

# Canadian Philosophical Reviews Revue Canadienne de Comptes rendus en Philosophie

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## DIALOGUE

Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue canadienne de philosophie

Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Été/Summer 1988

### Articles

The Liberal Tradition, Kant, and the  
Pox / ROLF GEORGE

Kant's Liberalism: A Reply to Rolf  
George / LESLIE GREEN

Liberalism, Kant, Pox: A Reply to Rolf  
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Système et rupture chez Hobbes /  
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Maximizing, Optimizing, and  
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Une critique de l'interactionnisme  
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Wilson's Defense of the D-N Model /  
JONATHAN KATZ

### Intervention

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**Books Received/Livres reçus**

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**Harold I. Brown**

*Rationality.*

New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall  
1988. Pp. x+244. US\$29.50.

ISBN 0-415-00181-1.

This excellent book provides both a lucid introduction to the philosophical problem of rationality and a promising start on a solution to this problem. Brown begins with a sketch of a 'classical model of rationality' that includes central features of the most influential accounts of rationality from Plato and Aristotle through Descartes, Hume, and Kant. His discussion is not meant as serious historical exegesis, but it does catch the main features of the still standard philosophical view that rational beliefs are those that follow necessarily when universally valid rules are applied to appropriate premises.

Brown shows the power and plausibility of this view and establishes its essential connection to epistemological foundationalism, which provides it with the only way of avoiding infinite regresses in the justification of premises and rules. This tie to foundationalism is the basis of his first line of criticism of the classical model of rationality. Foundationalism, he argues, requires basic premises and rules that are self-evident in the sense that their truth or validity is apparent to all those who understand them. But, he maintains, deftly deploying recent anti-foundationalist arguments (especially ones derived from Sellars), there is no set of self-evident truths capable of providing adequate foundations of knowledge. Although this attack on self-evidence is effective, Brown is less successful in showing that foundationalism requires self-evidence. He offers some good criticism of the Popperian idea that foundationalism can dispense with self-evident basic truths by employing a purely falsificationist methodology. But his brief discussion of more recent efforts (by Alston and others) to provide non-self-evident foundations of knowledge is not sufficient to exclude this sort of 'modest foundationalism.' In particular, he does not explore the possibility that the Sellarsian epistemology on which he relies in his critique of the classical model of rationality might itself sustain a viable foundationalism without self-evidence.

Brown is more successful in attacking the classical model as incompatible with the scientific practices that are our best examples of rationality. He first shows the failure of classical accounts (via both

inductive logic and Popperian falsificationism) of scientific rationality. Next, he argues that Kuhn's analysis of science shows it to have central features inconsistent with the classical model. Specifically, Kuhnian revolutions involve changes in the fundamental rules of scientific practice that are incompatible with the classical view of rationality as grounded in unchanging (universal and necessary) rules. Brown does a good job of separating the valid core of Kuhn's analysis from the sometimes questionable details of his formulations (for example, the overly simple insistence on a crisis preceding every revolution). Also, he argues convincingly that Kuhn's account should not be read as undermining the rationality of science but as suggesting an alternative to the classical model of this rationality.

Brown provides a sketch of his own version of such an alternative in his last two chapters. The alternative makes rationality a function of *judgment*, defined as 'the ability to evaluate a situation, assess evidence, and come to a reasonable decision without following rules' (137). He argues that judgment is more fundamental than and presupposed by rule-governed decisions, that its fallibility is no reason for denying it a central epistemic role, and that it is properly exercised only by those with adequate knowledge and training. So understood, judgment is, he points out, very similar to the Aristotelian ethical notions of deliberation, practical wisdom, and equity and to the notions of skill employed by Polanyi and Putnam in recent epistemological discussions. Finally, he maintains that the function of judgment can be integrated into an entirely naturalistic account of the mind, with no reference to nonphysical entities or properties.

Given this notion of judgment, Brown's model of rationality is developed in three steps. First, he takes agents rather than states or actions of agents (beliefs, decisions, and the like) as the primary loci of rationality. Second, he regards agents as rational primarily in virtue of their abilities to make adequately informed judgments. Third, he introduces a social element into rationality by maintaining that beliefs based on judgments are rational only if they are 'submitted to the community of those who share the relevant expertise for evaluation against their own judgements' (187). The resulting view of rationality is, as Brown notes, close to that of Kuhn, who insists that the rational authority of science is ultimately grounded in nothing but the expert judgments of the scientific community. He adds some helpful (but inevitably too brief) comments on the relation of rationality to truth and objectivity and on the nature and significance of rational disagreement. The latter topic is very nicely illustrated by

a fine summary of the conflict between Galileo and his Aristotelian critics.

There are many points at which Brown's account needs further development and support. He seems to me particularly vulnerable in his defense of the value of a form of rationality that, on his own admission, is significantly weaker than classical rationality and for which 'in many areas there is no guarantee that we are more likely to achieve or approach truth by proceeding rationally than by, for example, simply picking views at random' (226). He also entirely neglects the crucial question – raised, for example, by Michel Foucault – of the extent to which rational procedures are tied to social power structures and serve to constrain rather than liberate human thought and action. Overall, however, Brown has provided a fine introduction to the philosophical problem of rationality and sketched a potentially very fruitful approach to its solution.

**Gary Gutting**

University of Notre Dame

**Ken Bryson**

*Flowers and Death.*

Ontario: University Press of Canada 1987.

Pp. xii+246. Cdn\$21.85. ISBN 0-921801-06-8.

Although the reader is guided through such diverse paths as death education and Aristotelian physics, the message of the text remains consistently clear: it is a statement validating the belief in personal immortality based upon Christian perspectives. In the effort, Bryson manages to sustain a Thomistic epistemological framework while he significantly modifies a central Heideggerian motif. The individual is not simply a 'being-towards-death,' but, as he puts it, a 'being towards the resurrection' (39). We have here a unique and valuable text which is a proper contribution to philosophical as well as thanatological discussion. It introduces the reader to key thinkers such as

Sartre and Marcel, and bears an inspiring conviction that death has no final claim upon the person.

The text appears to be intended for the beginning student in philosophy and is an outgrowth of the author's lectures on dying and aging, and existential phenomenology. It contains a number of worthwhile features which enhance its value as a textbook. Following each chapter are excellent leading questions which are designed to engage students in open and honest dialogue on subjects related to death, no easy task given our cultural mechanisms for denial. Along with an excellent bibliography, including allusions to sources in art and music, some beautiful art prints have been included in the second edition. Especially intriguing is the print by Kollowitz entitled 'The Call of Death' (197, second edition). The class exercise on the 'death sentence,' in which each student must imagine her own impending death, is directly challenging and engages the individual in a personal confrontation with mortality and its meaning through time and memory (53-4). Moreover, Bryson provides sound advice concerning the pre-arranging of funerals and, more importantly, advocates discussing death openly with family. This calls for courage and integrity with the profound hope that students may free themselves from patterns of cultural denial in which they may be trapped.

Bryson's discussion of existentialism is an enticing introduction for the new student. His own outlook seems to be deeply influenced by Marcel, whose distinctions between 'being' and 'having,' and 'mystery' and 'problem' are crucial for students who are almost thoroughly immersed in a positivistic climate. In his rich remarks on love and loss, we again detect Marcel's inspiration whereby loss is perceived within the horizon of mystery rather than as problematic. This is a striking corrective to the prevailing wave of materialism within our culture and its perverse reinforcement of the denial of death.

Perhaps the most original contribution in his book lies with the author's interesting distinction between death as representing either one of two modes: as 'nothing there,' or as 'nothing-there' (200-2). He makes a rather bold attempt to clarify the nature of death and, for him, 'nothing there' (unhyphenated) denotes the absence of being and conveys pure privation. On the other hand, death as 'nothing-there' signifies the removal of the ground of the possibility of there being either absence or presence. He elucidates this distinction within a Heideggerian framework while, at the same time, proposing to go beyond Heidegger. Bryson argues that death is to be viewed in this latter way as 'nothing-there,' and posits the primacy of being over the

facticity of death. He views death and life in terms of a dialogue between being and consciousness. At death, being no longer discloses itself through consciousness, yet being still maintains its primacy over consciousness, for although it refuses 'to be' for consciousness, it still is. Bryson concludes that we are all 'beings towards the resurrection' (239).

