

COMPTES RENDUS/BOOK REVIEWS

The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory

Amy Allen

New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; 230 pages.

There is no outside to power. The gulf between this Foucaultian thesis and the critical theory of Habermas is generally perceived to be unbridgeable. How, it is said, is one able to articulate a sufficiently robust conception of autonomy once one accepts that the self—that bastion of critique—is constituted by power? Amy Allen's *The Politics of Our Selves* is a valiant, though ultimately lacking, attempt to navigate these difficult waters. Her strategy is to offer original re-readings of Foucault and Habermas such that they end up closer than commentators have often thought. Running beneath and parallel to this analysis is the Butler-Benhabib debate on gender and the construction of identity. This makes sense, given Allen's conviction that a viable social theory must incorporate contextual factors. The book concludes by offering a theory of social critique that is thoroughly pragmatic and contextual, but remains faithful to Foucaultian constraints.

Chapters 2 and 3 offer an insightful reinterpretation of Foucault. Many commentators have chastised Foucault for his adherence to the death of the subject thesis; Allen hotly contests this reading. Moreover, she offers textual evidence to support her claim that there is no great divide between his early and late work. Critics, including Habermas, have argued that Foucault's late emphasis on the subject is inherently divergent from his earlier call for the end of man. As Allen effectively demonstrates, Foucault's call is best understood as the end of the Kantian transcendental-phenomenological subject and not as a rejection of the subject *tout court*. Inasmuch as Foucault emphasises the historically conditioned empirical conception of the subject, he is "engaged in a radicalisation from within the Kantian critical project." (41) Indeed, Allen traces Foucault's relationship to Kant such that the seeds of the Foucaultian transformation of the subject are already present in Kant's late work—*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Foucault's notion of governmentality is the bridge between his analysis of power and his concep-

tion of the subject. Defined as the art of government, it includes both bottom-up and top-down processes. Subjects who adequately govern themselves and their families are permitted to rise to state power while the government itself is concerned with cultivating well-governed subjects and families. Thus, governmentality simultaneously individualises and totalises. The result is that making demands on the government for recognition of individuality actually consolidates and entrenches the scope of governmental control.

That Foucault retains a conception of the subject does not (yet) imply that he has carved out a space for autonomy. Since Foucault repeatedly characterises power as involving strategic relations, he is unable to offer, according to Allen, an account of social interaction that includes reciprocity and mutual recognition. This conclusion emerges from his analysis of governmentality and is paradoxically stated in a late interview: “The farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality.” (70)

Next, Allen analyzes Butler’s *The Psychic Form of Life*, which is an attempt to extend Foucault’s account of power to include will and desire. It is intended to explain cases where subordinated subjects are fervently attached to their continued subordination even after it has been made explicit. Gender subordination is the exemplary case. But much like Foucault, Allen claims that Butler conflates dependency with subordination. All subjectivation is subordinating. Clearly, this is fruitless from a critical theoretical perspective.

Enter Habermas and his theory of discourse ethics, which reformulates the Kantian conception of autonomy such that it is structured intersubjectively. Nancy Fraser has criticised Habermas for confining power relations to system contexts (administrative and bureaucratic contexts) whilst depicting the lifeworld (culture and society) as devoid of power relations. Indeed, the role of power in Habermas’ position is largely ambiguous yet it simultaneously threatens his entire emancipatory project. Initially, Habermas offered two ways in which power figured into the lifeworld. First, there was the colonisation thesis, which states that power emanating from system contexts encroaches on the lifeworld. But this still situates power exclusively in system contexts. Second, Habermas dealt with systematically distorted communication. This occurs when there is a concealed strategic element to communicative action. The result is a fundamental inability to distinguish between

genuinely communicative and strategic action. Unsurprisingly, Habermas abandoned discussion of this by the late 1970s. Allen identifies a third, as yet under-theorised, way in which power infiltrates the lifeworld, namely, Habermas' thesis of individuation through socialisation. Habermas argues that reciprocal recognition is necessary for subjects to constitute themselves, but this runs counter to, for instance, the fundamental asymmetry of the parent/child relationship. Whereas Butler's investigation reveals the psychic costs of socialisation, Habermas regularly downplays its subordinating potential. The extent to which this recognition problematises Habermas' context-transcending-validity-claims is explored in the second last chapter.

The context-transcendence-of-validity-claims is a site of major contention amongst critics. According to Allen, social theorists can be divided into two camps: radical contextualists like Rorty and context-transcending theorists like Habermas. While both camps accept some version of situated critique, the former are exclusively internal to socio-cultural contexts while the latter permit some form of critique that transcends the context. It is generally claimed that radical contextualists are deficient in two senses. First, they are unable to offer cross-cultural critique and second, they lack a sufficiently robust normativity that would enable them to rationally reflect on their own intuitions and beliefs. By contrast, it is *prima facie* unclear how context-transcending theorists can fully admit that critique is situated. Furthermore, Allen quotes Maeve Cooke in asserting that context-transcending theorists suffer from an "authoritarian residue." (140) What is desirable then is a more principled contextualism, one that retains the normative force of context-transcending validity claims, but contextualises the notion of context transcendence itself.

Of course, a sympathetic Rortyan might object here that Allen's principled contextualism is precisely what the neo-pragmatist defends. Indeed, in a footnote to this section, Allen does assent that Rorty's "frank ethnocentrism and cosmopolitan liberalism" (205) offer plausible responses to his critics. Since Rorty gives up truth in favour of the social nature of justification, he is able to accommodate disputes cross-culturally.

In the final chapter, Allen criticises Benhabib for her overly rationalist conception of an un-gendered core to the self. Benhabib's narrative conception of the self is impoverished in that she claims that the un-

gendered core self is able to provisionally choose what gender narrative to ratify. With recourse to Butler's performative conception of the self and empirical data from developmental psychology, Allen argues that the construction of identity, from the outset, is contingent on gender norms. For instance, it has been shown that parents tend to interact differently with their child according to the child's initially attributed gender. This "rationalist residue" (153) echoes Allen's critique of Habermas.

The book offers a stimulating, highly evocative discussion of two major philosophers. Teasing out their similarities and the way in which autonomy can be negotiated with power is no small feat. One might think that Benhabib and Butler have sufficiently refined the positions of their intellectual heirs, but Allen's critical engagement reveals important flaws. As a helpful corrective to unjust interpretations still prevalent in the literature, I heartily recommend it. Yet, for someone who offers such textured interpretations, one remains unconvinced by the distinction between radical contextualists of the Rortyan sort and Allen's proposal of a principled contextualism. Given Rorty's rejection of truth as a goal of inquiry (a rejection Allen explicitly cites), it is simply incorrect to later state that we ought not "accept a radically contextualist form of *relativism*." (180, emphasis added) The difference between the two, if there is one, needs to be more fully explicated. This is a missed opportunity on Allen's part and affects the persuasiveness and focus of her conclusion.

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Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology: The Problem of Ideal Objects

Kirk M. Besmer

London and New York: Continuum, 2007; 160 pages.

Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics After Anti-Humanism

Diana Coole

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007; 271 pages.

2008 marks the centenary of Merleau-Ponty's birth, and we are in the midst of a surge of new English-language books dealing with his work. Larry Hass' *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy* has impressively inaugurated a

new generation of general surveys of Merleau-Ponty's thought, a tradition to which Taylor Carman's forthcoming *Merleau-Ponty* will also contribute. In addition, there are many new resource texts, such as George Marshall's *A Guide to Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*, along with contributions to various series, including Eric Matthews' *A Guide for the Perplexed*, and Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds' edition of a *Key Concepts* volume.

In terms of scholarly activity, then, at least in the anglophone world, things are certainly alive and well with Merleau-Ponty studies. The field is maturing, and even burgeoning to the point where one might be tempted to speak of an "industry." Nevertheless, it remains the case that the fundamental questioning that has perennially guided philosophical interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's work—*How, if at all, is the Merleau-Pontian corpus unified? How, if at all, did Merleau-Ponty overcome dualism?*—seems as intractable or ambiguous as ever. It may be that this situation itself is somehow part of the allure of Merleau-Ponty's work. But it also potentially jeopardises the status that he is increasingly being accorded as one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century.

Considered together, new books by Kirk Besmer and Diana Coole provide telling insight into the state of Merleau-Ponty scholarship. These books might initially appear to be as distant from one another as they could possibly be, focusing, respectively, on ideality and politics. It is the case, however, that both address the problem of the unity of Merleau-Ponty's project—in particular, the question of the longitudinal continuity between *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*—and attempt to articulate its basic sense. Although Coole's study is more extensive and ambitious, both make valuable contributions. Yet what is striking is how these books reflect the division within Merleau-Ponty scholarship between (i) straight-up philosophical (or "theoretical") readings of his work and (ii) readings which foreground its political (or "practical") dimensions—a division that itself expresses the very sort of dualism that Merleau-Ponty sought to overcome with phenomenology.

In *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology*, Besmer takes the first sort of approach. That is, in seeking to understand what exactly Merleau-Ponty meant by "phenomenology"—and how this relates to Husserl, the only significant point of external reference throughout the analysis—he

takes it as a primarily theoretical enterprise. The aim is to establish the “*theoretical* content” of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, and to evaluate its “*theoretical* significance.” (2, my italics)

Besmer’s study involves two main aspects. First, it is developed on the basis of a genetic account of Merleau-Ponty’s overall “itinerary.” (2) Besmer is interested in Merleau-Ponty’s “final view of phenomenology,” whether this in fact remains phenomenological, and whether it exhibits a longitudinal continuity with the earlier work. Owing to the incomplete nature of *The Visible and the Invisible*, he lays out a *tripartite* view of Merleau-Ponty’s career, paying special attention to its “middle period” (1947–1957) as the crucial—yet often overlooked—“conceptual bridge” linking the early and late periods.

The second aspect of Besmer’s approach is that he takes as his principal focus “the problem of ideal objects,” that is, “the status and givenness of ideal objects in our experience.” (2) This is, as Besmer notes, an understudied theme in Merleau-Ponty scholarship, and any effort to redress this neglect is entirely salutary, inasmuch as it is precisely this problem that tests any phenomenological position most demandingly. Besmer’s central contention is that the specific approach Merleau-Ponty adopted vis-à-vis the problem of ideal objects in his middle period provides the means of understanding his final position. As it turns out, the latter represents not a break with the earlier formulation, but rather “an internal re-working of a central phenomenological problem” (6), namely, how, paraphrasing Husserl, to bring mute experience to the pure expression of its own sense.

The analysis unfolds across six chapters. The first sets the stage with a discussion of the problem of ideal objects in Husserl. Geared to the task at hand, this discussion focuses on the *Crisis*-texts that were crucial for Merleau-Ponty’s reading of Husserl. Although some may feel that this oversimplifies Husserl’s views, the chapter is well-crafted in its concision. Besmer identifies the ambiguity in Husserl’s notion of the *Lebenswelt* between antepredicative perceptual experience and the historical-cultural horizons of such experience—conceived by Husserl in terms of “institution” [*Stiftung*]¹—as the interpretive key to Merleau-Ponty’s uptake of phenomenology, in particular with regard to ideal objects. The claim is that in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty overemphasised the sense of the *Lebenswelt* as a perceptual world, a move that stranded him within the confines of egology, and that it was

only in the middle period that the methodological inadequacies of this position pushed him to address the intersubjective historicity of the *Lebenswelt* as a cultural world.

