety of restoration and a revisionistic concern for balance. If metaphysics must be regarded as the paradoxical effort of conceptual thinking 'to save what it at the same time dissolves', then Adorno's own conception of philosophy moves in the immediate vicinity of the paradox of metaphysics. In fact, just as with critique and rescue, the 'reflection on metaphysics' that is pursued here – indeed negative dialectic as a whole – is concerned with a conceptual movement beyond the concept, and consequently with that fundamental openness which, as Adorno says in the ninth lecture, constantly reopens, despite all legitimate and necessary critique, despite all critical inquiry into the truth and untruth of thinking: 'Precisely this thinking which moves beyond itself, into the open, is metaphysics.'

The disunity of metaphysics, which is critique and rescue, can be understood such that metaphysical thinking '[takes] the world of experience seriously' and does not simply oppose it to a 'supersensible world'. What Adorno repeatedly underlines in his presentation of the Aristotelian doctrine is the importance that this doctrine attaches to the relation between the pure form and the merely material, between the purely conceptual – which should be distinguished by a 'higher degree of essentiality' – and the nonconceptual and undetermined. However, Adorno is keen to distinguish himself from Aristotle, because he does not understand the relation between the extremes of metaphysics as an external one, but rather as one of immanent mediation; not as ahistorical and static, but rather as itself exposed to change. Only from such a perspective can one recognize why the event, to which Adorno gives the name *Auschwitz*, cannot be dismissed as just historical, in order to keep it separate from philosophical discourse and its metaphysical ideas. For Adorno the question of metaphysics is the question of the 'infinite relevance of the intraworldly and historical to transcendence.' In this sense it is the question of 'metaphysical experience.'

One can only do justice to the 'infinite relevance of the intraworldly and historical to transcendence', if one starts out from the historical shapes which the metaphysical extremes have assumed – the extremes of universal and particular, idea and entity, form and material. To the extent that 'catastrophes always have the power to drag in the past and the remote', that which is remote must also be tracked down within the

metaphysical idea or concept. Metaphysics is struck to the core by the 'outermost' that Auschwitz names, because this name stands for the destruction of the 'possibility of coherence', the coherence of a unified life-context which extends to death and justifies it. Adorno attacks both strategies of justification which would play down that 'outermost': both the soothing relativization which minimizes it as a historically and geographically limited experience, and the consoling relativization which supposes it to be compatible with something 'wholly other'.

To start out from extremes, as Adorno dedicates himself to doing, means, on the one hand, that rescue cannot be defence, but is rather a gesture of abandonment, an abandonment which may or may not succeed. On the other hand, it means that philosophy is concerned with the reporting of 'tendencies', not with the establishment of facts. The allusion to childhood, in whose vicinity metaphysical experience is taken to stand, and thus to happiness – to the awareness of the 'inside of objects as something which at the same time is removed from them' – should not be mistaken for a belatedly transfigured biographical fact. Rather, one is meant to discern in this allusion the record of a tendency. As thought which records tendencies, philosophical thought is an open, adventurous, and experimental thought – a claim Adorno makes in a passage from one of the later lectures, which Tiedemann quotes.

Thus, possibility turns out to be a decisive category in Adorno's reflections on metaphysics, one that does not remain subordinated to the category of reality. Nowhere is this clearer than at the end of the lectures, which stand out stylistically from the more regular and homogeneous, less open and exposed analysis of Aristotle. Possibility and openness belong together, because there is no 'metaphysical experience', indeed no experience or thinking at all, that is not determined by its fallibility: 'the possibility that it misses the point entirely'. In the last lecture one reads: 'Only that which can also be disappointed ..., only that which can also be false, [is] the openness which matters.' Consequently, what Adorno calls the open is not the opposite of the tendency to close off which characterizes mistakes, failures, deceptions and disappointment; rather it fights against the closure of the system at which traditional metaphysics aims. But then the open is neither true nor untrue, neither correct nor false, neither here nor beyond; it can be concealed or made to disappear at any time.

The open is like that 'no-man's land between the border posts of being and nothingness', of which

Adorno says in the fifth metaphysical meditation of *Negative Dialectics*: 'The smallest difference between nothingness and coming to rest would be the haven of hope.' It is perhaps this 'smallest difference' that separates and relates two lines in Ingeborg Bachmann's poem 'Enigma', whose gesture recalls that of Adorno's lectures: 'Nothing will come anymore/ ...There is nothing anymore to come.'

A German version of this review appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 25 May 1998. Translated here by Adam Beck.

Alexander García Düttmann

Dreaming cities

Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1998. 233 pp., £24.95 hb., 0262 19392 2.