The implications of this notion are interesting. Bryson sharply criticizes 'ostentatious funerals' as being the result of a 'thanatological confusion' whereby participants 'fail to distinguish between death as it is to the living and death as it is to the dead' (210). With a 'nothing-there' notion of death, we would, instead, be inclined to 'celebrate' dying itself rather than the brute fact of death and, in so doing, we assert the primacy of being (211). This has obvious links with the hospice philosophy in which the dying are engaged upon a process of living as fully as possible.

All of this attests to the many merits which the text embodies. Yet, there are some underlying flaws. One major weakness, admitted to by the author, lies in the Christian bias with which he carries out his investigation. Of course, in itself this poses no problem. However, within his text it does conflict with his proposed phenomenological methodology. His Christian perspective is evident throughout his work even though he insists upon an examination of all presuppositions. His personal religious beliefs, oddly enough, remain exempt from the eidetic reduction which the phenomenological method requires. By advocating a phenomenological method without strictly adopting it, the text performs an injustice to the beginning student in philosophy who needs to learn the art of raising all fundamental questions. Since philosophy consists in, as Bryson puts it, the 'radical activity' (38) of examination of all presuppositions, his own approach seems to betray itself. Moreover, his religious claims preclude allowing the student to confront a variety of other possible viewpoints which conflict, such as the materialist position which adheres to a mind-brain identity thesis excluding any spiritual element.

A second flaw in the text lies in its style, evidenced in two respects. First, the book discloses a bundle of issues which are loosely connected. Topics run the gamut from Aristotelian locomotion, Alcoholics Anonymous, senior citizens, Paul Tillich's ontology, to immortality of the self. This is a wide bite for the undergraduate, who may understandably feel overwhelmed and confused. By trying to incorporate all related concerns, Bryson sacrifices balance. A more thorough discussion of selected issues would have been an easier dose to swallow.

Second, Bryson claims, at least for his initial chapter, that his intended reader is the beginning student in philosophy (38). Yet his writing style shifts. Sections of the text appear which seem more geared for advanced students. He demonstrates an inconsistency in style, and the reader is not sure to what audience he addresses specific issues, such as, for example, the later chapters which treat the phenomenology and the metaphysics of death. At times, his style obfuscates his substance.

A final area of weakness lies in Bryson's occasional lapses regarding terminology. For instance, he classifies his personal orientation as leaning towards 'mysticism.' His use of 'mysticism' appears rather vague and needs clarification, and his apparent equivocation of 'mysticism' and 'mystery' is questionable (38-9). Furthermore, despite his appealing discussion of existentialism, he oversimplifies the many complex distinctions when he simply grounds the differences upon religious beliefs, that is, Christian versus atheist (118). His reductionism fails to consider the various intricacies within existentialism which the student needs to appreciate. Moreover, he provides a curious definition of the ontologist as one who seeks to provide insight into the 'nature of death as it is to the dead' (141). I'm not sure all ontologists would agree.

Regardless of the flaws, we have a commendable book in both a philosophical as well as thanatological sense. While only certain sections may be inappropriate for the student, the heart of the text speaks out loud. Bryson presents us with a rich and timely message of assurance. In his spirited critique against stereotyping the elderly, an endemic practice in a culture which idolizes youth and vanity, he provides a sensitive perspective on aging. In doing so, he rightfully demands a reorientation towards death. Death, instead of being mutually exclusive from life, is seen with a fresh vision. It is the continuation of a process, and our 'being towards the resurrection' inspires a vital hope in a despairing world.

**Michael Brannigan**

Mercy College

**Donald A. Crosby**

*The Specter of the Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism.*

Albany: State University of New York Press  
1988. Pp. xii+456.

US\$49.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-88706-719-0);

US\$19.95 (paper: ISBN 0-88706-720-4).

This book makes a convincing case for two claims: that the nihilistic spirit, although having its source in human nature and thus being universal and perennial, is especially pervasive in Western culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and that recognizing and challenging the intellectual assumptions on which it is based can free us from its negative consequences while granting us the valuable insights which are the core of truth within it.

Part One introduces the subject by providing a history of the use of the term 'nihilism,' showing nihilism's range through literature, religion and philosophy, and dividing the subject into five types: political, moral, epistemological, cosmic, and existential. Once Crosby has introduced each type, though, he limits himself to dealing with religious and philosophical views, not only dropping the subject of political nihilism (although not that of political *philosophy*) but also explicitly choosing not to deal with the two World Wars and the holocaust as formative social experiences (119). That this can be a philosophical loss is demonstrated by Blanshard, who covers much the same ground, briefly but with profound insight, in the first chapter of *Reason and Analysis*.

Part Two presents arguments for nihilism and Part Three examines religious sources of nihilism, identifying six assumptions in the Christian tradition which have played a fundamental role in creating the cultural background for the development of nihilism. An example of these is that religion and theism are identical and therefore loss of faith in a personal God must result in the loss of the religious dimension of life.

But the core of the book, taking up nearly half of it, is Part Four, 'A Critical Look at Philosophical Sources of Nihilism.' This section is an extensive survey of modern philosophy and identifies seven more assumptions, fundamental to the philosophies of this period, which lead to nihilism. Examples of these are the idea that reliable truth can best be attained through the application of the method of science

to philosophy and other disciplines; the radical disassociation of fact from value; and an emphasis on the epistemological and metaphysical primacy of the will. Thus this section, together with the previous one, provides the basis for Crosby's second claim, which he develops most thoroughly (if not exclusively – he sometimes seems impatient to get started on this part of his task) in Part Five, 'Final Appraisal.'

The range of Crosby's sources is broad and sometimes surprising, both in what he includes and what is missing. He draws on literature as well as religion and philosophy and includes Kafka and Camus, Nietzsche and Sartre, as would be expected, as well as C.S. Lewis, Stirner, and Baier, but not Musil, and only half an endnote is on Kierkegaard and there is nothing on Derrida (in spite of a claim to the contrary on the back cover). Also surprising is his presentation of the work of several significant thinkers, but only as derived from secondary sources. One example concerns Gadamer and another concerns Marx. What he has to say about Gadamer (326-7; 398-9 nn. 18, 20) simply reports the views of Rorty (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*) and the exposition of Gadamer's thought by Faulconer and Williams. His exposition of Marx's criticism of Stirner (299) is just a report of Hook's exposition of it in *From Hegel to Marx* and the only other mention of Marx is in an endnote (400-1 n. 6) that demonstrates acquaintance with the *Communist Manifesto* but otherwise just reports the Marx scholarship of others (MacIntyre, Arendt, and Löwith). His survey of Western philosophy from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth includes the most important figures, such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Mill. But even though he makes good use of his material to support his second claim, his survey is based on conventional interpretations that do not justify the amount of space he devotes to their exposition. (This, however, may depend upon his intended audience. There is some indication that Crosby intends this book not for a general professional audience or for specialists but for advanced undergraduates such as those he teaches in a course entitled 'Nihilism in the Modern Age' [ix; also see introductory anecdote about an undergraduate student, 1-3]. Certainly Crosby writes very clearly and he makes complex thought easily accessible. If he is aiming at such an audience, this could account for occasional repetitiveness in his exposition as well.)