The early work is dealt with in Chapter 2. Here we see Merleau-Ponty laying out a new “transcendental aesthetic,” hence, trying to account for ideal objects in terms of a non-reductive founding/founded relationship, i.e., Husserl’s *Fundierung*, with perception. Besmer argues, however, that even when it is developed with the gestural theory of language that Merleau-Ponty sketches out in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the intracorporeal orientation of this position still prevents it from providing a convincing account of ideal objects—witness the pitfalls of Merleau-Ponty’s account of the “tacit cogito.” What the *Fundierung* approach cannot grasp is the historical temporality of ideal objects, something which Merleau-Ponty came to see could only be addressed in terms of the “institutionality of language.” (45)

It is this turn to the intersubjective sense of the *Lebenswelt*—the *intermonde*—that Besmer considers in the next three chapters as he looks in some detail at Merleau-Ponty’s middle period. Here we are shown the shift of focus from an *intracorporeal* logos of the aesthetic world to an *intercorporeal* logos of the cultural world—from the primacy of perception to what Besmer refers to as “cultural primordially” (52), where language, not embodiment, occupies centre stage. Ideal objects are considered in terms of an historical account of rationality in which the distinction between the eidetic and the factual—as between philosophy and science—is fundamentally blurred. The idea is that Merleau-Ponty pushed the Husserlian notion of a “crisis of rationality” toward a resolution based intrinsically on intersubjective communication. (65)

Besmer’s argument methodically tracks the movement in Merleau-Ponty’s thought concerning ideal objects away from perception and the “perceiving body,” via language and the “speaking subject,” toward dialogue and the “instituting subject.” Anchored on a Saussure-inspired understanding of “novel expression” (the phenomenon formerly known as “authentic speech”)—which Besmer presents as a response to the problematisation of transcendental language in Fink’s *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*—this rethinking displaces the gestural account of language, rooted in the *Fundierung* story, with a “lateral” theory based in Merleau-Ponty’s reworking of Husserl’s *Stiftung* notion. The dialogical movement in and through which novel expression is successfully communicated is

now taken as paradigmatic of the *intermonde*, and it is on this historical institution of meaning, Besmer contends, that Merleau-Ponty's final view of ideal objects is modeled.

The last chapter offers detailed discussions of *The Visible and the Invisible* with the aim of showing both that the innovative ideas at work here are addressed to the same underlying phenomenological task—expressing mute experience—as the earlier work, but also that they cannot be fully understood and appreciated without clearly grasping how the middle period served to ratchet up the methodological rigour with which Merleau-Ponty discharged this task. Besmer also attends to Merleau-Ponty's re-reading of "The Origin of Geometry," and given his analysis it comes as no surprise that he characterises Merleau-Ponty's late thought, in particular with regard to the historical nature of rationality, as an "implicit rewriting" of Husserl's *Crisis*. (6, 135)

According to Besmer, then, Merleau-Ponty wrests Husserlian phenomenology from its vestigial foundationalism and renders it radically intersubjective. He thus makes numerous points that portray the problem of ideal objects as a "*generative*" matter of "*living participation* in a concrete historical world"—as "instituting subjects," we are "*practically engaged* in bringing the world to articulation." (32, 53, 124, my italics) These are well-motivated claims. Yet they are in some tension with the overarching theoretical orientation—Besmer declines any direct consideration of Merleau-Ponty's political writing (52)—and one may wonder if the consideration of ideal objects hasn't been skewed in the direction of scientific idealisation, rather than a broader field of normativity.

It is not the case, for instance, that Merleau-Ponty ignored history and culture in his early work. It is rather that he saw them through the lens of the young Marx, whom he credited with a "phenomenology of the cultural world," noting that "the introduction of the notion of the *human object*," the incarnation of ideas and values, "which phenomenology has taken up and developed, was reserved for Marx." He expressed the same idea in the middle of his middle period in referring to Marx's "original insight" concerning "a historical rationality immanent in the life of men."

Merleau-Ponty's view of Marxism did become considerably less uncritical. But as Besmer shows, the historically engaged orientation that it imparted to Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl remained. This leads

one to wonder whether the conceptual bridge crossed by Merleau-Ponty in developing his later thought is indeed as Besmer has characterised it. For example, as Besmer emphasises, the account of novel expression at the heart of his story amounts to “a re-writing of the transcendental moment” in response to the need for a “transcendentally appropriate language.” (79, 70) Yet, this is a problem that confronted Fink’s “*unbeteiligte Zuschauer*,” the “*non-participating* spectator,” for whom communicative dialogue is a non-issue. It is similarly unclear whether the synchronic-diachronic distinction drawn from Saussurian linguistics can underwrite the dialectical rhythm of generativity in general. It is well-known that Merleau-Ponty’s reading of Saussure is quite free. Yet, it may be that the same considerations that led Saussure to insist on the strict singularity of linguistic structures were also what ultimately led Merleau-Ponty to leave *The Prose of the World*—a text on which Besmer’s account relies—unpublished.

Such questions notwithstanding, Besmer’s book is an important contribution to Merleau-Ponty scholarship, in particular concerning the phenomenology of language. Still, his polemical critique of what he dubs “the standard view” of the middle period—perspectives that gloss over the significant methodological shifts in Merleau-Ponty’s thought during these years—does have some purchase on his own position. Most notably, the absence of any treatment of Merleau-Ponty’s courses on nature—a theme no less (and arguably *more*) important than language in the middle period—is conspicuous. This is all the more glaring given the morphing of “the things themselves” into the “brute Being” of Merleau-Ponty’s late thought. For how would “cultural primordially” understood linguistically leave any scope for such mute and non-anthropocentric existence?

Besmer suggests that the answer lies in the way Merleau-Ponty transcended culture’s dichotomy with corporeality. (141) But the dichotomy that needs to be overcome is more accurately described as that involving *nature* and culture. Nor will it do any good, especially in the context of ideality, to appeal to a “persistent,” albeit “obliquely implied,” “phenomenological realism” in Merleau-Ponty’s work. (108) If phenomenology is indeed “an active participation in the advent of sense” (134), if it is generative all the way down, then to pursue it as if it were a project of theoretical discovery will only serve to dissemble the

normative horizons that ultimately determine how the sense of history's mute intentionalities *should* be articulated and instituted.

This is, after all, the incisive edge of Husserl's critique of the "crisis of rationality." It is not just that the dualistic standpoint of mainstream post-Cartesian thought engenders theoretical difficulties. Rather, the deeper issue concerns what Coole referred to as the "positivist suppression of the normative dimension" of modern reason (31), the disarticulation of modernity's "critical reflexivity" with regard to *how reason ought to be practised*—or: how human coexistence ought to be organised, i.e., *politics*. As Coole sees it, the "crisis of rationality" amounts to a structural crisis in modern society itself, a depoliticisation that can only be remedied through progressive social transformation. But because this crisis is, in her view, pivotally a function of ideology—modern rationalism mystifies reason by dogmatically occluding "the internal relationship between ideas and experience," hence sowing "ontological confusion about the status of ideas" (46)—it can be effectively combated with philosophy. Such is how Coole reads Merleau-Ponty. The "interrogative ethos" (2) of his phenomenology is geared precisely to the reopening of those areas of lived experience—contingencies, ambiguities, and negativities—that are denied by modern rationalism, but which are the dynamic lifeblood of reason and politics alike. Ultimately, it is for trying to overcome the "ontological confusion" caused by modern rationalism that Coole regards Merleau-Ponty as a "profoundly political" thinker. (1)

Like Besmer, Coole rejects the early/late division of Merleau-Ponty's thought, and she also affirms its longitudinal continuity. Rather than to the middle period, she turns to Merleau-Ponty's often-overlooked political writing. She thus sees the continuity in terms of his basic practical commitments to critical reflexivity and dialectical agency, and it is this intellectual style that Coole wants to recover as having an enduring relevance.

It is principally in this way that her book differs from Kerry Whiteside's *Merleau-Ponty and the Foundations of an Existential Politics* (1988), the best existing text on Merleau-Ponty's politics. Whereas Whiteside offered detailed discussions of Merleau-Ponty's political ideas, and ultimately rejected his later work as a failure, Coole steps back from the historical detail and tries to articulate the sense of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as itself an inherently political means

of critically interrogating the concrete realities of collective life. Cast in this light, the later work appears no less—and potentially *more*—politically engaged than the earlier existential Marxism.

Coole's study is premised on a negative assessment of the current state of contemporary political thought. She holds that rationalistic ideology still prevails here, too, maintaining the field in an on-going oscillation between abstract poles of realism and idealism. As with Besmer, it is precisely to the "interworld"—to its "thick intersubjectivity," "the very flesh of the political"—that we need to return. Although she does not pursue it with equal rigour, by locating the horizons of communication within a broader political context, one involving power relations and other social forces, Coole is in effect one-upping the sort of methodological move described by Besmer. Her own treatment of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the interworld thus unfolds in the second of the book's three parts, after first laying out the parameters of his critique of rationalism in Part 1.

Here Coole develops Merleau-Ponty's view of modern rationalism and discusses its connection with the theme of the crisis of modernity. We see Merleau-Ponty picking up on the Husserlian view, but pushing it more decisively beyond "the Cartesian legacy" in ways that Coole likens to Critical Theory. This is essentially a matter of interrogating the fundamental "ontological prejudices" of modern rationalism and demonstrating the need for a new ontology to provide a non-dualist basis for political thought. Coole discusses Merleau-Ponty's critiques of liberalism and Marxism, showing how neither can bring about a unity of the ideal and the material. Coole pays more attention to Marxism, both on account of Merleau-Ponty's earlier investment in it as well as the fact that its dialectical and engaged orientation remained a fixture of his thought. Coole contends that it was primarily Merleau-Ponty's own Marxist self-critique that brought him to see that dialectical philosophy requires an anti-humanist ontology. Coole thus portrays Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as at once a critical renewal of the Marxist transformative paradigm, but also as anticipating the post-structuralist critique of humanism. The idea is that this approach can support a recovery of humanistic values in ways consistent with that critique.

In Part 2, "In Pursuit of the Interworld," Coole fills in the account of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, both in general

and with respect to politics in particular, and shows how his “return to ontology” was motivated by “explicitly political concerns.” (93) Overall, this is not a highly technical discussion of phenomenology—the parts dealing with Husserl are at times vague, and even parts of the discussion on Merleau-Ponty, including his links with Kant and Hegel, are not as philosophically sharp as one might wish. But Coole paints a rich and gripping picture, and once again it is centrally a matter of generativity: the interworld is “a self-generative existential field” (106), the site of the “immanent generative process” of historical transformation; and phenomenology is an on-going “*practice*” of critical interrogation that emulates the intertwining of thought and being in reflecting (on) this negativity.

This can sound like the merely verbal expression of dialectical desiderata, rather than their actual achievement. Some of the most intriguing passages are thus those in which Coole shows how, for both the political theorist and the political actor, this would work in practice. Subtle differences aside, we see that in both cases praxis is ultimately a sort of “dialectical art” (146) which, although it aspires to Machiavellian *virtù*, has significant affinities with Kantian aesthetic judgment (Coole explored the epistemology of this in an important article published in *Political Theory* almost twenty-five years ago). Coole draws many insightful contrasts—including with Habermas, Foucault, and an extended rejoinder to Judith Butler (Chapter 7), but it is surprising that she doesn’t consider Arendt, who also found political inspiration in Kant’s third *Critique*.

Coole ultimately argues that Merleau-Ponty’s ontological account of “flesh” is best understood—in ways that anticipate both Foucault and Deleuze—as a non-anthropocentric “field of forces” (233), but one that still supplies the basis for an account of transformative historical agency. It involves a “new materialism,” a “generative materiality” (163) that carries the immanent “criteria of [political] progress” (254) that it was Merleau-Ponty’s “abiding aim ... to reinstate.” (160)

This is where the really hard questions arise, and Coole defers until the very end to unpack them. As it turns out, there is not too much to say. Basically, social practices, structures, regimes, etc. are to be evaluated according to whether they enrich or impoverish corporeal life—whether they “paralyze or vitalise lived relationships.” (255) The

specific criteria Coole mentions—openness, differentiation, complexity—are clearly reminiscent of *perceptual* norms, and she does emphasise the continued centrality of embodiment in Merleau-Ponty's views. Especially when she refers to the enrichment of life as an “evolutionary norm” (254), though, it is not clear how or even *if* this could be distinguished from an *apolitical* vitalism. There is an overemphasis on intracorporeality here, precisely that to which Besmer's discussion of dialogue supplies a partial corrective. Here, too, though, there is a conspicuous and problematic absence of any discussion of Merleau-Ponty's return to the question of nature. An examination of this—in conjunction with the communicative angle explored by Besmer, and against the background of embodied perception—would be essential to give a more precisely nuanced articulation of the anti-humanist orientation of Merleau-Ponty's final work.

Coole has produced a major contribution to Merleau-Ponty scholarship, and no review can do complete justice to its wide-ranging analyses. Her account of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology as a project of practical reason can offer a methodological corrective to theoretical approaches. At the same time, this needs to be developed with the degree of internal rigour marshalled, for example, by Besmer. The two approaches are ultimately consonant, even mutually dependent: pure ideality implicates larger practical horizons, whose normativity points back into the “thickness” of intersubjective coexistence. The key point of contention that arises—Do we discover or create the *intermonde*?—thus calls into question the distinction between idealism and materialism in ways that attest to the extraordinary fecundity or utterly hopeless ambiguity of Merleau-Ponty's thought. If they can be brought together on a common generative basis, then the works considered here reaffirm hope that the former is the case.

