1999

Trudy Govier's *Dilemmas of Trust*

Carolyn McLeod
Dalhousie University

S. Burns

Roberts' main theme is the tension between "affirmation" and "alterity," viz. Nietzsche's conviction that in all experience a contradiction exists, so that of everything that is presented the opposite also holds good (204–12). The method here is to assert as true the principle that each definite assertion concerning experience has to be set over its other, in forms or tropes, not in propositions. There is no selection of dogma or doctrine—say, materialism over idealism, or atheism over theism—but only that which leads or directs us to live rightly and think correctly. This method, Roberts maintains, does not work against religion as such, i.e., against the religious imagination. The religious imagination is rather its weapon of defence, and Nietzsche was conscious of this. He uses that weapon against both ancient and modern versions of materialism and idealism. Though he always expresses himself as if everything were in 'process' only, Nietzsche goes further towards genuine religiosity than those whose criterion of truth and standard of excellence must be either sensuous perception or reflective thought (212–14).

This is the relation of Nietzsche to religion, if put quite abstractly. A word of caution: neither Roberts nor Nietzsche himself really understands the sceptical nature of this standpoint. Roberts makes much of Nietzsche's art of demonstrating opposites through tropes, whereby the withholding of assent comes about, as also the possibility of religious affirmation. But Nietzsche can affirm nothing in religion except the will to illusion, to masks, to superficiality; he can affirm nothing but this because for him life itself is based on illusion, deception, appearances, the necessity of perspective and of error. From this point of view everything he asserts is opposed to the positive, even though this is founded on a carefully thought out annihilation of all that is held to be true, so that all is made transient. That is, Nietzsche only arrives at a negative standpoint and can proceed no further. He thinks that this negativity is likewise a wondrous affirmation, for it is the self-transcending experience or infinite process of life. A true knowledge of religion would also comprehend the negativity of this process. The difference is that Nietzsche remains at the negative result, arguing that everything determinate—whether natural or spiritual—has an internal contradiction, that it destroys itself and consequently does not exist.

Kenneth Kierans   University of King's College

Dilemmas of Trust. By Trudy Govier. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1998. x, 246 pages. $29.95.

Trudy Govier is known to many Canadian philosophers as the author of lively introductory texts on philosophy and reasoning. She has recently produced two volumes on trust. It was Annette Baier's 1986 paper, "Trust and Antitrust"—its title alluding to American commercial legislation, but its substance

touching the core of ethics—that made trust a notable concept in contemporary philosophy. Govier's first volume, *Social Trust and Human Communities* (1997), deals with socio-political issues of trust, while *Dilemmas of Trust* discusses the role of trust in personal relationships, particularly those among friends and family members.

Whether Govier should have tried to separate the socio-political from the personal dimensions of trust is a question some readers might ask themselves. We could neither thrive nor survive without trust, according to Govier, so when it diminishes or dies out in personal relationships, usually the parties should work hard at forgiveness and reconciliation. However, as feminists have long argued, personal relations are often the sites of oppression and abuse. That is why Baier urged that sometimes it is appropriate to be "anti-trusting" rather than trusting: sometimes we need to resist any inclination towards forgiveness and will ourselves not to trust someone who has betrayed us in the past. Betrayal often has a political dimension, which explains how pervasive it can be in certain kinds of relationships. We cannot bracket the political from the personal in discussions about trust.

Govier takes issue with people who claim that most families are dysfunctional in ways that are damaging to our ability to trust in ourselves and in others. She argues that most families are "good enough" for us to experience and learn about trust. However, the term "good enough" is dangerous, for often it is used to cut off meaningful discussion: 'Ah, their relationship is good enough, so stop worrying about it.' We are not yet ready to end discussion about what sorts of family dynamics are important for teaching people how to trust well, and about whether those dynamics *are* present in most families.

Still, *Dilemmas of Trust* is interesting in its focus on those very dilemmas. A typical one is that without trust we will not find love, but only when we trust can our heart be broken. Another is that evidence of trustworthiness is often ambiguous, and so sometimes we are unsure of whether to trust at all. Some philosophers will seek rational solutions to such dilemmas, but Govier does not pretend to be able to do so. Instead, she explores everyday examples and considers what are good and bad reasons for trusting and distrusting. There is a lot of good sense in that discussion, but little in the way of formal solutions.

The dilemmas Govier discusses could be handled in more fruitful ways if she were clearer on the nature of trust and trustworthiness. She is often ambiguous about what distinguishes trust from attitudes such as confidence, reliance, and respect. At the end of the book, she describes trustworthiness as a moral stance, of being concerned about the welfare of others (210), but near the beginning she uses an example of some Nazi prisoners who supposedly were "trustworthy" to their captors (13). "Consistent trustworthiness" is the solution Govier offers to the dilemma of how to restore trust without putting oneself at grave risk of harm. However, that advice is vague in the absence of a clearly spelled-out conception of trustworthiness.

Govier has attempted to write both for the professional philosopher and for the 'lay reader,' which might explain why she avoids some of the analytical work of clarifying the nature of trust and trustworthiness. Her book is accessible and weaves together in interesting ways reports on theoretical literature, CBC phone-in testimony, philosophical argument, anecdote, sociological surveys, and silly self-help literature (of which she offers some well-aimed criticism). It also gives the first sustained treatment in ethics of "self-trust," a fascinating variant on interpersonal trust. Whatever their background, most readers will find that discussion illuminating.

Steven Burns   Dalhousie University
Carolyn McLeod   University of Minnesota

From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy. By Sudhir Hazareesingh. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. xii, 393 pages. $19.95 US paper.

The principal aim of Sudhir Hazareesingh's recent book is to challenge the prevalent scholarly opinion that modern French citizenship, as an ideology and a practice, was the creation of the Third Republic. Hazareesingh wishes to draw the attention of scholars to the largely ignored public debates during the Second Empire about citizenship, in particular as these involve considerations of decentralization. It is his contention that a conception of modern citizenship arose directly out of these ideological disputes, thus preparing the foundations for the Third Republic. He concludes his book as follows: "it was very probably because this broad sense of citizenship was not only accepted but also practiced by a very wide section of society by the late 1860s that the republic was able to establish itself, in the measured words of Littré, as 'the regime that best allows time to keep its just preponderance'" (321).

While Hazareesingh does provide a valuable summary and analysis of the views of the four most significant political groupings in the public discussions surrounding citizenship and decentralization during the Second Empire, he is unable to sustain the claim that he makes in the last sentence of his book. The problem lies less in the validity of his analysis than in the limitations of his methodology. Hazareesingh takes up the approach initiated by scholars such as Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock in their work in the history of political thought: namely, to analyze ideologies as 'speech acts' within a set of linguistic practices. While this approach can be helpful in articulating the political thought of an individual or period, it is less helpful as an explanation of the actions of those involved in political processes. Hazareesingh justifies his claim that decentralization and citizenship were interconnected and central concerns in the public debates of the Second Empire. But his further claim that these ideological articulations provided the