Part Five is easily the best part of this book. Crosby gets to the heart of the nihilistic spirit in his recognition of our culture's demands for absolute certainty and its yearning for perfection. He has previously referred approvingly to Kant's insight that 'it makes no sense

to yearn for a knowledge that transcends the very conditions making knowledge possible' (284) and this could easily serve as the theme of Crosby's critical insights as well (at least, with regard to cognition – but, *mutatis mutandis*, with regard to ethics and values also). When he turns to presenting positive insights that can be derived from understanding the roots of nihilism, Crosby is in our culture's tradition of wisdom that has its sources in Stoicism and the Old Testament, and so appears not to aspire to nor does he achieve originality of insight. But to reject the one-sidedness and chest-beating of the bleak nihilistic view of human existence and to offer in its place, with dignity and without melodrama, that which is life-affirming, wise and true – that is no mean achievement and one ought not ask a great deal more.

The book contains separate indexes of names and subjects, a bibliography, and substantive endnotes. The endnotes deserve special comment because they are frequently very rewarding, often containing significant insights and being more economically written than the text.

### **Judith McBride**

Central Connecticut State University

### **Jacques Derrida**

*The Truth in Painting.*

Trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987.

Pp. xvi+386.

US\$49.95 (cloth: ISBN 0-226-14323-6);

US\$19.95 (paper: ISBN 0-226-14324-4).

*There is no single genre or focus for this text though there are recurring themes which are addressed from various contexts throughout the work. For systematic and hermeneutically inclined readers, critics or thinkers, this text will defy the closure of interpretation they seek. However, it is a text which serves to problematize the relations*

between aesthetics, the visual art object, death, writing, commentary, autobiography and the political. From the four essays contained in this text, one can find 'ghostly' repetitions of Derrida's claims and analyses from his earlier texts; namely, *Dissemination* and *Glas*. he comments on his own positions, reiterates his themes, and moves on. In addition, his styles in this text vary from that of a rhetoric of metaphysics, to an aphoristic disjointed aggregate of paragraphs, to a journal or diary with dates (fictional perhaps) marking off one section from another, to finally, a return to a more traditional essay style – with gaps and as a pseudo-dialogue (with no other). No unity of styles then, no unity of argument this masterful work of Derrida offers a plethora of levels, suggestions, provocations and reminiscences from earlier works. This issue of framing – ergon to parergon – perhaps frames the text as a whole, if one insists on such a formulation. But this is problematized as multiple, hallucinatory, ghostly, and so forth rather than holding still for analysis.

The first essay, 'parergon,' fills half the finished text and provides a detailed response to Kant's Third Critique via the issue of parergonality. Tracing Kant's use of examples and the 'other logic' that they indicate, Derrida frames Kant's text via its own marginalia; a familiar deconstructive strategy.

The second essay, prompted historically by the paintings of Valerio Adami, notably those for *Glas*, Derrida's monumental text on Hegel and Genet, responds to the response with a questioning of the relations between script and painting – the writing of images – in and on Adami's work.

Thirdly, Derrida, increasingly anecdotal and disjunctive in form, offers some ruminations on another visual display; namely, 'The Pocket Size T1 ingit Coffin.' Named, 'Cartouches,' the essay speculates on what Derrida calls 'the topology of the cartouche'; again an issue of framing, containing what cannot be contained or framed – in this case, death itself – as being without example. Forming a diary, in appearance at least, Derrida displays open frustration in the face of this project and topic, and yet offers what could be seen as a metonymic chain of associations provoked by the topic itself. Writing here takes on the guise thus of biography, or as Nietzsche put it, as autobiography, or better as Derrida would later call it, autothanatography.

Lastly, Derrida returns to a more systematic and in appearance philosophic issue, and indeed more familiar territory: Heidegger on the work of art. Responding to Shapiro, whose interpretation of

Heidegger's 'Van Gogh' is questioned, Derrida offers a suggestive ending to the text on frames via the motif again of ghostly, hallucinatory projections and parergonality. There is no end to the mediating frames which allow us to see, to perceive, to think, to act, to write, for Derrida. Indeed, there can be no final word on the subject.

Concerning the translation, one must admit that it is masterful and remains true to the spirit of the author of the original. However, at times the English – that is British English – colloquial usage (e.g., 'chatty') ruptures the flow of the text by marking the place of origin of the translators. Of course, such a signature by a translator, Derrida himself would argue, is profoundly unavoidable.

**Irene E. Harvey**

Pennsylvania State University

**C. Dyke**

*Evolutionary Dynamics of Complex Systems:  
A Study in Biosocial Complexity.*

Don Mills, ON and New York: Oxford  
University Press 1987. Pp. 176.

Cdn\$59.95: US\$35.00. ISBN 0-19-505176-9.

There is irony in the fact that this book is being released at a time when the global society faces an immense entropy debt which industrialized nations have accumulated over decades of unrestricted economic growth. The book is a timely one indeed, with a message to academics from virtually all disciplines, the majority of whom remain firmly rooted in what the author calls 'the Hobbesian fallacy of viewing society and culture as overlays rather than as integrated co-determinants of life.'

Recent efforts by sociobiologists to amalgamate sociology and biology provide Dyke with an opportunity to delineate a strategy of investigative practices built on the evolutionary dynamics of complex biosocial systems. So far, sociobiology has relied on synchronic reductionist theories to seek explanations of social complexes, relating them

to evolutionary trajectories rooted at lower levels of complexity. By rejecting synchronic reduction, Dyke delineates in great detail and, somewhat repetitively, the reasons why one must insist on diachronic continuity in order to account for historicity of investigative processes. Thus, the sociobiologist who denies indeterminacies in the investigative process denies at the same time the historicity of the conceptualizing process; yet the investigative process itself is a social activity and part of a secularized dialectic based on methodology, epistemology and ontology at what Bourdieu called 'structured structuring structures.' Thus, systems do not exist independently of man's interpretation; they are created by defining an investigative space out of which, in Garfinkel's sense, explanations emerge set against a 'contrast space' of alternative possibilities.

Biological evolution is introduced by Dyke as a prime example throughout the book where structuring structures emerge in an enabling as well as a constraining process. In contrast to Ernst Mayr's hierarchical system of 'nested structures,' but in line with the notion that organized possibility space represents structure by definition, Dyke successfully argues that 'nested structures' constitute a system of complexly interacting structures which he calls a 'level-interactive-modular array.' By applying a succession of constraints to a system with many degrees of freedom, a possibility space is created. Although these constraints are diachronically hierarchical, synchronically they 'nest' in a complex interactive way. The material condition, then, for a modular phase to emerge is the successive availability of stable, phase-separated modules.

In his discussions of some of the major neo-Darwinian hypotheses, Dyke relegates game theory to a theory of bookkeeping rather than an explanatory theory. For example, Hamilton's parameter of inclusive fitness, when entered into a payoff matrix, introduces teleology of game-winning as a closure condition. As preferred alternatives, Slobodkin and others have introduced 'survival' and 'failure to survive' into game theory. By relating game payoffs to the Darwinian notion of 'negative selection,' the game assumes an explanatory meaning relative to survival of various species. With reference to the players of the evolutionary game, they are excluded from contributing to teleological closure, since they are not aware that they are players. Closure on the list of players can be found by counting species, higher taxa, populations, individual organisms and breeding pairs. Of course, identification of the players is itself system-dependent and

requires a local ontology to be established by identifying players and game together as interdependent entities.

After a thorough elaboration of a non-reductionist view of biological evolution, Dyke broadens the focus of discussion to include evolutionary theory of social structure. A large section of the book aims at disclaiming as scientifically invalid the Judeo-Christian and Liberal political mythologies which view man as the result of a linear additive hierarchy of structurings. In Garfinkel's terms, the opposing views are whether nature serves either as a neutral contrast space to human convention or as a contrast space that participates in human life in a morally relevant sense. At this point, Dyke introduces the game bridge as a laboratory surrogate of what he calls a scaled-down system which can accommodate the distinction between nature and convention. In my opinion, this is an ill-fated move for those readers who know nothing of the game. The mere jargon used by players is enough to confuse the issue, let alone the complicated conventions of the game. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern the essentials from this rather drawn-out exercise: the assignment of natural, artificial and conventional meaning to human affairs. Dyke's argument leads to the conclusion that the roots of conventional agreement are not conventional for, if they were, there would be no continuity between the biological and the social. The challenge to the sociobiologist is to define the constraints nature puts upon man's attempts to set conventions, and to reassess the boundary determinations in order to remove the hitherto established distinctions between nature and convention. To do this successfully, the sociobiologist must discard the *a priori* assumption that biological conditions are deterministic of social phenomena. His task, Dyke argues in agreement with Bourdieu, is under the same restrictions as the historian's: structuring structures are generated in such a way that at any given stage the resultant phenomena cannot be reduced synchronically to any one dimension, although their genesis in terms of the material conditions out of which they arise is known.