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Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari. Biographie croisée
François Dosse
Paris : La Découverte, 2007 ; 643 pages.

Cette biographie consacrée à Deleuze (1925–1995) et Guattari (1930–1992) est une véritable mine d’or d’informations réalisée par un auteur prolifique qui nous avait déjà offert des ouvrages du même genre dédiés à Paul Ricoeur et Michel de Certeau. Les lecteurs qui s’attendent à satisfaire leur curiosité en découvrant les aspects cachés de la vie personnelle de Deleuze risquent d’être déçus. Ce qui est un peu moins vrai de Guattari à propos duquel François Dosse évoque notamment certains éléments de sa vie amoureuse qui fut, semble-t-il, assez mouvementée, ainsi que ses épisodes dépressifs et des ambitions littéraires jamais réalisées. Mais ce qui intéresse avant tout l’auteur c’est l’évolution conceptuelle des pensées de Deleuze et Guattari contextualisée de manière admirable dans la vie politique et l’environnement intellectuel des différentes époques de leur parcours. C’est l’une des grandes richesses de cet ouvrage qui utilise judicieusement les correspondances de Deleuze et Guattari, renvoie à plusieurs documents audio-visuels, et évoque les témoignages d’un nombre considérable de personnes (amis, élèves, collègues, etc.) qui ont connu et côtoyé l’un ou l’autre des deux penseurs. De toute évidence, cette biographie a nécessité un travail colossal puisqu’elle implique une vaste entreprise de consultation des archives, de reconstitution des déplacements géographiques (bien que les voyages à l’étranger de Deleuze aient été beaucoup moins nombreux que ceux de Guattari), et d’échange avec les multiples témoins directs ou commentateurs. L’auteur ne se contente cependant pas de rapporter des paroles. Bien au contraire, c’est un véritable travail d’érudition philosophique qu’il nous présente. Divisé en trois grandes sections (avant, pendant et après le travail commun de Deleuze et Guattari) et vingt-neuf chapitres qui suivent, à quelques variantes près mais de manière exhaustive, l’ordre chronologique des événements, l’ouvrage analyse avec grande clarté le devenir de la conceptualité élaborée par Deleuze et Guattari sur une base individuelle ou en duo.

La première section revisite les années militantes du jeune Guattari, alors lacanien œuvrant à la clinique psychiatrique de La Borde, ainsi que l’itinéraire intellectuel du jeune Deleuze qui tente de renouveler l’histoire des idées. Comme le relate François Dosse dans son excellent

prologue, c'est par l'intermédiaire du psychiatre Jean-Pierre Muyard que Deleuze et Guattari se rencontrent en juin 1969. Après avoir été séduit par les travaux et les cours de Deleuze, qui enseignait durant ces années à Lyon, Muyard et Deleuze nouent une amitié. Ensemble, ils discutent de folie et de psychose. La curiosité de Deleuze à cet égard semble sans limite. Muyard s'intéresse, par ailleurs, aux expériences thérapeutiques menées au château de La Borde par Guattari et consorts. Ces expérimentations cliniques lui semblent dignes d'intérêt, mais il constate aussi que l'esprit éclaté et multidirectionnel de Guattari mérite une meilleure consistance théorique. L'initiative de Muyard vient donc tout naturellement : Guattari pourra contribuer à expliquer la folie à Deleuze, et Deleuze apportera une unité conceptuelle à Guattari. Précédée d'un échange épistolaire, la rencontre a lieu dans le Limousin où Deleuze passe ses étés : « la séduction mutuelle est immédiate » (13). À leur seconde rencontre à Dhuizon, non loin de La Borde, Deleuze et Guattari commencent déjà à débattre des thèses « anti-familialistes » qui seront au centre de *L'Anti-Œdipe*.

Les lecteurs, spécialistes ou non, en apprendront au sujet des rapports de Deleuze et Guattari à des écoles de pensée telles que le lacanisme et le structuralisme que François Dosse connaît bien pour avoir publié une monumentale *Histoire du structuralisme* en deux volumes. À cet égard, dans la section centrale du livre, l'opposition entre les « machines » deleuzo-guattariennes et la « structure », de même que l'étude des rapports de Guattari à Lacan (le premier ayant d'abord été pressenti comme successeur du maître avant de commettre le « meurtre du père ») s'avèrent particulièrement éclairantes. Cette même section accorde plusieurs développements intéressants relativement à la création et au mode de fonctionnement très particulier du groupe CERFI, ainsi qu'à la revue *Recherches* qui fut son principal organe de diffusion (chap. 15). L'auteur discute l'immense popularité en Italie de Guattari qui devient l'un des chefs de file de la gauche (chap. 16), et on lit avec intérêt la description des interventions des « brigades de Badiou » dans les cours de Deleuze et de Lyotard, considérés comme des « anarcho-désirants » insensibles aux préoccupations des ouvriers (chap. 20).

De la dernière section se dégage le sentiment que, après la parution de *Mille plateaux* en 1980, Deleuze et Guattari ont accompli ce qu'ils avaient à accomplir. Ils maintiennent une relation épistolaire et suivent l'actualité des publications de l'un et l'autre, mais aucune séance

de travail n'est organisée. Une distance tranquille s'instaure et les deux amis prennent dorénavant deux chemins différents : Guattari s'intéresse à l'écologie, adhère au parti vert et maintient son activisme culturel en étant lié au gouvernement Mitterrand via son Ministre de la culture Jack Lang, tandis que Deleuze écrit sur le cinéma en consacrant de nouvelles monographies à Bacon, Foucault et Leibniz. François Dosse écrit ce qu'on soupçonnait déjà : le livre *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* (1991), pourtant cosigné par Deleuze et Guattari, aurait été rédigé uniquement par Deleuze (27 et 538–9), le nom de Guattari qui devient une sorte de force virtuelle figurant sur la page couverture comme « preuve d'amitié d'une exceptionnelle intensité » (NdA : F. Dosse m'indique que cette note qui a suscité beaucoup d'émotion de la part des proches de Deleuze et Guattari, bien que fondée sur un témoignage fiable, a été supprimée pour la réimpression de l'ouvrage). Dans les derniers chapitres de cette biographie, une place de choix est réservée aux appropriations et aux réceptions internationales, aussi multiples que variées, des travaux de Deleuze et Guattari. L'auteur souligne, à juste titre, l'importance des travaux de Constantin Boundas qui fut le premier intercesseur de Deleuze au Canada (557–9), et il évoque au passage la réception des travaux de Deleuze et Guattari chez les urbanistes et les architectes qui demeure relativement méconnue dans la francophonie (614–5).

L'ouvrage expose avec brio l'un des rares modèles d'amitié philosophique qui a donné lieu à une véritable œuvre rédigée à quatre mains. Loin de se cantonner dans une suite d'anecdotes, il peut convenir comme manuel d'introduction aux œuvres solitaires ou en commun de Deleuze et Guattari. Tous les ouvrages de l'un et de l'autre, de même que plusieurs de leurs articles, sont d'ailleurs commentés et admirablement situés dans leur contexte de parution. Le ton apologétique est caractéristique de ce genre d'ouvrage qui ne lance aucune missive contre Deleuze et/ou Guattari tout en se permettant quelques attaques contre ceux qui, par négligence ou malveillance, ont déformé leurs propos (notamment B.-H. Lévy et L. Ferry). En outre, une trentaine de photos viennent agrémenter les pages centrales de l'ouvrage qui est doté d'un précieux index.

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Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique

Emmanuel Kant

Précédé de *Introduction à l'Anthropologie*

Michel Foucault

Paris : Vrin, 2008; 267 pages.

Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique est un cours donné par Kant pendant vingt-cinq ans et aussi le dernier livre publié du son vivant (en 1798). Une première traduction française, réalisée par Foucault et parue en 1964, a connu plusieurs rééditions. Ce n'est toutefois pas le texte de Kant qui va principalement nous intéresser ici, mais plutôt l'« Introduction » que lui consacre Foucault, un texte important tant par son contenu que par son ampleur (70 pages dans la présente version) qui demeurait jusqu'à maintenant inédit. Les plus fervents lecteurs de Foucault ont cependant pu consulter ce document à la bibliothèque de la Sorbonne ou aux archives de l'IMEC. Quelques transcriptions, pas toujours fiables et dépourvues des notes en bas de page, circulaient également sur le web. On ne peut que saluer la publication de cette « Introduction » et de la traduction de l'*Anthropologie* qui, réunies pour la première fois dans leur intégralité, constituent la thèse complémentaire de Foucault complétée en 1961.

Avec Heidegger et Nietzsche, Kant peut être considéré comme l'autre source philosophique principale, peut-être même la première en importance, dans l'itinéraire de Foucault. L'« Introduction » joue un rôle capital dans ce parcours, non seulement parce qu'elle amorce le dialogue avec Kant qui se prolongera jusqu'au fameux texte « Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? » (dont Foucault élabore différentes versions de 1978 à 1984), mais aussi parce que la pensée kantienne représente un point tournant dans l'historiographie foucauldienne en marquant le passage de l'âge classique à la modernité. L'« Introduction » questionne et problématise de manière originale et bien documentée le mouvement interne à la pensée de Kant entre la première *Critique* et l'*Anthropologie*, c'est-à-dire la dynamique qui va de la recherche des conditions de possibilités de la connaissance à une investigation de l'existence concrète. Dans la réécriture du chapitre consacré à la « Déduction des concepts purs de l'entendement » de la première *Critique*, Kant tente de résoudre le paradoxe qui fait du sujet transcendantal à la fois le sujet et l'objet

d'investigation. Pour ce faire, il soutient que le moi se connaît non pas tel qu'il *est* en lui-même mais tel qu'il s'*apparaît* à lui-même. Ce qui d'une certaine manière conduit Kant, dans l'*Anthropologie*, à délaisser la question de la connaissance au profit d'une investigation présentée comme plus fondamentale consacrée à « l'homme ». Kant opère ainsi un geste que Foucault considère emblématique pour notre modernité en ouvrant la porte, notamment, à l'essor des sciences humaines, à la phénoménologie et à toutes les « analytiques de la finitude ». Visiblement, la solution kantienne au « doublet empirico-transcendantal » qui renforce le tournant anthropologique ne convainc pas le jeune Foucault. Dans *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault continuera à défendre des positions radicalement anti-humanistes à travers lesquelles est dénoncée toute forme d'objectivation de l'homme. Les textes ultérieurs de l'époque généalogique montreront plus clairement comment les recherches visant à déterminer l'identité humaine se confondent avec une variété de techniques de contrôle sur la vie des individus. En réalité, depuis son « Introduction », Foucault n'a jamais cessé de problématiser la question de l'homme. Son intérêt pour l'anthropologie de Kant annonce ainsi les développements à venir concernant la « mort de l'homme », l'archéologie des savoirs impersonnels, la généalogie des mécanismes d'assujettissement et l'étude des modes de subjectivation. C'est pourquoi l'« Introduction » doit être considérée comme un écrit programmatique.

Si dans « Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? » Foucault se revendique du questionnement kantien en assumant l'héritage de l'*Aufklärung* (tout en rejetant le *telos* kantien au nom de la « pure actualité » où le présent traversé par une série d'événements peut être envisagé autrement), il n'en va pas de même avec l'« Introduction » qui ne trouve aucun terrain d'entente avec Kant. Cette fin de non recevoir se manifeste de manière explosive à la fin de l'« Introduction »: « Il faut récuser toutes ces 'anthropologies philosophiques' [de Kant à la phénoménologie de la conscience et à l'existentialisme comme variantes humanistes, NdA] qui se donnent comme accès naturel au fondamental; et toutes ces philosophies dont le point de départ et l'horizon concret sont définis par une certaine réflexion anthropologique sur l'homme. ... Les valeurs insidieuses de la question: *Was ist der Mensch?* sont responsables de ce champ homogène, déstructuré, infiniment réversible où l'homme donne sa vérité comme âme de la vérité » (77–8).