There has always been something spectral about situationism. The Situationist International existed in one form or other from 1957 to 1972, and exerted a ghostly influence out of all proportion to its size or organizational capacity. The famous slogans of May '68 – 'Beauty is in the street'; 'Beneath the paving stones, the beach' – have a situationist ring to them. Debord's society of the spectacle, in which the proliferation of image is more important than the accumulation of commodities and capital, anticipates Baudrillard's world of simulacra, but has considerably more political bite. The situationist drift through the city has become part of a powerful urban mythology, exemplified by Iain Sinclair's extraordinary *Lights out for the Territory* – surely the best book on London to have appeared in recent years. The spectre is still there.

Although it defined itself as a revolutionary movement, the SI looks in retrospect like one of the many avant-gardes that have stalked the streets of the modern city, and especially Paris, since Baudelaire's *flâneur* set off down the boulevards. The surrealists roamed the city in pursuit of the objective chance that would bring them into contact with the object of their desires and grant them the experience of the marvellous. Walter Benjamin followed in the footsteps of both as he explored the arcades of the capital of the nineteenth century. The city has long been the setting for the avant-garde artistic practices in which changing the words was a prelude to, or a substitute for, changing both life and the world. Situationism followed

the *flâneur* and the surrealists into the streets on a psychogeographic quest for places conducive to the creation of the situation that would explode the society of the spectacle. Most of the members of the SI were not poets but had a background in the visual arts; their goal was not to change the words, but to change the image of the city both by seeing it in a new way and by designing a city for the future. Sadler's beautifully illustrated book is probably the most detailed study yet of situationism's utopian urbanism, and the ideal companion volume to Sadie Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture* (1992), still the best general introduction to situationism.

Sadler reads situationist texts in two contexts: that of the rebuilding and transformation of so much of Paris from the mid-1950s onwards, and that of the development of modernist architecture in general. For Debord and his comrades, the 'drift' (*dérive*) was the ideal way of exploring Paris's psychogeography, or the changes of ambiance that divided the city into zones with different psychic atmospheres which had unconscious effects on the wanderer's emotions and perceptions. Drifting was not quite as aimless as the surrealists' nocturnal wanderings: these drifters had maps. The most famous, and most exquisite, was made by Debord and Asger Jorn in 1957 and is entitled *The Naked City*; the title was 'borrowed', in a typical act of 'necessary plagiarism', from Jules Dassin's 1948 film about New York. Looking rather like a constructivist painting, it is a collage of fragments from a published map of Paris, separated by white space and linked by arrows; it purports to provide a psychogeographic guide to the city. It is in fact impossible to walk across Paris using this map as a guide. It is discontinuous, does not have a north-south axis, and modifies the

geography of the city to reveal a logic that lies beneath or behind the visible spectacle.

The context for the theory of the drift is that of the gentrification of much of central Paris and the deportation of its working-class population (and especially its immigrants, who actually built the new Paris and its transport network) to the distant and dismal suburbs that have become battle zones. In the 1970s, the Pompidou Centre rose from what had been the warren of streets and multiple-occupied slums of the Beaubourg area. Almost twenty years before it opened, the situationists had sensed what was coming: the preservation of a few old urban spots as a touristic spectacle, and the transformation of neighbourhoods into museums administered by what we would now call the heritage industry. As they drifted, the situationists were attempting to record a Paris that was fast disappearing. Ironically, it was the Pompidou Centre that hosted the 1989 exhibition which recorded how they traced their records. Situationism became part of the spectacle.

Whilst the drift can be seen as a form of urban nostalgia, situationist urbanism is, as Sadler demonstrates, firmly within the utopian tradition of Fourier and Owen. More tellingly, he also shows that it has a complex relationship with architectural modernism. For the SI, the modernism of Le Corbusier's 'machines for living in' (houses, to most of us) was as repellent as the clean grids of Mondrian's paintings. The grid crushed the life of the city; it is scarcely possible to drift along, or in, a straight line. Yet when Nieuwenhuys Constant came to design his New Babylon of the future in the late 1950s, it bore a striking resemblance to Le Corbusier's urban utopias (or nightmares). His detailed plans and drawings show unitary buildings made of

movable modules, supported by pillars, to leave the ground free for transport and preserved bits of 'nature'. In some of the drawings, transport takes the form of the helicopters or small planes that are part of so many of the utopias and dystopias (Lang's *Metropolis* comes to mind) of the twentieth century. Nostalgia for a vanishing city coexists with a utopian and optimistic faith in the



power of architects to create a city in which life will be a permanent festival. Significantly, it is quite unclear whether the building of the utopia of New Babylon is a prelude to revolution, or its sequel.