An academically most interesting and, in today's world, most opportune model of what Dyke calls 'negotiating social space,' is represented in the formative dynamics of cities. As dissipative structures, they are the equivalent of open systems in a thermodynamic state of nonequilibrium. They arise as 'spontaneous' configurations within an energy flux from which they are phase separated. As flux changes take place, the requirements on the ability to exploit the available energy may become more stringent, thereby creating selec-

tion pressure for increased efficiency. With reference to the social system of a city, the demand for increased efficiency may depend, in Adam Smith's terms, on the introduction of division of labour. This leads to an increase in complexity within the system of systems, although the system's constituents become simpler due to specialization. Increased complexity calls for increased structural interdependence and the devices to maintain internal coherence of the larger system.

Within the theoretical framework concerning dissipative structures, Dyke explores the theme of the Jacobean cities from Jane Jacob's 'Cities and the Wealth of Nations' and 'The Economy of Cities.' Markets, as identifiable spatio-temporal structured structures of a city represent the trading process as a gate through which gradient tracking flow takes place towards an equilibrium in Boltzman's sense. To use the small marketplace as a paradigm in economic discussion is misleading, since small markets are small entropy producers where entropy debt is absorbed by the market participants themselves. In contrast, the modern capitalist economy incurs an enormous entropy debt from which it is difficult to recover. Oversimplified notions based on traditional economic equilibrium models rather than on dissipative structure theory continue to obscure present day reality. As Dyke puts it: 'Trash, soot and sludge seems an annoying and inconvenient byproduct of our lives and activities rather than a necessary feature of them. But without a gradient down which material flow can cascade, no dissipative structure can remain stable. Genuine equilibrium looms as the heat death of our civilization.'

Overall, the book is well written, although in parts, the language is unnecessarily complicated. The content of what Dyke conveys quite successfully is so broad, that the appended notes to each chapter are essentially helpful to a primary readership. They also dispel the notion of superficiality one might otherwise be tempted to assign to some of the chapters.

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George Englebretsen, ed.

*The New Syllogistic.*

New York: Peter Lang 1987. Pp. xii+322.

US\$41.50. ISBN8204-0448-9.

'The New Syllogistic' refers to the program of Sommers and his followers. It is primarily a challenge to a number of dogmas in the philosophy of language. One who already has some access to the philosophy of language – knows something about the work of Frege, Russell and Quine – but is unfamiliar with Sommers' work should read the tenth paper in this anthology; it is by the editor, and is the most lucid account of Sommers' program.

Frege's analysis of general statements has (since the rise of the analytical school of philosophy) gone unchallenged. According to it, a sentence like 'All actors are buffoon' is correctly analyzed as 'Everything is such that if it is an actor then it is a buffoon;' the latter sentence, and thus the former, is not of the subject/predicate form, since the quantifier word 'All' is not really a part of the subject 'All actors' but implicit in the function 'Everything is such that...'. Englebretsen explains in his paper that the reason this dogma and others like it in the philosophy of language prevail rests on an even more fundamental dogma: the inference power of Aristotle's syllogistic is much weaker than that of Frege's first-order logic.

Three types of inference are generally held to be beyond the reach of the former but well within that of the latter: those involving singular terms, those involving relationals and those involving truth-functions. And if first-order logic requires a particular analysis of a certain type of expression (e.g., that a general statement be of the quantifier/predicate form and not of the subject/predicate form) then given the superior inference power of first-order logic, it is plausible to suppose that this analysis is correct, however unnatural it might seem.

A number of papers in the anthology deal directly with undermining the presupposition that the inference power of first-order logic exceeds that of syllogistic. These are all very fine papers, though a few are quite technical. The least technical is Sommers' paper 'The Calculus of Terms' and it mainly consists of an informal account of a calculus for classical term logic; the aforementioned types of inference which are generally held to be beyond the reach of syllogistic are informally shown to be within its reach. Sommers closes his paper

with an invitation to examine the powers and extent of syllogistic.

A number of the contributors have accepted his invitation. The very elegant contribution by Lockwood rewards careful study by the sophisticated reader. For he uncovers all the non-Boolean operations that Sommers' term logic needs to render it equal in expressive power to Frege's first-order logic with identity. In his paper, Noah also accepts Sommers' invitation and brings Quine along for company; in Noah's own words. '... I would like in this paper to use another well developed system of term logic, Quine's predicate functor logic, for Sommers' neo-Aristotelian program.' Both Lockwood and Noah show formally that the types of inference which are held to be beyond the reach of syllogistic are within its reach.

The three papers by Swiggart, Slater and Bacon respectively concern Sommers' relationship to his precursors and contemporaries. The principle aim of Swiggart's paper is to examine and compare the work of De Morgan and Sommers as term logicians, and he decides after doing so that Sommers has been able to exploit far more effectively than De Morgan the potentiality within subject/predicate logic for analysis of natural locutions. Slater's paper deals with the question of how Frege's logic can be modified to take into account Sommers' criticisms. Bacon's papers tries to locate precisely Sommers' system of syllogistic with respect to Boolean logic as well as up-to-date versions of modern quantificational logic.

The paper by Sayward argues that Sommers' version of term logic compares unfavorably with free logic on matters having to do with existence and non-designating singular terms. Englebretsen is to be commended for including a few papers that point out possible weaknesses in Sommers' program. For instance, in his paper, Strawson challenges the dual claim that Sommers' term logic is faithful to the semantic-syntactic structure of natural language and that first-order logic is not.

Lack of space precludes describing each of the five remaining papers in the anthology. I'll only say a few words about the paper that is most germane for those of us who teach courses in elementary logic and critical thinking. A central thesis in Sommers' program is that any statement can be expressed as a pair of terms where each one has at least one of two distinct distribution values. This points the way for Friedman in his paper, to formulate three necessary and sufficient rules for syllogistic validity: (1) the distribution value of each end term must be consistent throughout the syllogism. (2) The middle term must be distributed in just one of its occurrences. (3) The

number of negative premises must be equal (in quantity) to the number of negative conclusions (at most one of course). Though these rules can be improved upon, they are better – even in the manner in which Friedman states them – than any rules for syllogistic apt to be found in a standard text such as Copi's. Friedman's paper illustrates but one of the many ways in which Sommers' program can be exploited for pedagogical purposes.

The time is long overdue for Sommers' program to take hold. The papers in this anthology – all of high quality – will, I sincerely hope, speed us toward that end.

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**Michael Heim**

*Electric Language: A Philosophical  
Study of Word Processing.*

New haven: Yale University Press 1987.

Pp. xi+305. US\$19.95. ISBN 0-300-03835-6.

Heim's book has an extraordinary range of content, but three themes emerge most clearly. First is a phenomenological study of the psychic transformation that Heim attributes to the experience of writing computerized text. Second is a Heideggerian critique of the theory of transformative technologies as explicated from the work of Eric Havelock and Walter Ong. Third is an exegesis of past attitudes toward writing and language, with particular attention to the period of Ancient Greece. The second two themes are nominally offered as interpretive or analytic guides to the first one, but there is enough development of them both to warrant attention by readers who may have little interest in the philosophical study of computerized writing that is the central topic of the book. I will review these three themes in reverse order here; the best should always be saved for last.