En 1961, Foucault oppose sans doute trop naïvement à l'homme de Kant le Surhomme de Nietzsche: « L'entreprise nietzschéenne pourrait être entendue comme point d'arrêt enfin donné à la prolifération de l'interrogation sur l'homme. ... La trajectoire de la question: 'Was ist der Mensch?' dans le champ de la philosophie s'achève dans la réponse qui la récuse et la désarme: *der Übermensch* » (78–9). On a là, presque brutalement posés, des thèmes qui ne cesseront ensuite d'être approfondis et problématisés par Foucault. Mentionnons que l'« Introduction » contient bien plus que la mise en scène de ce débat, tout de même central pour Foucault, entre Kant et Nietzsche. Ce travail exemplaire de contextualisation de l'anthropologie kantienne dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre et d'une époque est né d'un travail acharné mené aux archives de Kant à Rostock, non loin de Hambourg, où Foucault dirigeait l'Institut français à la fin des années 1950. L'« Introduction » constitue ainsi une contribution majeure aux études kantienne.

Comme nous l'avons mentionné, l'*Anthropologie* de Kant a très certainement contribué à guider Foucault dans la mise en place de son historiographie. Dans l'*Anthropologie*, Kant reproduit pour une ultime fois le geste classique qui consiste à opposer la folie à la saine raison en affirmant par exemple « La *spéculation* (hors de la saine raison) est un usage de la raison qui passe à côté de sa fin dernière; en partie par incapacité, en partie par une erreur de point de vue » (150). En d'autres termes, le fou est pris dans un système de contradictions qui rend toute connaissance impossible. Kant ajoute que les personnes insensées demeurent incurables et que « toutes les méthodes thérapeutiques doivent rester sans efficacité » (163). L'« Introduction » fait référence à cette analyse kantienne des « déficiences de l'esprit » (18). Ce qui n'est pas le cas de *Histoire de la folie* où, sans doute pour éviter les recoupements entre cette thèse principale et la thèse complémentaire, on ne trouve aucune référence à l'*Anthropologie* de Kant. Dans l'*Histoire de la folie*, c'est essentiellement la pensée de Descartes qui est associée à l'exclusion de la folie. Cette remarque montre non seulement pourquoi les deux thèses doivent être lues ensemble, mais elle témoigne aussi du fait que la définition foucauldienne de l'âge classique avait été intuitionnée très tôt et de manière définitive.

On attend avec impatience la suite de la publication des cours de Foucault au Collège de France en souhaitant aussi la parution du mythique quatrième volume de l'*Histoire de la sexualité* (sous-titré « Les

aveux de la chair ») que Foucault n'a pas eu le temps de réviser avant sa mort et qui demeure entre les mains du légataire principal des manuscrits, Daniel Defert. Entre-temps, tous ceux et celles qui s'intéressent à la pensée de Foucault ont maintenant un précieux texte à se mettre sous la dent sans devoir se déplacer dans l'hexagone.

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Infinitely Demanding

Simon Critchley

New York: Verso, 2007; 168 pages.

To say that *Infinitely Demanding* is not quite as difficult a read as the title suggests is not to criticise but rather to compliment Simon Critchley on the fluency with which he presents difficult thought. In his "Explanatory Note," Critchley says that the book is "the distillation into a single, continuous argument of much that I have been thinking and writing about for many years." (149) We do indeed find in abbreviated form many of the features familiar to readers of his work during the last fifteen years: Levinas, Lacan, Beckett, comedy, Laclau, hegemony and interstitial distance from the state are all there, as well as readings of Badiou, Løgstrup and Marx.

What is somewhat surprising is the complete absence of Derrida, who, like some purged former politburo member airbrushed out of old photos, is not just insufficiently represented: he is not even mentioned or footnoted once. Indeed with this volume Critchley seems keen to put as much distance between himself and his best known work, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992), as possible. However, there is no significant change of orientation and one can see a general strategy in the book, suggestive of a desire to reach out to a wider audience, of turning to make Derridean and Levinasian points by way of other philosophers. This can be seen, for example, in chapter two where Badiou and Løgstrup are discussed prior to readings of Lacan and Levinas. At times indeed Critchley seems to be rather pushing himself to make detours into new territory and I am far from convinced that the conclusions he draws from the discussion of Løgstrup could not equally well, or better, have been drawn from Levinas' work.

Critchley argues that philosophy does not begin, as has so often been said, in an experience of wonder but rather with a sense that something desired has not been achieved. He outlines various ways in which such a feeling is inherent in modernity, contending in particular that a sense of failure is inescapable in a self that is formed in the face of an ethical commitment it cannot finally fulfill. In his first chapter, Critchley engages in a deconstructive reading of Kant's *Faktum der Vernunft*, which suggests that rather than being autonomous, the self is shaped in relation to a demand with which it is confronted. This heteronymous subject and its ethical consequences are then further elaborated in readings of Badiou, Løgstrup and Levinas in the second chapter.

What I found particularly problematic in the architecture of the book was the suggestion, introduced at the end of the second chapter and pursued in the third, that the Levinasian ethical subject is in need of sublimation via recourse to Lacan. I think here Critchley takes the easy path of not responding to those critics of Levinas who see his work as labouring under a pathos of excessive responsibility, trying to skip the (admittedly exhausting) need to return to Levinas' text and point out simple misreadings (arguably in recent years no philosopher has suffered so persistently from serious misrepresentation). It seems clear that the Levinasian account of ethics precisely does not leave us, like Oscar Schindler at the end of *Schindler's List*, with a subject on its knees and crying over not having done more. Sublimation, or a process akin to it, is always already at work in Levinas' account of the subject and in many ways its persistence could be said to be the central target of his philosophy. In both of his major works, *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being* (1974), any relation to an other is found to be possible only on the basis of an infinite exposure to that other. Yet Levinas argues that such an "experience" can never be unmediated: as he says in the former work, the face is never manifested independently of the third, or in the latter, the saying is thematised in the said. The problem is that sublimation is all too common and we might argue that Levinas' much mocked pathos is the result of an attempt to open the encounter with the other and the possibility of an exposure to the unthematized ethical residue of saying that is obscured in the said.

The need for sublimation or not aside, it is in the inherently heteronymous and ethical nature of our selves that Critchley finds the solution to what he sees as the problematic motivational deficit at the heart

of liberal democracy. He argues that politics is action in a specific situation, the taking up of a distance from the state by actors who are never simply given but creatively brought into being. He tends in his final chapter to take his examples from “activist practice” and refers to Ya-Basta! and the WOMBLES although he never specifies why he chose these rather than other civil society groups or actors which could have similarly been invoked. Critchley himself wishes to adopt “anarchism” as the name for the politics of ethical responsibility that he sees as the consequence of heteronomous subjectivity. Yet, this is far from being a simple endorsement of “actually existing anarchism,” as he says, “anarchy should not seek to mirror the archic sovereignty that it undermines. That is, it should not seek to set itself up as the new hegemonic principle of political organisation, but remain the negation of totality and not the affirmation of a new totality.” (122) Such an anarchy is not so much anarchy generally understood as a valorisation of any pragmatic activist calling of the state to account. Indeed in his closing pages, Critchley stresses the essentially dissensual nature of democratic politics and uses a discussion of Graeber’s work to draw attention to the dangerously depoliticizing nature of the strong emphasis on consensus in much contemporary radical discourse.

It becomes clear as the book progresses that Critchley is particularly seeking to address those involved in radical politics today. This can be seen in some of his omissions, such as his formulation of politics as “a disturbance of the state” which arguably misses a step that needs to be taken first. (114) There is an important moment in the final pages of *Totality and Infinity* where Levinas speaks of the face relating to the third and aspiring to a State. While stressing the ethical experience of the face that challenges thematisation, Levinas is also insisting that there must be a moment of universalisation. In *Force of Law*, Derrida similarly stresses the need for both law *and* justice. In the face of corrupt elites and a neo-liberalism only too keen to let the state wither, in much of the world today (perhaps even in a U.S.A. where people can die for want of health insurance?), the affirmation of a state that aims at impartiality is undoubtedly the necessary precondition of any meaningful political activity. Critchley’s formulation of “interstitial distance from the state” would imply the necessity of the state but one has the feeling that Critchley’s attempt in the final chapter to ally himself with and intervene in contemporary radical politics prevents any explicit affirmation of the importance

of the state. Indeed, further exploration might suggest that 'the State' as a site is not always monolithic and that the "distance" Critchley values can, on occasion, be found *within* it.

The chief merit of *Infinitely Demanding*, apart from making Critchley's work of the last decade or so more readily approachable and available for undergraduate students, is this active engagement with new social movements that in the last decade have brought important new challenges to existing political practice. Critchley's formulation, in the final chapter, of what we might term a truly anarchic anarchism, together with his stress on the necessity of dissensus rather consensus makes this an important philosophical engagement which very subtly brings to bear high level theoretical insights on contemporary radical politics.

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Ethics at a Standstill: History and Subjectivity in Levinas and the Frankfurt School

Asher Horowitz

Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2008; xx + 404 pages.

Asher Horowitz describes this work as an attempt to place Levinas and the first generation of the Frankfurt School in "constellations," drawing out their affinities and highlighting where each may be able to supplement the shortcomings of the others. Given the modesty of this explicit purpose, one would be justified in wondering for whom this volume is intended; without an argumentative defence of each of the various positions presented, such a project could be compelling only to those already convinced by both Levinas' "ethics as first philosophy," and the socio-philosophical analyses of the Frankfurt School (or at least the major points of agreement between its members), positions between which there are deep tensions.

But no such argument is forthcoming on Horowitz's part. Despite his claims, *Ethics at a Standstill* is very much a contribution to what he might call a "left Levinasian" theoretical project. In a series of footnotes, he surveys the field of political engagements with Levinas and, with the exception of Enrique Dussel, finds them all too "liberal," which, for Horowitz, ultimately means: they do not call for the abolition of the

State. (370–4, esp. notes 10, 11, 22, 23) While relying on much of the relevant literature in his explications of Levinas, his readings of the Frankfurt School are occasionally idiosyncratic and always designed to render them compatible with his broadly Levinasian orientation. Through this approach, Horowitz's real goal becomes apparent: to take Levinas beyond the "impasse of liberalism."

The work is structured as a "back and forth" between Levinas and successive members of the Frankfurt School. Horowitz begins with an explication of Levinas' philosophy with a view to highlighting precisely the "amphibology" of ethics and politics—the manner in which Absolute Responsibility for the Absolute Other necessitates the "saming" of other Others in the demand for justice—that leads to Levinas' liberal "standstill." Horowitz's response is to approach the question of History, which, for the Levinas of *Totality and Infinity*, is always a violent totalisation of singular subjects, by way of a fascinating Levinasian reading of Benjamin's "On the Concept of History," which allows him to connect Levinas' concept of eschatological judgment with Adorno's concept of "natural history" as the allegorical expression of a contingent, particular, and transient situation. The strategy, from here onward, is to demonstrate that one can analyze the apparently ahistorical Levinasian "Same" in terms of its natural-historical configurations, the point being that if the "Same"—the totality opposed to the ethical subject—has a history (that is to say, if "History" has a history), one can mount a more nuanced social critique of such configurations than Levinas was able to do himself.

If such is the plan, the task for Horowitz is to convince his readers that the "dialectic of natural history" presented, for instance, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *One-Dimensional Man*, as the entrenchment of modes of "identity thinking" which impoverish the experiential capacities and cognitive resources of the historical subject, can be consistently construed as the dynamic relation of the Levinasian ethical subject to the "Same." Natural history is supposed to be an account of the evaporation of opportunities for "transcendence," that is, for recovering the sense of an originary, and absolutely responsible, ethical subjectivity.

Adorno's negative dialectics, with his insistence upon practising philosophy "from the standpoint of redemption," that is, practising philosophy as unrelenting immanent critique that does not spare its own normative underpinnings, seems to Horowitz a promising model for a critical relation of ethical subjectivity to the totality it transcends. And,

insofar as the ethical subject is supposed *not* to be a (totalising) subject of knowledge, Adorno's method of passing critical judgment upon the totality of social relations and, more importantly, upon the general "identity thinking" which underlies them, without thereby asserting any positive, fixed critical position does appear initially plausible.

Horowitz nevertheless takes issue with Adorno's attempt at thinking beyond "idealist" subjectivity in terms of mimesis, of the relation between a proto-subjectivity and pseudo-objects not yet clearly distinguished from it; he claims that mimesis does not maintain a relationship with the Other in its *absolute* Otherness. At this point, Horowitz explicates Levinas' points of departure from Husserl and Heidegger to arrive at a conception of a radically material, sensible subject. For this subject, sensibility is not a mode of information, but rather a precognitive affectivity by which one is affected by an Other who remains absolute.