Perhaps predictably, the chapters dealing with the drift are more interesting than those on the utopias. Sadler is right to see situationism as a utopianism, and to place its urbanism in a very old tradition; but it is so difficult, after so many disasters in town planning, to have much faith in playground cities, plug-in cities and streets in the sky. Better, perhaps, to drift in a Paris of the mind where Walter Benjamin can still meet André Breton, and where it might still be possible to meet the late Guy Debord for a drink (but beware, his appetite for alcohol was legendary). Sadler has written a wonderful guidebook for that walk.

David Macey

Technology and decree cretinism

David Dyzenhaus, *Legality and Legitimacy: Carl Schmitt, Hans Kelsen and Herman Heller in Weimar*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997. xiv + 283 pp., £40.00 hb., 0 19 826062 8.

John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997. xii + 352 pp., £30.00 hb., 0521 59167 8.

Books on Schmitt are coming thick and fast. Besides the two under review here, Renato Cristi's *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism* (1998) has also recently been published, and Bill Scheuerman's *Carl Schmitt: The Rule of Law* is forthcoming. The English-language literature on him is now quite vast. As John McCormick notes, much of the work on Schmitt either denounces him or uncritically appropriates him. Neither of these books does that, though they both make clear the fascist implications of Schmitt's work. McCormick's argument is that Schmitt's critique of liberalism is based on a broader critique of modern thought, which he regards as having been infiltrated by the technological. Dyzenhaus's focus, in contrast, is on the relationship between Schmitt's politics and his arguments concerning law and the constitution.

In Part One of his book McCormick entertains the notion that Schmitt be considered a critical theorist of sorts. Though the conclusion is unsurprising – by

lapsing into the irrational and lacking any emancipatory potential, Schmitt forecloses the viability of being characterized as a genuinely critical theorist – McCormick's opening discussion involves a fascinating three-way dialogue between Weber, Schmitt and Lukács. McCormick traces Schmitt's development to his increasing distance from Weber, and compares this with Lukács's similar development in the opposite political direction. In the following chapter McCormick explores the influence of Nietzsche on Schmitt's friend–enemy distinction, giving Schmitt's irrationalism and vitalism a greater philosophical depth in the process.

For Dyzenhaus, Schmitt's chief protagonists are Hans Kelsen and Herman Heller, and the background is the legal and constitutional crisis of Weimar. Schmitt treated Kelsen's attempt to purify legal theory of all political ideology as the epitome of self-destructive legal positivism, a liberal avoidance of politics masked by a veneer of science. Schmitt found it highly significant that Kelsen had once said that 'the concept of sovereignty must be radically repressed', arguing that this was consistent with the relentless Enlightenment opposition to theology, metaphysics and the moment of exception. Dyzenhaus argues that Heller challenged Schmitt most successfully, for Heller understood Schmitt's philosophy of politics as the one most likely to exploit the problems encountered by Kelsen's apolitical Pure Theory of Law. Whereas Kelsen's legal theory could not take into account the fact that power is constitutive of law and thus makes law prey to power, Schmitt's complete relativization of law to power and to the contingencies of the particular situation of power led to the irrational deification of power and decision.

Following Karl Renner, Heller described Schmitt's belief in dictatorial decisionism as 'Decretinismus' – decree cretinism. Heller's point was that while Schmitt's true aim was a fascist state, his theory of decision in a moral vacuum could not justify even that. All it could justify was the proposition that whatever force was capable of doing so should fill the vacuum. Both Dyzenhaus and McCormick make clear the extent to which Schmitt's decree cretinism left him without any philosophical or political resources to deal with Hitler other than welcome him, and how little effort it required for Schmitt to turn his arguments of the 1920s into fully fledged fascist and anti-Semitic works.

Both books also point to the dangers of the revival of uncritical Schmittianism. McCormick points out that Schmitt is a major influence on recent and current gurus on the Right: he has influenced cultural con-

servatism via the work of Strauss, techno-economic conservatism via Hayek, and foreign-policy conservatism via Morgenthau. Given that these trends on the Right set their sights on 'liberalism' as an enemy, and given the way Schmitt's critique of liberalism's failure to engage with the problems posed by emergency powers, representation, law and the state (all dealt with at length in the core chapters of McCormick's book) allowed him to glide effortlessly from conservatism to fascism, the implications are clear.