Heim's history is a tale of heroes and villains (much like Heidegger's) in which influential thinkers create philosophical systems that

reflect the linguistic capacity for rich (or impoverished) cultivation of being. Heim admires Heraclitus, for example, because his philosophy releases the power of metaphor and ambiguity. He criticizes John Dewey, on the other hand, for stressing a problem-solving view of thinking that trivializes the contemplative thought. Heim identifies a link between Platonic and Medieval philosophy and the psychic experience of physical resistance to thought, of thought's final triumph in the form of permanence, and of privacy and solitude that would have been associated with the writing of manuscripts and the production of books. The historical themes are intended to augment Heim's study of the electronically processed word. As he notes, 'we can glimpse our own limits by contrasting current reality apprehensions with those of previous epochs' (225). In using thinkers of classical stature as exemplars or ideal types, however, Heim invites reluctance from readers who suspect that he has not quite gotten the heroes and villains right. This is unfortunate, since it doesn't really matter for Heim's main thesis. Heim has not done enough to convince us of his reading of the history of philosophy, but he has done more than is prudent to generate sympathy for his phenomenological study of the processed word.

Much the same can be said for Heim's treatment of Havelock and Ong, vis à vis Heidegger. The general point is that Havelock and Ong (who are quoted approvingly) have failed to recognize the way that changing linguistic technologies alter not only the psychology of human beings, but the world itself. Heidegger shows, for example, how being loses its time values of simultaneity and repetition when language becomes confined to the mental interstices between reading and writing, where being is forced to assume a sequential and representational (hence eternal) guise. In Heim's reading, Havelock and Ong miss these points because they see psychic transformation taking place in response to the linguistic form that is imposed upon communication by its medium, and ignoring the transformation of the world that takes place when alternative possibilities of linguistic form arise as a response to technological inventions.

In my view, Heim is attributing too much to Heidegger and too little to Ong in this debate. Ong and, for that matter, McLuhan (whom Heim maligns), never thought of word technologies (including the alphabet and the printing press) *merely* as transmitters of a linguistic form. Heim understates the significance of the medium as it is understood by Ong and McLuhan. A medium is more than something which runs between two points and carries information. A techno-

logical medium (like a chemical medium) is something in which agents are immersed; it is worldlike, in other words, and always has been since McLuhan initiated studies of technological transformation in the 1950s. Heidegger, on the other hand, often understates the role that technology played in the transformation and eclipse of *logos* in the early days of philosophy; technology is a modern phenomenon to be contrasted with the more benign *technē* of the Greeks. Heim might have left out the little spat between Heidegger and Ong altogether, as far as his main thesis is concerned, but I hope that he will write more on the topic in another context.

The main thesis is that word processing opens the door to a peculiarly unreflective and, frankly, stupid relationship to language, and, in turn, to being. As glowing lights or magnetic blips, words lose their sense of formal permanence. Words and ideas become matter to be shoved about and enframed in a format that appeals to a criterion of efficiency, rather than truth. Thought does not seek its own order, but has order imposed upon its finished symbols, as words, sentences and paragraphs are rearranged in post hoc fashion. The result is a text that has never been thought, one that may be as much an accident of the author's block moves or outlining program as it is of an author's conscious intention. Or, more likely, the author revises intentions to conform to what the computer has suggested. In either case, the contemplative, constructive activity of writing by hand has ceased to inform the printed word.

As is always the case with technology, we are enticed into this newly found room in the house of being by a promise of ease and relief of drudgery, and by the power that beckons for those who will respond to ease with an imperative of faster work and increasing productivity. Speed and productivity, however, are false values where the traditions of literate culture are concerned. The problem, for Heim, is to enter the realm of the electric word without closing off opportunities and accretions of being that have been cultivated by generations of book-bred forebears. Heim does not want a return to handwriting, much less typing, though he lovingly appreciates the wisdom implicit in the words of those who do. He wants to counteract what the word processor does to us by understanding it, and, perhaps, to discover some exercises for mitigating its effects. I find it ironic that in stressing a form of salvation by understanding the technology, rather than by rejecting the possibility of self-generated salvation altogether, Heim is choosing Ong's path over Heidegger's. In

seeing word processing as a problem, he is choosing John Dewey's approach and rejecting the open-ended ambiguity of Heraclitus.

There is much in Heim's review of word processing that is surely wrong. There is, for example, a lengthy section lamenting the decline of written personal correspondence. We get a useful discussion of how typing and now word processing accelerate the demise of letter writing, but there is no mention of the obvious and more important role that the telephone and modern transportation have had in this cultural event. Here, however, Heim is well worth reading even if he is wrong. The phenomenon of computerized writing needs a public airing, a philosophical debate. Here is the first shot.

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**Jean-François Lyotard**

*Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event.*

New York: Columbia University Press 1988.

Pp. xix+112. US\$20.00. ISBN 0-231-06670-8.

*Peregrinations* is the sixth publication in The Welles Library Lecture series at the University of California, Irvine. Lyotard's lectures are three: 'Clouds,' 'Touches,' and 'Gaps' (1-44). The fourth essay is Cecile Lindsay's translation of Lyotard's 1981 article 'Pierre Souyri: Le Marxisme n'a pas fini' (44-75). The fourth essay appears in order to make *Peregrinations* look more like a book. A further buttress is Eddie Yeghiayan's 'Checklist Of Writings By and About Jean-François Lyotard: A Selected Bibliography' (77-112), which lists French, German, Italian, etc., editions and reviews of Lyotard's writings. Despite Yeghiayan's decision to create a separate entry every time a book was translated or appeared in a new edition (Lyotard's *La Phénoménologie* 1954, appears 15 times), this learned but repetitive list is handy and in virtue of its organization initiates one into the burgeoning postmodern business of rendering French sociologi-

cal and philosophical writings into English; it especially exemplifies the steady growth industry of Lyotard studies.

The three Wellek lectures, written and delivered in English, are anamneses of Lyotard's life and work in politics and philosophy. They are such in the pedestrian sense of reminiscences about the 'phrasing' of his life. In 'Clouds' he explains that after abandoning his goals of an artistic career, the study of history and, forfeiting his desire to become a monk after having become a husband and a father, he became 'a professor of philosophy at a lycée in Constantine' (1). And they are also anamnestic as case histories of how a thinker comports himself with thoughts. The latter are clouds which 'never stop changing their location with one another' (5). Such ephemeral noemata 'are not our own,' says Lyotard, but 'we try to enter into them and belong to them' (6) by drawing some around poles of attraction such as law, form, and event. Even as one peregrinates with thoughts, head in the clouds, perhaps even open to scorn from an Aristophanic chorus for one's sophistry, it is the degree to which one attempts to possess thoughts that concerns Lyotard. The activity of one who wants to build a system of total knowledge 'constitutes par excellence the sin, the arrogance of mind' (7).

The lesson of a pleasing Zenic digression (10) is that while one must not disappoint the call for knowledge, a law which summons one forward to appropriate thoughts with all the hyper-rationalism of structuralism, for instance, must be disavowed. There are numerous other ways of fulfilling the desire to explore clouds of thoughts and oblige the law, and those ways are often incommensurable (12).

By taking 'law' as a blind prescriptive force which summons thinking forward without domesticating it and, in the absence of 'unequivocal criteria' with which to judge between good and bad thinking, Lyotard moves perilously close to both doubting the law and abandoning himself to the ebb and flow of forces of energy and affect, as he did in his 'evil book' *Economie libidinale* (1974). Such is the predicament which Lyotard once again leads thought into and leaves it in; that is his ongoing contribution, let us say.

As the salesmen of little narratives bawl their wares in the post-modern loquacity market, Lyotard develops his method *à propos*. In 'Touches' it is the event which Lyotard seeks to apprehend in its singularity as that which happens as opposed to what has happened (18). The attitude which he cultivates in this matter is a philosophical mongrel with debts to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the 'equally floating attention' which the analyst pays to the analysand, the free

play of the Imagination and Understanding in Kant's aesthetic judgment, etc.