In the final chapter of the book, Horowitz attempts to rethink the possibilities of relating ethical subjectivity to the Same. Following Marcuse, he discusses the Freudian thesis according to which the process of civilisation is the result of the conflict between the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle, where the (relative) victory of the Reality Principle, in response to a situation of scarcity, results in the law of repression. But, according to Marcuse, Freud hypostatizes a particular natural-historic configuration of scarcity, namely, the domination of the many by the few, and thus mistakes a situation of "surplus-repression" for "basic repression." The point is that—according to Levinas—ethical subjects may engage in erotic and, more importantly, *fecund* relations with others: relations (familial and sexual being the most prominent models) which may, in rejecting the natural-historic arrangement of the Same, reconfigure it in such a way as to eliminate surplus-repression.

To restate, I think that while the main line of Horowitz's argument could perhaps be compelling to certain "Left Levinasians," his approach lacks a great deal of force. In particular, while Horowitz is evidently correct about the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between the traditions of phenomenology and critical theory, the approach here remains too external, on two levels.

First, the shortcomings perceived in Levinas are not immanent failures, but rather failures to live up to Horowitz's unquestioned, though perhaps somewhat tendentious convictions, e.g., that "Ethics, if it is ethics, does something to the public sphere; it makes the State wither away."

(350) That this is not an intrinsically Levinasian position is further evidenced by Simon Critchley's recent political appropriation of Levinas in *Infinitely Demanding*, wherein Levinas provides an account of ethical *motivation* for anarchist politics in a world where the State structure is here to stay. To make any sort of claim regarding the relation between "ethics" and "the State" would require premises regarding the reducibility or irreducibility of the "political" as such, which are unfortunately not provided.

Second, the shortcomings perceived in the Frankfurt School—and especially Adorno—are by no means immanent, but rather only seem shortcomings from a Levinasian perspective. For example, whether or not there is some sort of "latent idealism" in Adorno's presentation of the mimetic relation, its presence is not in and of itself a weighty objection; arguably, from Adorno's perspective, one would need the added premise that the mimetic relation also masks a more fundamental mode of subjectivity. It would have to be shown that he "got it wrong," and not merely that he failed to live up to an externally predetermined conclusion. While Levinas may claim to present just such a fundamental mode of subjectivity, Horowitz does no work to convince us that he is correct. Indeed, it would seem that, from Adorno's perspective, the phenomenological presentation of ethical subjectivity could be nothing other than an ideology designed to create subjects passive in the face of a *dominating* Other, that is, Levinasians are self-consciously complicit in their own domination.

Clearly, most of my reservations regarding *Ethics at a Standstill* stem from disappointment at the lack of any attempt to make it seem "right," and thus are not substantive criticisms in themselves. Nevertheless, it is just this lack of argumentative force that leaves Horowitz's conclusions so dubious; in particular, the notion of transformative fecund relations as potentially emancipatory presents a certain dilemma. For, if we are *not* the ethical subjects that Levinas describes, if indeed we are primordially interpretive or pragmatic or what-have-you, then the normative claim that we *ought* to inculcate this radically different form of subjectivity—itsself the supposed wellspring of all obligation and normativity—is radically unfounded. Horowitz runs up against the same objections that Habermas levelled at Adorno. If, on the other hand, we *are* ethical subjects, Horowitz's conclusions are false: there is quite clearly nothing emancipatory about merely being so.

It seems that Horowitz is not simply suggesting that radical State-withering consequences follow from mere “ethical subjectivity.” Rather, at times he appears (perhaps unintentionally) to be exhorting us to a vague transformation of our subjective relations, as if we simply hadn’t realised that escape from domination would require us to treat each other better. Maybe we have forgotten, but this is certainly a round-about way of reminding us.

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A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity

Manuel DeLanda

New York: Continuum, 2006; 142 pages.

Manuel DeLanda wrote *A New Philosophy of Society* in a style which, by his own admission in the introduction to his *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, bridges the gap between Continental and Anglo-American philosophy. His aim is to introduce “a novel approach to social ontology” (1) in order to provide “sociologists and other social scientists” (8) with an insight into “what kind of entities we can legitimately commit ourselves to assert exist.” (1) He calls such entities “the actors of [his] earlier historical narratives” (6), namely, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (1991), *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History* (1997) and *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (2002). DeLanda had already undertaken a reconstruction of Deleuze’s ontology in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. In this new book, which is in a sense a continuation of the former project, DeLanda elucidates the concept of assemblage and other related concepts as they were used by Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus* and in other texts. By introducing this reworked segment of Deleuzian ontology, DeLanda wishes to alter rather than preserve the ontological foundations on which sociologists are to base their works.

As a means of deploying Deleuze’s “theory of assemblage” in a more productive manner, DeLanda proposes a “neo-assemblage” theory, sometimes derided as “assemblage-theory 2.0” by “orthodox” Deleuzians. (4) This new framework can accommodate both reductionist

and non-reductionist views of micro and macro levels of social reality. It is presented as a continuum spanning a broad range of social assemblages. This work on the concept of assemblage is important and insightful because it develops a non-essentialist view of assemblages and sees them as instead governed by relations of exteriority. Understood in this way, the assemblage approach is a powerful tool that can be used to analyze social entities on any scale, from individual persons, to cities, nation-states, and the global economy. As DeLanda puts it: “[T]he ontology of assemblages is flat.” (28) The drawback is that, at times, the resulting conceptual framework may appear too schematic and terse.

In the first chapter, “Assemblages against Totalities,” DeLanda presents assemblages that are unlike the organic totalities founded on relations of quasi-Hegelian interiority. As an example of relations of exteriority in assemblages he refers, like Deleuze, to the “symbiosis of plants and pollinating insects.” (11) He then presents assemblages in two dimensions using four variables: on the one hand either 1) material or 2) expressive; on the other either 3) undergoing processes of territorialisation or 4) of deterritorialisation. Most interesting is the other synthetic process he introduces: “the role played in the production and maintenance of identity by specialised expressive entities such as genes and words.” (14) By adding this third dimension, DeLanda manages to define the theory of assemblages more clearly than Deleuze, who insists on the differentiation between assemblages and the strata of “filiations, biological organisms and institutional organizations.” (121)

In the second chapter, “Assemblages against Essences,” DeLanda attempts to persuade social scientists of the merits of his approach by demonstrating that his account of assemblages is non-essentialist and yet compatible with realism. DeLanda explains that “the ontology of assemblages is flat since it contains nothing but differently scaled *individual singularities*.” (28) There are thus no general categories. Larger social assemblages can also be regarded as individual entities when essences are reconceived according to a transformed notion of the relation of parts and wholes.

In the third chapter, “Persons and Networks,” DeLanda commences his “detailed analysis of social assemblages at progressively larger spatial scales” not with sub-personal components but rather with persons as “the smallest-scale social assemblage.” (46–7) Drawing on the principles established in the first two chapters and using the personal

scale as his point of departure, DeLanda, like Deleuze, follows Hume's empiricist model in which singular impressions are heterogeneous and irreducible. He then analyses the processes of territorialisation, which occur through habitual repetition, and of deterritorialisation, which are brought about through events that break the routine and destabilise personal identity, for example skill acquisition. Bringing Bourdieu's accounts of social classes and resource distribution into his analysis of social assemblages, DeLanda moves on to large-scale entities such as government organisations, in his progressive analysis of the ontological status of social entities. DeLanda admittedly uses his own non-Deleuzian theoretical resources in creating relations between the ideas of contemporary thinkers such as Bourdieu and Tilly and those of Deleuze, in order to render the concept of assemblages fruitful for contemporary sociologists. For example, Bourdieu's analyses of social classes, which are not limited to economic resources, but also include cultural resources such as education, help conceptualise social classes as assemblages by taking into account interpersonal networks and organisations with both material and expressive roles, as well as the larger assemblages that they may form.

The fourth chapter, "Organizations and Governments," starts with an investigation of authority structures, following Max Weber's threefold model of authority, which includes the rational-legal, the traditional, and the charismatic type, as well as mixtures of these. DeLanda looks at techniques for the enforcement of authority, such as punishment, as described by Foucault, as well as at forms of organisation such as camps, which derive, like punishment, from the military sphere. The same processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation that affect persons also affect these larger assemblages: destabilising events disturb the routine functioning of authority structures. DeLanda describes nation-states as large hierarchical assemblages, which, like any organisation, depend on their resources. He references Pfeffer and Salancik on the magnitude, criticality, control, and substitutability of resources, as well as on strategies for coping with resource dependencies, such as oligopolies and economies of agglomeration. He then deals with some complex forms of hierarchical organisation, such as federalism and examples from the U.S.A. DeLanda admits to both the lack of cross-cultural references and of deeper social or historical analyses in the examples he uses, but he sees this lack as justified since he is attempting to create an efficient and easy-to-use ontological tool for social scientists.

The final chapter, “Cities and Nations,” deals with spatial relations, which become increasingly prominent as the analysis shifts towards larger scales of social assemblages. Increased geographical mobility, fashion, and the disciplinary use of space in factories, offices, prisons, schools, etc. are described as processes that destabilise the identity of assemblages. These processes are then counterbalanced by territorialising processes such as segregation and congregation. Referencing sociologists, historians, and urban geographers, DeLanda looks at different types of cities in the context of historical sequences of events that shaped the connectivity and territorial hierarchy of urban centres. He moves from cities to nation-states, following the same governing principles he previously established.

In *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History*, DeLanda included a chapter on linguistic history. In *A New Philosophy of Society*, he reserves a place at the end of each chapter for language in order to highlight the dangerous relation between the easily misinterpreted linguisticity of experience and social constructivism. He thus inadvertently ends up giving prominence to postmodernist linguistic analysis. His ideas on language would benefit from the same sort of elucidatory reworking to which he subjects Deleuze’s concept of assemblage.

Deleuze used a wasp pollinating an orchid as a rather poetic example of a heterogeneous assemblage. This image is evoked on the book cover designed by Tony Chung, which represents not a wasp but another type of hymenopterans, a swarm of bees interacting over a beehive seen from up close: looking at it feels like zooming in on Google Earth. That is how the reader may eventually start to feel as DeLanda, moving closer to the present, surveys an expanding territory and quotes an increasing number of authors. In the face of the disconcerting thought of ourselves as parts of assemblages, DeLanda, with his non-reductionist matter-of-fact approach, does the reader a tremendous favour by reconstructing Deleuze’s theory of assemblages and by recognising elements of it in the works of the diverse authors assembled in this book. Indeed, their voices “can come together to form a chorus that does not harmonise its different components but interlocks them while respecting their heterogeneity.” (119) On the whole, DeLanda, whose major works on Deleuze have not yet been translated into French, has created a clearly structured introduction to a new philosophy of society based on assemblage theory that social scientists may find useful as a tool for thinking about “the irreducible

social complexity characterizing the contemporary world.” (6)

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Hiddenness and Alterity: Philosophical and Literary Sightings of the Unseen

James Richard Mensch

Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005; 270 pages.

James Mensch's *Hiddenness and Alterity* opens with the Delphic oracle's call: "know thyself." However, throughout the ages of human inquiry, obtaining such self-knowledge has proven troublesome, if not impossible. Mensch's question in this text is not how one can achieve self-knowledge, but rather "how our *lack* of knowledge can show itself as such." (2) How is it that we can find our motives obscure, our memories faded, and what we say unmeant? The main task of this book is to explore the way in which this lack reveals itself and what it reveals about our selfhood. The answer offered throughout is that "*the hidden is the other.*" (2) For Mensch, the other is the lack that I can see hidden from me "to the degree that the other is in me as *other* than me—that is, as *beyond* what I can grasp and know." (5) While the book's subtitle suggests that the examples for this investigation will come from the domains of philosophy and literature, the thirteen chapters actually fall into four sections: phenomenology, ethics of the other, literature and religion. As a whole, what this book adds to the discussion of hiddenness and alterity is a reading of a *virtuous* other to whom we are in debt for the alterity inside us that defines who we are.