The subtle contours of both books will repay careful and sustained reading. Those interested in European philosophy will learn much from McCormick's book, while those more concerned with the legal dimensions of political theory should find Dyzenhaus's equally rewarding. Not only are both scholarly and well-written texts; they are also a powerful antidote to the sad apologetics still being pandered by those who have sought to promote the work of one of fascism's most intelligent theorists.

Mark Neocleous

Watching worlds emerge

Jane Duran, *Philosophies of Science/Feminist Theories*, Westview Press, Boulder CO and Oxford, 1998. xiv + 206 pp., £46.50 hb., £13.95 pb., 0 8133 3299 0 hb., 0 8133 3325 3 pb.

Ongoing debates on gender issues and the context-dependence of truth have not left philosophy of science unaffected. The bibliography on such topics betrays an increasing interest in the coupling of knowledge and power. Duran's work is both cognizant of scholarship in epistemology, social theory and feminism and sensitive to the political role of science. In this book, she briefly traces the historical development of philosophy of science from the Vienna Circle to the latest relativist thinkers in order to promote a long overdue reformulation of some basic ideas.

Gleanings from a leftist 'radical critique', a post-modernist detraction of science, and a feminist epistemology provide the material for an updated approach to the problems of scientific inquiry, discovery and justification. Duran's project threads its way through a perusal of positivism and rebuttal of misinterpretations; an overview of successive moves towards a *Weltanschauungen* conception of science; and a nuanced

account of contemporary radical and feminist theories of knowledge. It concludes by grounding theoretical validity and epistemic support in the discursive process of testing and verification by scientific communities. The aim is to avoid a drastic choice between a dogmatism consolidating established hierarchies and a scepticism leading to political abdication.

Duran focuses on a crucial axis of past philosophical-scientific research, the relation between theoretical and observational vocabulary, and examines the tension between empiricism and instrumentalism. Either way, positivist variations result in aspirations to airtight epistemic foundationalism, compatible with reductionism and the unity-of-science thesis. From a feminist viewpoint, this reveals an androcentric desire to master all things by subjecting them to a single explanation.

Reactions to positivism (Hempel's deductive-nomological model of science is one of Duran's central examples) do not fall short of quests for solid and value-neutral groundings of knowledge. Science remains a 'god's-eye view' antiseptically devoid of context-dependence or commitment to external interests. However, by combating the preponderance of the Vienna Circle's legacy, such reactions paved the way for theories acknowledging science's embeddedness in society. The turn toward *Weltanschauungen* – the term employed by Duran to signify world-views framing research – shifts the interest from justification and foundation of science to the emergence and construction of scientific theory. Kuhn, Feyerabend, Hesse, Lakatos and Toulmin are thoroughly discussed. However, without diminishing the significance of these developments to Duran, the rationality employed is perhaps no less gendered than that of previous ideas.

Feminist issues might be missing in thinkers like Bloor, Winch and Latour but their projects can be used for purposes of radical critique of science. Latour, in a more pronounced way than other theorists, purports that science lacks any veridical warrant. That repetition, whim, gossip and ambition are as crucial to science as vision, disinterestedness and seeking for truth is a claim that brings him close to feminists like Haraway and, to some extent, Harding.

It is evident that a lurking relativism – explicit in some of the theories discussed in this book – causes uneasiness to feminist defenders of agency. Duran is aware of it this and presents concisely – and equidistantly – the current debate between 'empiricist' and 'poststructuralist' feminists. The former, despite their attack on science as androcentric, wish to retain some of its epistemic base, whereas the latter direct a



blanket critique of reason and dismiss ideas of truth and validity wholesale. Duran, avoiding extremes that 'throw out the baby with the bathwater', opts for a mediatory approach, which entails a qualified welcome of new ideas that reject an absolute value-neutrality of research and do justice to political concerns without jettisoning scientific rigour. (On this she shares a lot with Roy Bhaskar's scientific realism and Christopher Norris's discussions of relativism, neither of which is mentioned in the book.) Via an excellent use of Goffman's acknowledgement of the empirical nature of social processes of instantiation and Nelson-Hankinson's idea of a community of researchers functioning as a weak justification of knowledge-claims, Duran emphasizes a procedural, empirical and discursive possibility for resuscitating some sense of scientific confirmation. This well-argued case proves that the symphony of traditional epistemology, feminism, science studies and social theory has been fruitful for philosophy of science.

Marianna Papastephanou

Money

Michael Neary and Graham Taylor, *Money and the Human Condition*, Macmillan, London 1998. 145 pp., £35.00 hb. 0 333 65959 7.