One adopts this attitude in order to avoid anticipating events and grasping them with reference to a pre-text; that is, 'thinking advances through clouds by touching them as enigmatic events' (20). Lyotard is tempted to pronounce an identity between his quasi-phenomenological ascesis as it pertains to art and a political attitude. But he overcomes it and draws an analogy instead, one which initially bears upon his work with the Algerian chronicle *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and the *différend* with his friend and comrade Souyri over the 'determinant judgment' made by Marxism: it presented itself both as the judge and a party in a suit which Lyotard found himself. He was unable to express his views without borrowing the idiom of Marxism, and to do so was to betray his position, yet that was the only idiom available to him.

Marxism, represented by Souyri, pre-determined the way in which Lyotard read the Algerian situation. But as much as that pre-determination was a kind of delusion, it could not have been completely avoided. Nevertheless, Lyotard still felt 'the responsibility of responding to each case' (27). Can one respond to the event in the political as one does in the aesthetic attitude? Yes, says Lyotard, the analogy holds after it is smoked out with Kant's idea of the sublime.

'Gaps' is just that cloud of smoke. In virtue of what are rather formidable differences (practical vs. pleasurable reception of events; fulfillment vs. non-fulfillment of needs, etc.) between the two domains, Lyotard proceeds in terms of an idea of a state of unresolvable tension.

An aesthetic based on the sublime is indeed strange since it involves negative pleasure which arises from the failure to synthesize the form of an object. Faced with formlessness, attracted and repelled by an object, the mind conceives of sublimity in terms of an Idea of reason, of 'Absolute greatness' (40). This means that 'there is no sublime, therefore, without the development of the speculative and ethical capacities of the mind' (41).

The sublimity of the Idea of freedom, for example, is that it hangs over the gap between its mediated and negative presentation and the demand for its immediate, positive presentation: the presentation of the unrepresentable. The tension here is positive because it signifies that progress 'would not be only the progress of technology and science' (41); that is, the good news is that new formations of thoughts would only be responsible to the ideas of reason insofar as they are mediate, negatively presented and arise out of unformed ethical-

political situations. This is a 'retreat' from the immediate apprehension of forms into heterogeneity and 'dissensus.'

As delightfully elusive and allusive as these short lectures at times are, there is little of the sublime about them. One would do well to read the books they allude to and mention and study the questions they manage to elude so craftily.

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**Joseph C. Pitt and Marcello Pera, eds.**  
*Rational Changes in Science: Essays on  
Scientific Reasoning.*

Norwell, MA: D. Reidel 1987. Pp. xiii+224.  
US\$64.00. ISBN 90-277-2417-2.

This collection of papers, written especially for the volume, deals with the nature of scientific rationality. Post-Kuhnian philosophy of science has not yet settled on a canonical model of science to replace the mature form of the original positivist view represented by Nagel's *The Structure of Science* and Hempel's *Aspects of scientific Explanation*. Ironically, the collapse of the Received View occurred without a new paradigm waiting in the wings. Because conceptions scientific rationality were so closely tied to the Received View, its demise without replacement cast doubt on the overall rationality of science. These doubts are preposterous, however, since science is our exemplar of rational activity outside of pure logic; if science is not generally a rational activity, then it is doubtful that the concept of rationality has much meaning at all.

The authors of the papers in this volume are committed to the basic rationality of science. Given, though, that there is no longer a widely accepted precise and common conception of scientific rationality, the papers are heavy on criticism and their positive claims are necessarily somewhat tentative. The authors work with intuitive and var-

ied notions of rationality that suit their particular purposes. There is no clear unity behind their conceptions of scientific rationality except for the conviction that it is there to be found.

The book is divided into two sections, with a short introduction by the editors. The first section deals with theoretical considerations of rationality in science, while the second section contains historical studies that try to find evidence of rationality in episodes of scientific change.

The first article in the theoretical section is an essay by Richard Burian on conceptual change. He attempts to delimit and reconcile the roles of historical and philosophical methods for understanding conceptual change in scientific revolutions. Burian suggests that more attention is needed to how scientific theories are evaluated, both to the structure and nature of evaluation. He argues that conceptions of science based on the structure of particular theories (perhaps he had Newtonian physics in mind) are apt to be unduly limiting. In an appendix, he points out that even within biology there are a number of different subdisciplines whose theories have little structural similarity. Whatever the sciences share, it is unlikely to be some common structural or logical property of their theories.

The second article by Popper is an attack on relativism and 'the myth of the framework.' Popper accepts the existence of frameworks; the myth is that they present absolute barriers to communication. Although divergent frameworks present an obstacle to science, they also present an opportunity for scientific discovery. Although Popper's article presents nothing new to workers in the field of conceptual change, it is worth reading as the work of a master.

John Watkins' article tries to establish what scientific rationality must be like in the face of Humean skepticism. He starts with criticisms of previous conceptions of inductive logic, and finishes with a new theory of corroboration. The article by Raimo Tuomela explores the nature of scientific rationality by investigating the borderland between science and pseudo-science. The final theoretical article, by Tom Nickles, continues his investigations in the rationality of scientific discovery through an examination of the nature and role of methodology.

The historical articles are somewhat less ambitious. An article by Pitt examines the rationality of Galileo's explanation of the tides. Pitt's objective is to refute the Feyerabendian claim that Galileo was primarily a clever propagandist. An article by Shea examines the rationality of the acceptance of Newtonian views on the Continent. Shea

argues that continental Cartesians showed a rational caution in their gradual acceptance of Newtonianism, and that the historical evidence shows that they were aware of the reasons for their caution. The final two articles, by Marcello Pera and Rachel Laudan, examine aspects of the rationality, respectively, of Galvani's discovery of animal electricity and the postulation and eventual acceptance of continental drift.

Although the articles in this volume do not present a unified picture of post-Kuhnian science, or a common conception of scientific rationality, they do demonstrate that there are elements of science that meet common sense requirements of rationality. One thing that is striking overall is that rationality appears in science in so many apparently diverse ways. There may be some unifying conception of science, on the order of the Received View, that will unify and explain all of these apparently disparate manifestations of rationality, but it appears we are still a long way from it. Whatever form it takes, if it ever does appear, the new model of science will be much more complex than any we have held before.

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**Hilary Putnam**

*Representation and Reality.*

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1988.

Pp. xv+136. US\$19.95. ISBN 0-262-16108-7.

Putnam's thesis is bold: 'mental states ... cannot be computational states, or computational cum physical states (states using a mixed vocabulary referring both to physical and computational parameters)' (xiii). Given that he assumes that functionalists have already sufficiently shown that 'mental states cannot simply *be* physical-chemical states' (xiii), his thesis is bolder than it may at first seem, for it has the consequence that there cannot be any science of the mind, at least not any science which is unified with the main body of the natural

sciences. This anti-science theme, and its implications for philosophy, namely a radical re-setting of the philosophical compass, is discussed directly in the final (seventh) chapter of this compact book. Only there does he discuss the issues which dominated *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981). The first six chapters, except Chapter 4, are meant to show that functionalism not only has not, but cannot, account for the phenomena of language. Chapter 4 is an aside to the eliminative materialists: they are wrong, too.

Although Putnam criticises separately, accurately, and destructively, many species of functionalism (Chomsky's, Fodor's, Block's, Lewis's, Boyd's, and different versions of Putnam's own), he takes his arguments collectively to show that there does not exist 'some scientifically describable "nature" that all cases of "reference" in general, or of "meaning" in general, or of "intentionality" in general possess ... [or] that all cases of any one specific intentional phenomenon, say, "thinking that there are a lot of cats in the neighborhood," have in common' (2-3). *A fortiori*, there is nothing functional or computational which they all have in common, so functionalism is wrong, as is materialism, whether reductive or eliminative. Indeed the philosophy which motivates these positions on the mind, namely scientific realism, is wrong-headed. (Putnam himself now *seems* to be an ordinary language philosopher holding a traditional emergentist theory of mind.)