The first three chapters seem to gather around issues of temporalisation explicit in phenomenology. According to Mensch, Kant's account of temporalisation, when closely read, "shows that temporalization is a self-concealing process." (18) What he means is that in order for two pieces of content to show themselves as different from each other, an element of "not-newness or pastness" needs to be added to one of them. "This modification is reproduction's generation of time" (22) and this generation, for Kant, "is the trace of the subject." (29) The paradox con-

tained here is that the subject is both what creates temporality and that which is created by temporalisation. In this sense we have something-that-is-not-ourselves inside ourselves, a concept Mensch develops in his thoughts on Husserl, which are undertaken through close readings of a number of unpublished documents from the Husserl Archives in Leuven. For Husserl, we are together with others because we all share in pre-egological [*unterichliche*] temporalisation. In this sense there is something in me that is with others; “within me, understood as a physical system, there is something transcending me, other than what I am.” (61) It is this other-within-the-self that opens the possibility for an ethics.

The second identifiable section, made up of chapters four through seven, concentrates on the ethics founded on the other that cannot be reduced to our expectations, for “freedom is a function of the excessive quality of our selfhood.” (98) Mensch illustrates this thought with an example. Imagine you see a figure in the distance and you approach it. If you expect a person and it turns out to be a mannequin, then what you encounter offers you less than you expected. If you expect a mannequin, and instead you encounter a person, what you encounter is more than what you expected. (78) In both instances, actually, the other is beyond expectations. This realisation is our entrance into ethics, for when confronting the other I cannot “see what she sees when she faces me. Because I cannot see myself, the content of her consciousness seems to form a private sphere.” (86) The realisation of a private sphere in ourselves thus begins outside of ourselves, in the realisation of the unreachability of the other: “[O]ur intentions transcend our private sphere because they begin outside of this sphere. Their starting point is our being in the world outside of ourselves. The selfhood we do transcend is, in this context, a hiddenness in the world we are in, a hiddenness that owes its origin to this world.” (88)

The third group of chapters, eight and nine, fall under the category of literature. Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno* (1856) and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) are read through a Freudian eye. Mensch uses Melville’s novel to ask who is in control in the id/ego/superego conglomerate. The answer he provides is *death*, for “[t]he identity of the self is not that of substance. It is rather that of a system and when that system is out of whack, when the Freudian parts will not work together, it is the undoing of the self and hence, death is at the lead.” (136) Conrad’s novella asks a slightly different question; Mensch

reads it as an effort “to describe the *non*recognition of evil.” (149) This question is then extended to what Mensch reads as the Holocaust’s defining characteristic, which “seems to be its inexplicability.” (151) *Heart of Darkness* provides an indirect approach to the representation of the unrepresentable: “Proceeding by indirection, literature is capable of unmasking the self-concealment of evil. In focusing on its surrounding circumstances, it describes evil in terms of such concealment” (158); “Evil, here, is recognised by what should be present but is not.” (159)

While the subtitle, *Philosophical and Literary Sightings of the Unseen*, prepares its readers for phenomenology, ethics, and literature, curiously absent from it is the language of religious belief, a definite element of Mensch’s work. Mensch functions under the assumption that his readers are believers in God and that they pray. Such axiomatic statements as, “All too often we pray for things, such as victory or gaining a desired position, and forget that there are losers in such competitions” (199) or “The most striking example of incarnation is, *of course*, Christ,” pervade these last chapters. (201, emphasis mine) However, these assumptions are made in the midst of powerful readings of the call of the face of the victim, which moves one to become a rescuer (of Jews in World War II Germany) as well as the need of Abraham to believe in the sacrifice of his son Isaac (otherwise he and God would be in a relationship of worldly exchange—of progeny in exchange for a race of believers—rather than a relationship to each other’s alterity). Perhaps the absence of “religion” from the subtitle points towards a fear of excluding an audience of non-believers from the book.

There are two guiding threads throughout these various facets of the text: firstly, as far as each of us is an individual, it is because of the not-us in us; secondly, this not-us is a call to ethics, for allowing something to exceed us opens a space for virtue. However, this respectful focus on alterity seems to take place in lieu of a reading of the alterities of more earthbound others, namely non-human animals and artificial intelligence. While the latter is never addressed, the former does make a quick appearance near the end: “Embodied, I experience [the world’s] immediate sensuous presence in much the way that other animals with similar senses do...Where we part company is in terms of the linguistic meanings that structure the human intelligibility of this sensuously present world.” (220) Alternatively, I think a reading of the non-human, earthbound other would be important in this text, which moves far too

quickly through this area of inquiry. Indeed, much of Mensch's work is centred on the Levinasian encounter with the face of the other which in itself precludes an interrogation of a relation to non-human animals. Levinas, in his 1975 essay "*Nom d'un chien ou le droit naturel*," denies a dog the ethical status of the other because there is no possibility of recognizing mortality, or logos, in its eyes. This becomes problematic when Mensch equates the face with Derrida's concept of the trace, which is done throughout the text but most explicitly in the subheading "The Face as the Trace of God." (170) While the question of the animal occupies much of Derrida's later thought, as early as in *Of Grammatology* (1967) he sets out the trace (as opposed to the logocentric sign) to include non-human animals. In this sense it is difficult to couple the human-only face with the more open trace. Even a later essay of Mensch's dealing specifically with the animal, "The Intertwining of Incommensurables: Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*" (2007), merely concludes that the animal, like the divine, is within us, and thus another example of the other-within. What is needed here is not so much a reading of the animal within, but rather of the animal without: the potentiality of accessing that which is not one's self may be found in an openness to the trace of the non-human animal. This trace could then rework the question that Mensch poses at the end of his book: "Who is the other that ultimately structures the world?" (225) Perhaps an alternative idea to consider would be *what* the other may be, rather than just who.

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Nietzsche on Gender: Beyond Man and Woman

Frances Nesbitt Opperl

Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005; 221 pages.

It is generally accepted in many circles that Nietzsche was a malignant misogynist who ferociously vituperated women. Frances Nesbitt Opperl attempts to exonerate Nietzsche from this charge in her book *Nietzsche on Gender: Beyond Man and Woman*. Opperl suggests that a close analysis of Nietzsche's writings will reveal that these misogynistic tendencies are merely attempts to dismantle humanity's "reliance on dichotomies,"

particularly in reference to the man-woman binary. (1) In this destruction of duality, women are not the sole beneficiaries; in fact, once these antiquated conceptions of women are disassembled, opinions on men, women's "dichotomous counterpart," will also be simultaneously dismantled in the process. (1) Once the "binary opposition between man and woman" is in ruins, humanity will be able to understand gender and sexuality in more nuanced terms. (1) According to Oppel, Nietzsche's works are especially conducive to multiple interpretations, due to the prevalence of literary devices that not only "destabilize fixed meaning and confound identifications" (89), but also unlock a hermeneutical vacuum that can only be filled by "human interpretation." (194) This "empty space" will permit humanity to go beyond conventionally accepted precepts on gender and sexuality and move towards future possibilities. (1)

In order to understand Nietzsche's "demolition projects" on gender and sexuality, it is necessary to concede the point that there are two different definitions of woman: the literal and the ideal. (15) The literal definition of woman refers to "a person of the female sex" while the ideal refers to "abstract concepts such as life, truth, happiness, wisdom, and sensuality" or those qualities that have become commonly associated with the eternal feminine. (15) The majority of Nietzsche's criticisms are concerned with the latter definition, as he believes that ideals in general have the ability to "slander reality and 'sanctify' lies." (15) Oppel explains that Nietzsche is disturbed by the insidious ideals of the eternal feminine that are promulgated by Christianity—those portraying women as cloistered angels and exemplars of "piety, mediocrity, moderation, tranquility, modesty, and obedience." (20) By equating the eternal feminine with Christian values, Nietzsche is able to argue that women have become associated with the "ignoble herd" (20) and the "herd morality." (29) Although Nietzsche is critical of the eternal feminine, he is also highly censorious of its binary opposite: the "emancipated women" or those women who have mobilised against male hegemony in the hope of achieving equality. (29) For Nietzsche, these women foolishly jeopardise the power they wield in the domestic sphere in order to engage in "almost masculine stupidity." (Oppel 33) Oppel explains that once Nietzsche begins his tirade on the women's movement, his criticisms on the eternal feminine subside; moreover, he becomes much more sympa-

thetic towards the latter classification, describing them as the “real women” (Oppel 30) of the world.

One of the most controversial passages in the entire Nietzschean canon is the symbolic function of the whip in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85). Before attempting to elucidate this cryptic and contentious passage, Oppel concedes the point that the whip itself “derives from a multitude of sources and explodes with many possible interpretations.” (152) Due to this multifarious nature, the reader becomes the “provisional power broker of the text’s signs” and is responsible for solving this “riddle.” (119) However, this argument should not be regarded as Oppel’s subtle attempt at dodging the discussion; rather, she proposes that the whip can be interpreted as a joke, a form of expression, or a personal memory. Aside from this more blatant example of perceived misogyny, Oppel focuses her attention on the absence of women in both *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Oppel teaches that Nietzsche’s earlier opinions on woman derive from his conception of “human possibilities and human limitations” and are derived from his studies of Greek antiquity as a philologist. (36) These studies have allowed Nietzsche to locate the “secret source” or the ancient Greek woman. Nietzsche’s conception of the ancient Greek woman follows into *The Birth of Tragedy*, where she is “scattered” throughout the work, in order to provide her with “mythic status” (65) that embodies both tragedy and myth. (88) For example, at the opening of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche informs his readers that the “continuous development of art is bound up with the *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* duality—just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations.” (Oppel 63) In other words, the progenitors of art are two male personages, which incites curiosity in the reader, who is attempting to identify the role of the woman in this miracle. According to Oppel, the removal of the female presence in this act of procreation is an attempt to draw attention to these missing female qualities.

This absence also exists in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Oppel presents two theories that help explain the omission of women. The first theory proposes that Nietzsche wished to “expunge women from existence” (154), by engaging in this type of conspicuous “misogynistic fantasy.” (154) The other theory—to which Oppel subscribes in her book—argues that Nietzsche is attacking the “heterosexual dichotomy by elimi-

nating it as a narrative possibility,” thus forcing male characters to undertake female qualities. (154) The second contention is not only a direct assault on conventionally accepted notions of human sexuality, but also an attempt at providing an analysis of the human being as an entity that is inherently composed of “multiple Selves” and embodies both masculine and feminine qualities. (186) Opiel concludes her book with a brief discussion on the current state of the sexual revolution and how Nietzsche’s desire to destroy binaries is becoming more and more evident through the use of gender-neutral language, gender-reversed roles in the workplace, and the demand for same-sex marriages. (194)

This work is of great value not only to philosophers but also to those engaged in feminist, queer, and transgender theory, as Opiel not only attempts to rescue Nietzsche from the charge of being a small-minded misogynist, but also elucidates his postmodern contentions on gender and sexuality. Those who are concerned about the level of validity and reliability of these unorthodox interpretations should take comfort in the fact that Opiel astutely supports her original interpretations with extensive and frequent references to both primary and secondary sources. In addition, Opiel was brave enough to undertake a serious study of Nietzsche’s laconic notebooks and impassioned letters that have the ability to confound and frustrate even the most erudite and patient of scholars. Opiel’s literary style, persuasive arguments and invigorating approach thrashes spurious statements and outmoded opinions that have commandeered discussion and debate on this misunderstood philosopher and his controversial opinions on gender and sexuality.

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Philosophy for Life: Applying Philosophy in Politics and Culture

Rupert Read

London, UK: Continuum, 2007; 165 pages.

Philosophy infuses both the mundane and the catastrophic, from fly-away phrases to contemporary cinema to our stakes in ecological amelioration. It is threaded in what we opt for, what we craft, and what stances we take. Philosophy is not removed theory; it is not thinking from afar. Neither is it, one hopes, lofty, or exclusive. Philosophy is, elementally,

what we participate in and communicate with and by way of; but most of all, it is what we *do*. This is Rupert Read's premise in his 2007 *Philosophy for Life: Applying Philosophy in Politics and Culture*, a collection of eight essays presented in four sections. Death, faith, pop culture, and our interconnection with/in our natural surroundings are several of the avenues Read navigates in order to depict the necessary place of philosophy. Read asks after undergirding purposes to many of our "everyday" experiences—not only their ramifications, but also whose agenda is being satisfied in what we seek, what we say, and what we believe. He does this by presenting vignettes of encounters and showing where philosophy is presumed to, does already, or should be utilised to help ourselves. Where *Philosophy for Life* leaves readers wanting, however, is in Read's failure to do what he wishes for us to do.