This book is a contribution to the neglected field of the sociology of money, written from the standpoint of an 'open Marxism' that takes money to be 'the supreme social power' (especially money-as-capital) and sees it 'institutionalised as individuated biography'. Apart from topping and tailing chapters, it contains four substantial freestanding papers exemplifying the general standpoint. These are uneven in quality.

'Marx, Magic and the Secret of Money' exhibits perfectly faults characteristic of much of the book. There is no argument, just a freewheeling run through half-analogies and buzzwords, claiming, among other things, that 'Marx was a magician'. 'Risky Business! The Law of Insurance and the Law of the Lottery' is better. It contrasts the attempt by the Keynesian welfare state to manage risk with today's 'risk society' concretely symbolized in the National Lottery. However, it does not go much beyond a rapid survey of the history and the literature concerned. 'Probation, Criminology and Anti-oppression' is a haphazard survey of literature from *Moll Flanders* to *Anti-Oedipus*, to which is added an autobiographical account of the author's work in the probation service.

'LETS Abolish Money? Is there a Community Outside the Community of Money?' is the only chapter that can be recommended. There is an argument that effectively takes apart the overblown claims made for local exchange and trading schemes (LETS). LETS do not abolish money, of course; they simply change its name (and in most cases even tie its value at par with sterling!). It follows that no new utopian community is created; for all the members remain subordinated to the inhuman community of money. However, there is an inconsistency here in that in some earlier places the circuit C-M-C (C=commodities, M=money) is spoken of favourably compared with that of M-C-M – in Aristotelian fashion money is to be 'rehabilitated' as 'means of exchange' – but LETS, which are precisely schemes to have C-M-C without M-C-M, are attacked as inadequate attempts to escape the baleful effects of money.

In the book as a whole the main enemy is identified as capital, but there is no convincing account of the mediations whereby it implants itself in all spheres of human existence.

Chris Arthur

From behind

John Rajchman, *Constructions*, with a Foreword by Paul Virilio, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1998. ix + 143 pp., £12.50 pb., 0 262 68096 3.

This is a book about philosophy and architecture, both, according to its author, 'in a state of crisis or transmutation'. More particularly, it is about the productivity of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze for the field of contemporary architecture. It thus takes its place amongst the rapidly expanding body of work dedicated to Deleuze in all fields of cultural criticism and inquiry. It stands out as one of the most focused and readable introductions to a number of his arguments, ideas and concepts. If the key philosopher in these essays is Deleuze, the key architect is Peter Eisenman, whose work is the occasion for at least two of them. Unfortunately, from this point of view, the book contains no illustrations or photographs – of, for example, the Rebstock project – to act as visual counterpoints to the philosophical ideas. But this just underscores the philosophical intentionality of Rajchman's text: to engage in critical readings of the philosophical tradition from the point of view of contemporary 'geometr[ies] of living' as they intersect with the 'space of a city or a building'. Architecture, in this book, supports philosophy, posing and dramatizing problems for thought and politics.

Constructions contains six tightly argued essays on key ideas where the concerns of philosophy and architecture (and art more generally) intersect: building, folding, ground, lightness, geometry and, perhaps most centrally, abstraction. It concludes with two short more obviously political pieces, one of which

is no more than a note, on the politics of future cities and an as-yet-to-be-designed 'virtual' – rather than 'utopian' – house: 'the house that in its plan, space, construction and intelligence gives the greatest number of "new connections"'. The idea of virtuality developed here connects with the Deleuzian ones of 'multiplicity' and 'singularity', key words in Deleuze's critical engagement with the subordination of experience to either transcendental *a priori*s or dialectical narrativizations, which Rajchman mobilizes against the idea of 'ground' in the history of architecture and art: 'Or can we put ungrounding *first*, analysing the relations between grounds and forms, grounds and identities, in terms of the potential for free ungrounded movement that is always virtual in them?' From this point of view, an important dimension of Deleuzian philosophical critique and revision – and this is its value to Rajchman's own cultural critique – is the recuperation for the present of potentialities lost to systematic thought: signposts of alternative histories and pathways. Hence the importance – and paradoxical futurity – of the word 'first' in *Constructions*, and of a thinking that takes place, so to speak, *before* systematic conceptualization: *before* 'grounding', or *before* modernism's own theories of abstraction. This is literally apparent in the rhetoric of Rajchman's essays, in the – at times unfortunately overabundant – use of the phrase 'prior to', or its cognates.

Apart from the potentially richer history and politics of architecture Rajchman's intervention evokes, his essays also reveal just how revisionist a philosopher Deleuze was – that is, how insistently, in Deleuze's own words, he took philosophy 'from behind'.

John Kraniauskas

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