Putnam's arguments, 'arguments from within the scientific realist's own perspective' (116), depend on certain features of meaning and reference. These features, even when uprooted from their particular arguments, reveal the state of mind Putnam brings to bear on the topic which is never far from the philosopher's heart, i.e., language. They are: i) 'Meaning is holistic' (8): as Quine observed, what a word (phrase, sentence, etc.) means is a function of the theory/ies in which it occurs; ii) 'Meaning is in part a normative notion' (11): we can decide what, e.g., Bohr meant by 'electron,' only by weighing the pull of a 'principle of charity' against the pull of the 'incommensurability' of his theory of the electron with our own; iii) 'Our concepts depend on our physical and social environment in a way that evolution (which was completed, for our brains, about 30,000 years ago) couldn't foresee' (15); iv) 'The division of linguistic labor' (22): speakers can meaningfully use words, e.g., 'molybdenum' (or 'your uncle') while relying entirely on the ability of 'experts' to discriminate the referents; v) 'The contribution of the environment' (30): the referent of,

e.g., 'water' is determined in part by the facts about water, so that something else, call it XYZ, is not the referent of 'water' even if indistinguishable from water by us given all our theories and methods; vi) 'An indexical component' (33): the referent of 'water' is in part a function of the fact that *this* stuff, the stuff in rivers and lakes around *here*, is what *we* take to be water. This accounting is not exhaustive, but it is representative.

Putnam clearly wants the reader to think of meaning and reference, both in particular instances and in general, as being a function of, well, *everything*: the speaker, his/her society, his/her/their beliefs, theories, practices, rationality, history, environment, etc. The upshot of taking all of these features of meaning and reference into account, as Putnam sees it, is, crudely rephrased, that any good scientific account of the intentional presupposes a good scientific account of everything. 'If the program is to construct a theory which explains propositional attitudes, semantic notions, etc., over all possible species, then the problem we face is that our theory must "survey" the possible modes of conceptualization of all physically *possible* rational beings' (92). Even if we restrict ourselves to our own intentionality, 'to ask a human being in a time-bound human culture to survey all modes of human linguistic existence – including those that will transcend his own – is to ask for an impossible Archimedean point' (89).

Putnam's arguments are persuasive and discouraging. But we should note that just the same sort of arguments could have been marshalled against other sciences. Newton's mechanics might have been argued an impossible dream, on the grounds that the behavior of any body in the universe is a function of the mass, position, and behavior of all the other bodies in the universe, the viscosity of its medium, its density relative to that of its medium, chance collisions, etc. A closer analogy concerns the present science of life. The life of an organism depends on the life of its species (holism), other species (division of labor), the environment, and a genetic makeup which could not have foreseen the exigencies of the organism's life in an ever-changing universe. What is alive is a dicey, normative question, answered, in practice and in part, indexically: *these* things are alive. Yet we do have quite nice life-sciences, ones which go so far, indeed, as to *reduce* life to more basic physical-chemical processes. Granted, this reduction does not meet the very stringent, traditional, empiricist criteria Putnam enumerates (77) using the over-stressed, (Ernest) Nagelian, temperature = mean kinetic energy paradigm. But then

reduction is not so monolithic a concept as Putnam seems to think, nor does it afford much justice to the range of ways in which distinct scientific theories both provide information for, and procure information from, other theories. From this point of view on the way in which various theories are unified within the natural sciences, a reduction merely represents the extreme case where one theory *can* (in principle) provide all the information services provided by the other, and then some. It is clear that psychology already has begun to utilize information from the natural sciences (as in the neuro-chemistry of schizophrenia and Parkinsonism), as well as provide information to these sciences (as in the idea that the brain of one asleep is neurologically different from the brain of one awake). The issue comes down to just what degree of mutual informativeness is possible or likely here. Putnam's arguments against closer informational alliance between psychology and the natural sciences are noteworthy – but so is the observation that barriers in principle to the scientific accounting of this or that part of the empirical world have seldom (if ever) been effective.

Eliminative materialists, following in the footsteps of their pioneering Quine, are apt, Putnam rightly guesses, to say “‘We told you so’” (xiv) when informed of his conclusion that no science of the intentional is possible. They foresee the ‘elimination’ of the intentional anyhow, in favor of pure neuroscience. Chapter 4 is meant to show that truth must be eliminated along with the intentional: to eschew folk-psychology is to eschew ‘folk-logic.’ The idea that the folk-logical concept of truth could be replaced by something more scientific, as Putnam puts it, ‘is today only a gleam in Churchland’s eye’ (110).

**Jeff Foss**

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**Stanley Rosen**

*The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry:  
Studies in Ancient Thought.*

New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall  
1988. Pp. xiii+223.

US\$29.95. ISBN 0-415-00184-6.

This book contains ten essays written, as the dustjacket tell us, by the author over the last thirty years. Some of these are published here for the first time, although there is little indication of what is new and what is old. Evidently, the author has not thought this information worthy of inclusion.

The first essay takes up the theme expressed in the title of the book and other nine essays approach it from various perspectives. Thus, there are discussions of political and ethical matters in Plato's *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Statesman*; two essays on topics in Aristotle; and two on interpretations of ancient thought in Heidegger and Nietzsche. The author offers both interpretations of ancient thought and utilizes ancient thought as a vehicle for the discussion of perennial philosophical problems.

Those familiar with Rosen's other works will not be surprised to hear that this is a difficult book. The author is devoted to the elliptical and enigmatic and no friend of middle terms. One must expect that following Rosen's interpretation of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche's interpretation of Plato is not likely to be smooth sailing. I am, however, sorry to say that a certain disdain for the reader's needs pervades much of this book. One would be more grateful for the occasional sharp insights if they were not merely tiny islands in a sea of turgidity.

It would be unfair to attempt to offer in a short review a critical assessment of the many provocative views expressed in this book. Even a summary of all of these would undoubtedly be inadequate to the complexity of Rosen's thought. I shall instead concentrate on one dimension of that thought, namely, Rosen's exegesis of the texts of Plato and Aristotle.

Perhaps it is saying both too much and too little to describe Rosen's interpretative standpoint as heretical Straussianism. One can only nod in respect for the author's devotion to minute textual analysis and his expressed desire to take in all seriousness the writings of the ancients. Yet one wonders whether it has ever occurred to Rosen

that serious reading is not a simple algorithm guaranteed to produce only one reasonable result. In fact, for Rosen serious reading is not the transparently uncontroversial principle that the innocent reader might take it to be. For Rosen, serious reading, especially of Plato, means ignoring arguments as arguments. It means homogenizing the text into a series of signs pointing to Plato's *real* intentions. What is offered as metaphysics is received as grist for hermeneutics. My point is not that we should ignore the subtleties, philosophical and literary, in the text of Plato. Nor that Plato's ideas about what philosophy is should not influence our reading of a *written* dialogue. Rather, what I find indefensible is the cavalier unwillingness to evaluate arguments as such. Rosen's only justification for this approach – gleaned from hasty asides – is that Plato's arguments cancel each other out, so that the conclusion of one is contradicted by the conclusion of another. Thus Rosen dismisses the need to take seriously the arguments in the central book of the *Republic*. If this is respect for the text, it is respect as in 'I'll respect you in the morning.'

A fair example of the distortions endemic to this book is the following: 'On balance, one must conclude that the *Republic*, despite the central role assigned to mathematics in connection with the exposition of the nature of philosophy, regularly speaks of "Platonic Ideas" with metaphors or similes, i.e., in poetic language, which refers to these Ideas as produced. There is no evidence that Socrates regards this as politically dangerous' (8). Rosen's point is that the use of metaphors and similes in reference to Ideas indicates a poetical rather than an argumentative predilection in Plato, an interpretative stance which removes analogy from philosophy. But as Plato and many other philosophers have understood, when dealing with some fundamental fact or phenomenon, there is by definition nothing more basic to analyze the datum into, in which case philosophical progress requires resort to illuminating metaphors. This is not poetry, as Rosen would have it, nor is Plato's opposition to poetry in book X of the *Republic* a disingenuous rejection of a methodology he himself embraces. His reason for rejecting some, not all poetry, is that it has a corrupting influence when the poet is ignorant of the truth. Naturally, this view is fraught with difficulties. But if one wants an interpretative basis for sorting these out I would recommend Iris Murdoch's *Why Plato Banished the Poets*.