In the first section, *Environment*, Read wrestles with several distinctions we uphold, more specifically the Nature vs. Culture distinction and its underlying opposition, subject vs. object. Read demolishes these dichotomies and attunes us to our irremovable and indistinguishable place within nature. He holds that in taking this philosophical approach—our being *of* the world, and not with or beside it—we can cultivate more long-lasting action. "Philosophy can be a radical and powerful tool for starting something good." (136) The second part, *Religion*, takes the example of Quaker meditation and "friend"-based interactions and extrapolates their political potentiality. Read postulates that faith-based systems are marginalised in our society while a dogmatic neo-liberal series of tenets, like democracy or equality, are simultaneously asserted but not fulfilled. In the following article, Read envisions whether it is worse to die or to be dead, and the repercussions of each: anticipation, the drive of the ego, and the libidinal wish to create something to live on after we pass. Both are assumptions of *self*. The third section, *Politics*, takes on Chomsky's linguistic and political expertise, considering such terms as "Terrorism," "Democracy," and "Patriotism," and the suppositions and consequences of each. It also offers a comparison of *The Lord of the Rings* with present-day government. The fourth and last section, *Art*, offers one essay on T.S. Eliot, in which Read presses readers to heed the context and tone of his poetry, and how both point to the ultimately larger request to think on the nuances of one's life.

We can understand Read's position to be one or both of two things: either philosophy is ever-present such that we only need to be-

come aware of it; and/or philosophy is extraordinarily helpful in its ability to declutter, to “clear the way.” (92) Either way, maintains Read, philosophy helps us out of the fog, assisting us as a kind of guide. Advocated is, in a sense, philosophy for the masses—not a singular ideology to be swept away by, but a portrayal of the quest for the best answers to the questions we face, the quest for the best kind of life to live, that we all partake in, knowingly or not. But it is here that the first glimpse of trouble arises, namely in the assumption of “all-ness.” What Read does, for better (because it feels uplifting and hopeful) or worse (because it may not be true), is to equate philosophy with life—*all* life. He does this, however, without reflexively asking whether there *is* such a thing as “all life.” It looks as though for Read there is a totalised “living through,” one that encompasses gift-giving and Quakerism and fossil fuels and George W. Bush. An essential reality. And, one that is shared. It may well have bolstered his argument to at least address the possibility that there might not be a singular and secure life out there. What of liminality, multivocality, and perspectival plurality? This is of critical relevance given not only the text’s recent publication, but also the choice of examples: Peter Jackson’s filmic adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, our tarnished eco-systemic relationships, and references to WMDs and Hurricane Katrina. Calling attention to Read’s use of the term *all* might produce a fruitful shift and permit inclusion of more readers.

Read assists the reader in taking a critical account of his or her assumption by pointing to the counterintuitive and the uncomfortable. This is most successful in his *Environment* section where he demands that we ask ourselves whether empathy distances us from nature. His discussion provokes us not so much to be (a) part of nature, but rather, to see how we already are a part of it.

Braided throughout Read’s investigation is a discussion of communication—of the meaning and the implications of our utterances. Without relying on heavily technical language, Read focuses on usages gone wrong, looking specifically at turns of phrase we readily use—*to forgive or forget* and *to have a change of heart*, most notably—yet rarely question. In this sense, he offers what he demands: philosophy’s accessibility. The “user-friendliness” of the text reaches a humorous apex though when Read in his writing turns to the use of capital letters to convey importance. “(Imagine the attack on the World Trade Center repeating itself twice EVERY MONTH!)” (106); “On the one hand, we might

want to talk about ACCEPTING SOMEONE BACK INTO ONE'S LIFE, about certain kinds of behavioural changes." (76) Read does not however question the meaning behind his mechanical use of convention. Similarly, he problematises analogies or likenesses we use every day; for example he wonders if "forgiveness [is] relevantly analogous to accepting an apology" (74) but omits overtly discussing the likenesses he is himself positing. In particular, he does not ask whether his four chapters are similar in intensity and meaning.

The point is not that all cases and examples should be equal, but rather, it must be asked why these sections and not others (Philosophies of Sexuality, Food, Family), why in this order (why Environment before Religion), why this contemporary thinker in lieu of another (Noam Chomsky and not Donna Haraway), and why some sub-topics and not others (*The Lord of The Rings* instead of Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*, T. S. Eliot's approach to poetry instead of Milan Kundera's writings on fiction)? It would be helpful for Read to name his method in order to contextualise his discussion and allow the readers to understand what is at stake in all of this. Perhaps we are to assume that he takes particular examples as but interchangeable conduits used to communicate a core theme. Or, we might feel left out, unable to share in his focusing on a single novel, poet, environmental concern, or political thinker. We might also misunderstand him, believing that he views environment, religion, art, and politics as parallel or Chomsky and Eliot as equally influential. What must be considered, then, is what Read might be inherently equating by laying his text out as he does. He does, after all, speak abstractly about form in his *Art* section. Oddly, Read does not dig deeply enough into this in his own work: Why, I would ask, include *four* parts, and why *those* four parts?

There is a kind of uniformity to what Read resists including in his *Philosophy for Life*. Read refuses to call his position what it is. While Read's preferences are very much loud and clear, their *why* is not. Read asks us to do important things (unrelentingly question our assumptions) and helps clarify our thinking (in that he draws our attention to our unquestioned assumptions). But he keeps himself in part concealed. Consistency is no doubt hard to achieve. Yet it is difficult to simply let Read off the hook given that his message is one of *doing*. Ought Read not be performing what he asks us to do? At times Read comes off as pushing his personal catalogue of beliefs, from nomenclature to Abu Ghraib to

the reprioritisation of wealth distribution. While all of these might be important concerns, not only should the choice and the context of his examples be considered, so should the connection be strengthened between each overarching section and the book's larger aspirations. This text, then, is best suited for those with particular interests intersecting with Read's, or for those who can make the leap between a belief in the wholeness of philosophy and itemised sketches, or for those who wish to be quixotically reminded as to why philosophy matters. What will come across to all readers is that while philosophy cannot resolve any problems, it can add to our understanding of the problem, and enrich life.

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Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God

G.W.F. Hegel

Trans. Peter C. Hodgson

Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007; vi + 213 pages.

Continuing the ongoing project of the Oxford's *Hegel Lectures Series*, Hodgson has once more rendered an invaluable service to those interested in the philosophy of Hegel by producing a readable, precise and scholarly translation of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*. As is standard with the series, this translation includes marginal pagination referring to Jaeschke's critical edition of the German text, editorial footnotes that point to relevant passages in Hegel's other works, and a translation glossary. Hodgson has also provided a substantial editorial introduction to the text, including a lengthy summary of each lecture and the supplementary passages from a manuscript fragment on the cosmological proof and material from Hegel's 1831 lectures on the teleological and ontological proofs respectively.

The significance of this book is partly reinforced by the fact that only three days before his death Hegel signed a contract to produce a book entitled *Über das Dasein Gottes*. (1) Hodgson claims, following Jaeschke and Marheineke, that the 1829 manuscript of Hegel's lectures on the proofs essentially constitutes a draft of that projected work. (2) Given that Hegel may with some justice be said to have published only

two books in his lifetime (the *Encyclopaedia* and *Philosophy of Right* being essentially outlines for his lectures), one would think that the present translation would be greeted with substantial interest. Unfortunately, and I think mistakenly, it shall likely be overlooked.

A large part of the success of the *Hegel Lectures Series* can be attributed to the fact that the early editions of Hegel's lectures were constructed from a pool of manuscripts and student notes from lecture series delivered sometimes decades apart. The new critical editions of Hegel's lectures have at last given us the ability to examine Hegel's lectures individually so as to trace the development and changes in his approach and presentation. It is thus, ironically, unfortunate that the present manuscript, far from suffering at the hands of Hegel's original editors, was left intact to such a degree that Jaeschke's critical edition of the manuscript and appended material is, apart from a few rather insignificant changes, essentially a reproduction of the same material from the 1832 edition of Hegel's *Werke*. (4) Consequently, Hodgson was able to use the 1895 Speirs and Sanderson translation of the *Proofs* in the old *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* "as a starting point for what hopefully is [and indeed is] a much more precise and readable version." (4) Given, then, that none of the material presented in this translation is exactly "new" and that the old translation or Hodgson's summary of the lectures may easily be consulted by those interested in gaining a rough understanding of their content, I shall use the remainder of this review to argue for the significance of the present text by attempting to provide at least a plausible answer to the following question: why, at the age of sixty-one, would Hegel commit himself to writing his third, and what he must have suspected would be his last, book on the much maligned proofs for God's existence?

To answer this question we must turn to the last years of Hegel's life. Although at the peak of his career, these years were fraught with worries and dangers. Attacked from the left and right, Hegel was accused of both Christian nationalistic conservatism and atheistic liberalism. Such issues, moreover, were not merely of external concern, for Hegel's own students tended in these contrary directions of interpretation, as one sees from the letters of Daub and Feuerbach who read Hegel as a panlogist and atheist respectively. The Hegelian middle was thus already showing its cracks while, contrary to his pronouncement in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel had come in his later years to regard philosophy as

the province of a few, an esoteric study that had no immediate effects in the world. Hegel's philosophical system however, insofar as it is essentially historical, presupposed as its ground the implicitly reconciled rational state and religious community. The final blow thus arrived when the July Revolution in France appeared, on Hegel's own interpretation, to signal the collapse of the rational state and a turn in Europe to the sort of democratic regimes which he had always regarded with deep suspicion.

Although Hegel was eventually able to disabuse Daub of the panlogist interpretation of the system, Daub remarked that such interpretations would persist until Hegel published his *Philosophy of Natural Science*. One might indeed suspect that misinterpretations would persist until Hegel managed to publish his complete system of science, including most especially an elaboration of the final three sections of the *Philosophy of Spirit* with its complex syllogisms of the system, and at last provided an account of the relation between and transitions amongst the moments of the system. Yet given the trouble that revising, much less writing, the *Science of Logic* had caused him and the sheer breadth of information and topics covered in his supplementary lectures, one may reasonably suspect that, at the age of sixty-one and with failing health, Hegel could not see himself completing this monumental task. Instead he decided to write on the proofs of God's existence. While we may not be certain of the final form that such a work would have taken if Hegel had lived, a careful examination of these lectures provides tantalizing clues as to why Hegel would choose this topic for his last book.

On the surface these lectures would seem to be merely marginal in the system, tucked away as a footnote in either the philosophy of religion or history of philosophy. In 1829, however, Hegel claimed that he had chosen to speak on the proofs because he wanted to teach on an individual topic and had "chosen a topic that is connected with the other lectures given on logic." (37) One will thus find in these lectures quite useful elaborations of some of Hegel's central logical categories, including a long discussion of the relation between possibility and actuality. The virtue of Hodgson's careful and consistent translation of Hegel's terminology should thus be obvious, and those interested in the *Logic* will find much of value here. Of course, Hegel repeatedly insisted on a close tie between the *Logic* and *Philosophy of Religion* and indeed repeatedly claimed that his system and the revealed religion were essentially identical in content and differed only in form. Leaving aside the troubling as-

pect of that claim given Hegel's explanation of the relation between these categories in the *Logic*, and even taking into account his obvious interest in claiming religious orthodoxy given the constant threats of censorship, it is still difficult to see why Hegel would dedicate his final work to the proofs of God's existence, especially if it would merely serve as a somewhat loose mapping of these proofs onto various categories in his *Science of Logic*. Hegel's characterisation of the proofs in the course of the 1829 lecture, however, points to a much broader and more ambitious conception of their significance. Hegel's plan in these lectures, only partially carried through, was to treat the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs successively. While the first proof followed the path of necessity, the second followed the path of purposiveness and freedom. (170) The third and final ontological proof, transformed and reconceived in accordance with Hegel's speculative dialectical method and concepts, was taken by him as the last proof, but such that, as the identity of concept and object in the absolute, it comprehended the other two proofs as moments of itself and its own self-comprehension in otherness. This characterisation of the proofs is neither benign nor accidental, for Hegel uses precisely the same terms to characterise the final three syllogisms of the system in the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

What I am suggesting, then, is that Hegel's final work on the proofs was planned as an attempt to explain the entire logic of his philosophical system and the relation of its moments in a manner that was at once esoteric and exoteric. On the one hand, the proofs provided Hegel with an opportunity to explain and defend the central categories of, and connections between, the three parts of the system and thereby defend himself against the misinterpretations of the so-called left and right Hegelians. On the other hand, Hegel had always used the presuppositions of Christian religious consciousness to gain a foothold with those who were not yet initiated in his system, and this approach had met with a good deal of success in his highly popular lectures on religion. Could it be that in his final days Hegel had once more become confident that philosophy could become the externally universal form of consciousness (a change perhaps already announced in Hegel's poem to Stielglitz on August 27, 1831)?

If I am correct, then these lectures would have formed the basis for what would have been Hegel's crowning achievement. I thus sincerely hope that Hodgson's new translation will convince scholars to reconsider this neglected manuscript.

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Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings

Edited by Sharon M. Meagher

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007; 309 pages.

Like feminist philosophy, environmental philosophy, and philosophical approaches to racism before it, urban philosophy has found it difficult to gain entrance to the canon of philosophical fields in university curricula and scholarly publications. However, unlike these groundbreaking efforts—erstwhile, and still in some quarters, considered offbeat if not philosophically unrespectable—philosophical treatment of things urban may be found in the works of mainstream philosophers dating from Plato and Aristotle and continuing through Augustine to Francis Bacon, then Walter Benjamin, John Dewey, and most recently interventions by Habermas, Foucault, and Iris Young, among others.

If, moreover, More, Campanella, Fourier, and other classic utopians are considered philosophers and if one counts philosophically informed sociologists, planners, and architectural theorists (for instance, George Simmel, Louis Wirth, Henri Lefebvre, Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Richard Sennett, Manfredo Tafuri), there is certainly enough material to constitute an already existing philosophical tradition. That it has not been so recognised likely derives in part from the unavoidable interdisciplinarity of any study of the subject. It may also be that just as philosophers have tended to think of themselves as disembodied thinkers, so they have regarded the origins of their wisdom as deriving, if not from nowhere but themselves, then just from the ideas of prior philosophers or perhaps from university-based “schools” of thought, but not from their situation within specific urban environments.

This collection of readings both reflects and aims to promote relatively new interest in cities by contemporary philosophers. It is composed of 40 excerpts from classic and recent books and articles, includ-

ing most of those referred to above. These are divided into readings arranged according to historical periods and essays pertaining to a selection of issues: what is a city?, citizenship, urban identity and diversity, the built environment, and social justice/ethics. Readers of this journal will find about half a dozen philosophers in the Continental traditions, the best known being Benjamin, Heidegger, Habermas, and Foucault, though excerpts from them are not as centrally urban-philosophical as one might wish. The selection from Benjamin's *Paris Arcades Project* is his critique of Haussmann, while arguably his celebration of the flâneur is more philosophically relevant. The reading from Heidegger is on dwelling. Rather than excerpting from Habermas' essay on postmodern architecture or Foucault's interview on urban space and power, the collection selects passages, respectively, on the public sphere and the panopticon. There are also striking omissions. In particular, Jane Jacobs, David Harvey, Richard Sennett, and Mike Davis are not included.

Of course, no collection, or at least none that can be priced for use in undergraduate courses—the primary readership to which the book is directed—can include all pertinent readings or all appropriate authors, and as it is the text covers a lot of territory. In this respect Sharon Meagher has made a decision confronting any editor of a collection on a general theme by including a large number of short excerpts. Entries range from three to twelve pages, with only four more than ten pages. While granting that such a book could be well suited to today's students (who might be described either as more supple at filling in details than earlier generations or, alternatively, as being attention-span challenged), I see disadvantages in this strategy. It means that general contexts are not exhibited or arguments developed. It also affects one pedagogical dimension of the book, namely, the guide questions at the end of each reading, which, given the shortness of the readings, cannot be more much more challenging than tests of having done the reading.

Nonetheless, I think that given the relative paucity of affordable texts in this field (its main competitors are the Blackwell series, which are more expensive and broader than philosophy), Professor Meagher has made an appropriate choice. The book might be approached as something like a very full annotated bibliography, where the annotations are by the entry's own authors. Having read these contributions, one would have a fairly good overview of how philosophers from a variety of traditions and several ages have concerned themselves with urban-related is-

sues. The disadvantages can be partially offset by a very useful integration of the book with a website devoted to its authors and themes (www.philosophyandthecity.org). This includes course syllabi, links to cognate material, a site specifically for use by instructors, a public blog, and additional readings. There is no reason why this site could not be expanded to include links as well to those full texts of authors included in the readings that are in the public domain.

In the book's preface it is suggested that it can serve as a way to introduce general social and political philosophy. I can see it being thus employed, but only if supplemented with fuller readings of basic political-philosophical material. Even then it would be difficult to apply the book to current, mainstream liberal political philosophy. None of the philosophers in this tradition addressing cities (admittedly few) is included. Here is another place that the website could be used to expand on the book's scope, as is already begun by posting papers by Loren King on it.

All in all, publication of this text provides an introduction to philosophical approaches to cities which should be of interest to a general readership and could be usefully employed in university courses—in social science, urban studies, and other kinds of courses as well as in courses in departments of philosophy.

Frank Cunningham, University of Toronto

The Idea of Continental Philosophy

Simon Glendenning

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006; 144 pages.

Among Simon Glendenning's recent works is a book-length expansion of his introduction to the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia of Continental Philosophy* (2006). The title, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*, is revealing, if not slightly ironic, since it offers a glimpse of his main argument: there is no rational or philosophical difference between Continental and analytic philosophy, not for a lack of disagreement between the philosophers, or a gulf of tradition between the works, but because philosophically speaking, the former simply does not exist. He contends that while analytic thought can be approached as a semi-unified method, grouping

together the work done in Continental philosophy by problem, method, or even geography is problematic, and does not offer any benefits to one's understanding. Glendenning nonetheless makes clear that this strong claim is not to deny that the Continental/analytic distinction continues to hold a good deal of weight, but that there is not a unified tradition capable of including thinkers as diverse, for example, as Adorno, Heidegger, and Deleuze. Continental philosophy is thus "not ... a style or method of philosophy, nor even a set of such styles or methods, but, first of all, the other of analytic philosophy: not a tradition of philosophy that one might profitably contrast with analytic philosophy." (83–4) The first two chapters see Glendenning describe the nature of the breakdown in communication between the two camps and advocate a metaphysical "wide-angled view" in order to focus on the disputes without becoming entrenched in the squabbles. Chapters 3 and 4 outline some of the divergent paths supposedly coherent Continental philosophy has taken over the past 300 years, emphasising its major figures' disparate works, and then detailing some characteristically uncharitable and conflating mischaracterisations by analytic thinkers. The last two chapters offer suggestions as to how parties sympathetic to the Continental camp might consider the gulf and view their own work within the philosophical profession.

"Continental philosophy," Glendenning holds, is an appellation first used by analytic philosophers to promote a semblance of unity and cast certain works as other than *its* established method, giving itself "the illusory assurance it has methodologically secured itself from 'sophistry and illusion.'" (84) Here Glendenning begins to depart from other authors who have approached the problem of an analytic/Continental split, because he indicates that the very casting of this division already participates in the breakdown of communication and furthermore leads to a sort of structural incompatibility between the two sides of the division. Philosophers and students of the analytic mainstream come to learn of particular works (say, Heidegger) as that *other* way of doing philosophy, which one is to avoid if one wants to do philosophy in *this* (read: proper) way, thus creating an environment not only lacking in dialogue, but where training in one tradition potentially comes to mean eschewing the other (even and *especially* when the other does not properly constitute a tradition). Under those conditions, the very possibility of a meaningful dialogue is lacking:

the point is that for many analytic philosophers, engaging with such texts makes a demand: it requires learning to read *other* movements in the philosophical stream otherwise than as one's own *Other*. And so, first and foremost, it requires that one find that the philosophical resources typically available to one provide one an only limited competence, or even a structural *in*-competence with regard to these other philosophical resources. (34)

Glendenning lays the burden of responsibility for the breakdown in communication on the side of analytic philosophy since its way of distinguishing itself from other philosophical currents led to an extreme difficulty, if not outright impossibility, in dealing with those other philosophical currents.

Glendenning would agree that a certain charity is necessary to a proper understanding of most important philosophical works, something that does not imply uncritical assent as much as it does a willingness to be taken by, and to take seriously, the question of the other. But in locating some crucial encounters between the two camps, Glendenning notices that the argumentative care characterised by this kind of charity is largely absent. He finds his evidence in three sources: 1) accounts of talks given at a 1958 conference where Gilbert Ryle takes pains to distinguish his method of philosophizing from the "continental method," taking some rather unphilosophical, caricaturing shots at Husserl's philosophy; 2) R.M. Hare's "series of lectures on British philosophy given at a number of German centers in 1957" (74) which Glendenning characterises as a "fragrant homily to the Oxford tutorial system" (74); and 3) Geoffrey Warnock's report on the developments in twentieth-century British philosophy as a process of expelling "foreign influences" in the service of developing a superior and distinctly British manner of doing philosophy. Glendenning documents the manner in which these three particular instances serve as philosophical mis-encounters that offer a simplified account of their philosophical rivals and thus serve as paradigmatic examples of the unjustified dismissiveness that came to dominate the dominantly analytic philosophical scene's treatment of "Continental" authors.

Glendenning concludes with a discussion of the effects this institutional bifurcation of philosophy has had on the professionalisation of the discipline. Whether or not there is a *philosophical* justification for the division, its consequences are readily apparent in the demographic of philosophy departments throughout the U.K., the courses that are taught therein, the avenues for publication, and the budgets allocated for conferences and research. Drawing the distinction between “enders” and “benders,” that is, between those who are “inclined to work with a certain lack of interest in securing or maintaining the idea of the analytic/Continental divide” on the one hand, and those who demand that “we acknowledge the *de facto*, real world gulf, or at the very least, real world gulf-effects, holding apart many whose work is marked by a serious interest in (among others) the usual suspects and many analytic philosophers,” Glendenning locates his own position as an enthusiastic *ender*, who nevertheless recognises the effects of the aforementioned division and adopts some *bender* dispositions from time to time, admitting that there are strategic and political dimensions to each position. (119–20) However, in light of the fact that he denies an actual philosophical gulf between what he can identify only nominally as “two traditions,” he warns against an overly lively *bender* tendency to fashion a unified body of “Continental philosophy” out of what he sees as essentially the anglophone reception of post-Kantian philosophical scholarship. This type of response overlooks the significant differences among the philosophers and works in question in a manner paradoxically similar to the analytic “invention” of Continental philosophy and perpetuates an ineffective schism in philosophical culture.

Since the issue of argumentative charity is an important one, one might venture to ask whether (or why) analytic philosophy even owes Continental philosophy a proper assessment. Analytic philosophers would moreover disagree that there was a lack of discussion of the ideas presented by Continental figures, by arguing that (for example) Ayer’s *Language, Truth, and Logic* or Schlick’s *A General Theory of Knowledge* provide detailed confrontations of precisely that sort. In terms of Glendenning’s characterisation of analytic philosophy itself, had he considered such philosophical episodes as pragmatism (not just in its Rortyan form), certain philosophers who straddle the “gulf” more or less comfortably in their own scholarship (like Dreyfus or Føllesdal), or the challenges posed to the dominant strain of analytic philosophy at the time by

such figures as Quine, Sellars, or Davidson, analytic philosophy itself might have begun to look less like a unified tradition. These considerations might fall beyond the scope of the account Glendenning intends to give. However, he seems committed to the idea that a dialogue, which should have taken place, failed to as a result of a disingenuous misrepresentation on the part of certain analytic philosophers. Because it is not simply the particular shortcomings of the individual encounters that are at issue for him, but the very tenor of the discussions themselves, it seems noteworthy to recognise that certain partisans of Continental philosophy reciprocate a mischaracterisation and misunderstanding of analytic philosophy as well. This issue is addressed only peripherally in the book.

That said, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy* functions most effectively on several levels: first of all as a handbook for undergraduate students perplexed with these labels and struggling to make sense of what Continental and analytic philosophy are (particularly those students in staunchly analytic departments who find themselves gravitating towards the philosophers Glendenning calls “the usual suspects”), and secondly as a scanning of the current state of the discipline, offering some pragmatic expectations for those philosophers entering the fray of the job market. One of the most interesting merits of the book is that it posits a number of somewhat understated questions. For example: What is the nature of the demand issued by philosophical thinking that makes it efficacious (if it does) to seriously consider different methods and ideas? What is at stake in the discounting of certain ideas, and where and how might a properly philosophical encounter between the multifarious currents of philosophy actually take place? In that manner, Glendenning’s book serves as a prologue to further thinking about questions he will hopefully continue to engage, and thereby promote a philosophical culture that is able to advance beyond its current, tendentious bifurcation.

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