Consider this extraordinary statement: 'In sum: it is entirely clear that Plato practices "esotericism," and that those who extract what

they take to be Plato's theoretical views or "arguments" from their dialogical and poetic presentation are studying images of their own theoretical presuppositions, but not Plato. I mean by this, not that arguments have no place in Plato, or in philosophy, but rather that one must be a poet as well as a philosopher in order to determine what are the Platonic arguments ... That this conclusion, which is beyond dispute, should continue to draw opprobrium on to those who assert it, is a sign of the wide-spread failure to understand Socrates' account of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry' (11). As a caveat against taking arguments out of context, this statement is unexceptional; as a principle of Platonic interpretation, it is worthless.

The long chapter on Aristotle is, if possible, an even greater travesty of philosophical analysis. The point of this chapter is that Parmenides and the Megarians hit upon the 'problem' of nothingness or non-being and that Aristotle, despite his best efforts, did not solve it. Leaving aside such dubious exegetical remarks as 'in fact, Parmenides is a dualist' (159), the gist of Rosen's argument is that Aristotle introduces the concept of privation in order to solve the above problem. Unfortunately, 'Aristotle's explanation does not succeed. He wants to say both that something comes to be out of something and that it comes to be out of nothing. This requires him to identify "nothing" (= nonbeing) as something, or still worse, as in one sense something and in another sense not' (156). As Rosen proceeds to ring the changes on this insight, one central misunderstanding becomes increasingly obvious. Rosen is evidently unaware of the Aristotelian doctrine of the equivocity of being which means not just that Parmenides has posed a false dichotomy, but more importantly that all derivative attributions of being are causally dependent upon the primary referent. Nowhere in this entire chapter does Rosen even allude to this basic doctrine.

Furthermore, he does not distinguish the introduction of the principle of privation in the *Physics* from its use in the *Metaphysics*. In the former, it is part of a conceptual structure used to explain change, *given* that change exists. In the latter, it is a concept inextricable from the causal priority of substance. It is simply false, as Rosen would have it (179), that Aristotle's 'ontology' is grounded in the appearance of change. The science which the work *Metaphysics* seeks to establish is 'grounded' is changeless separate form.

Despite these severe criticisms, I must allow that Rosen's spirited and imaginative effort to liberate ancient philosophy from the muse-

um and to make it party to contemporary debates is praiseworthy and provocative. Alas, his rescue attempt is a botched job and more likely to produce a result the opposite of what he and many others, including myself, would wish.

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**Jeffrey Stout**

*Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals  
and their Discontents.*

Boston: Beacon Press 1988. Pp. xiv+338.

US\$27.50. ISBN 0-8070-1402-8.

Can there be reasonable discussion of moral issues without an appeal to an unquestionable foundation of morality in a society pervaded by different moral outlooks? In this wide-ranging and well-argued volume Stout gives an affirmative answer, alternating hard-hitting criticism of many contemporary writers with lucid presentation of his own positions. Though I confess to favorable prejudice because of the use Stout makes of some of my own work, I think most readers will agree with me that this is the most thorough and persuasive attempt to date to take account of the multiplicity of moral standpoints in our culture and to argue that it does not threaten coherent moral discourse.

Stout organizes his views around the idea that there are many moral languages – holistic complexes of vocabularies, principles, and beliefs which can be individuated though not fully described 'by reference to the sets of candidates for truth and falsehood they make available' (68). There are languages of respect, of divine command, of 'consequentialist calculation,' of the virtues (144) and many others. Moral philosophy cannot be the study of *the* language of morals (60) because there have been and still are many such languages. The problems Stout discusses arise because today no single language of morals is dominant.

In the first of the book's three parts, Stout argues that there can be moral truth and falsity, and consequently reasonable moral discussion, even without any foundational principle or hegemonic language of morals. Hermeneutic understanding and the adaptability of living moral languages make it always possible to understand one another across linguistic barriers. Disagreement, as Davidson showed, can never be so total that we can never find common ground from which to approach resolution of our differences. We are also able to make valid judgments about acts approved in other cultures. Though cross-cultural judgment of agents is more complex, Stout argues that cultural difference poses no threat to reasonable morality.

Part 2 contains an examination of religious languages of morals. Rejecting standard criticisms of religious morality as relying on a foundationalism which itself is unacceptable, Stout nonetheless concludes, through a critique of Gustafson, that religion now is either too vague or too close to secular views (182-3) to offer anything distinctive to the contemporary discourse on morality.

If a plurality of languages still leaves open the abstract possibility of reasonable moral discourse, what is the actual situation we are in, and can we improve it? This is Stout's topic in Part 3. He argues convincingly that communitarian critics of modern liberal society have failed to show either that self-centered concerns have turned most people away from social ties or that our disagreements amount to moral chaos. But his aim is not to defend liberalism. It is rather 'to move altogether beyond the debate between ... communitarians and liberals' (220; 236). The former he thinks are utopian, suffering from 'terminal wistfulness'; the latter tend to sound smugly satisfied with the status quo. He proposes that we adopt an eclectic language centering on an idea of a common good, and making use of MacIntyre's distinction between goods internal to a practice and those external to it. How would this work?

Most of us, Stout thinks, agree on a limited and provisional notion of the good, one which has no pretensions to being comprehensive (212; 237-8). This conception will not enable us to settle all our problems. But if we use MacIntyre's distinction between internal and external goods, we can see that there is enough agreement to allow both for a more positive assessment of our society than MacIntyre gives, and for some fairly radical criticism. Internal goods such as those involved in the practice of baseball or medicine are widely sought and admired. But they are apt to be threatened by pursuit of external goods, such as fame or money, which success at sports or

medicine can give their practitioners. Stout thinks there is a growing consensus (284) that pursuit of external goods is destroying the practices that make internal goods possible: greed corrupts baseball and medicine, and the ailment is spreading. But if we keep our eye on the thin common good we all accept, we can use the language of internal and external goods to give reasoned even if drastic criticisms of 'systemic problems' (285) like this one, and thus make progress toward acceptable social change.

This is an unusually lucid and penetrating book. With most of its main points I have no quarrel, but the last chapter raises some questions. Stout gives no full discussion of what exactly is involved in the platitudinous (212) notion of the thin common good which is central to moral discourse after Babel. Apparently it includes everything we care about, including justice and rights. Can Stout hold this and still claim that there are many separate moral languages functioning in our culture? If we agree about a vague but encompassing common good, it would seem that we must all be native speakers of several languages; and we are not told which, if any, are excluded from the consensus. A serious moral issue is related to this question. Stout denies the importance of deciding whether the right is prior to the good or the reverse (323, note 9). But that decision has been called for because there are *practical* conflicts that seem to need it. To put it crudely, some people think it will be time to worry about sustaining the quality of the good when we're sure everyone will get a fair share; others think the possibility of leading a good life is so threatened, even for those who have it, that we'd better attend to that and postpone worry about fair shares. Stout, in being anti-Kantian (140) and in recommending a good-centered language for post-Babel discourse, allies himself with the latter, despite his insistence that he cares about rights too. Perhaps this isn't quite communitarian smugness, but if we bear in mind the condition of our own poor and the populations of the Third World it sounds disconcertingly close.

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**█**  
Editors' Note

The anglophone editors of

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are pleased to announce the acquisition of  
an address for **electronic mail** on the  
University of Alberta's mainframe computer.

Correspondents and contributors are  
encouraged to use the address for replying  
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any other messages.

The E-mail address of CPR/RCCP is

CPRS@UALTAMTS.BITNET

Any institution's computing services  
department will be able to advise on how to  
access the address.

*R. Burch*  
*R.A. Shiner*