Christoph Schuringa. *A Social History of Analytic Philosophy: How Politics Has Shaped An Apolitical Philosophy*. Verso 2025. 328 pp. $34.95 USD (Hardcover 9781804292099); $14.99 USD (eBook 9781804292136).

In his recently published *A Social History of Analytic Philosophy*, Christoph Schuringa delves into uncharted territory. What is sought is a demonstration of how today's dominant institutional form of academic philosophy structures and is structured by the economic, social, and cultural milieu in which it finds itself. This is no easy task. The book attempts to navigate a space that the analytic tradition of philosophy would itself rather avoid, or, at least, keep at arm's length. Unlike its "continental" counterpart, it renounces the "somewhere" which situates the subject and subjectivity in favour of what Thomas Nagel calls the "view from nowhere"—that is, an objective vantage point which aspires to remain independent of societal structures, relations of power, or historical development. However, despite its claim to operate as a tradition that conceives of itself as having no tradition, this self-image is illusory. Schuringa claims that the pretence of an ostensible no-man's land plays from a fantasy that philosophical thought takes place in isolation from and is impervious to its own production. Far from a space of objective neutrality, analytic philosophy has always been moulded by its social context.

This self-perception is said to be epitomised in Bertrand Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*, a text which presents the history of philosophy as an internal, self-moving development that only retrospectively adorns itself with a dash of the social. Schuringa contests this "purity myth" by exposing the social and material conditions which otherwise remain concealed by the assumptions of analytic philosophy. Seeking to uncover this philosophical blind spot, his own ideological commitments are explicitly stated as critical and broadly in line with the Marxist tradition. This has important implications for the overall tenor of the text. Schuringa claims that analytic philosophy is founded upon "a basically eighteenth-century mindset" marked by the twin face of bourgeois ideology: liberalism and empiricism (15). This argument is buttressed by the stronger assertion that analytic philosophy's supposed objectivity appeals to the liberal principles of equality and neutrality. From these two propositions, Schuringa speculates that the core tenets of analytic philosophy, as well as its ascendency as the dominant form of academic philosophy, cannot be understood outside of the context of a "concerted programme to reinvigorate liberal capitalism" (129). The not-so-secret liaison with liberal capitalist institutions, which support it both intellectually and economically, are responsible for analytic philosophy's hegemony—a reality for which Schuringa does little to hide his disdain.

The book follows a chronological progression beginning in 18th century England, situating the inception of what would become the analytic approach in the empiricist-liberal tradition (Chapter 1). The next three chapters survey analytic philosophy's various birth sites in Cambridge (Chapter 2), 1920s Vienna in the so-called "the Vienna Circle" (Chapter 3), and finally post-war Oxford where it took hold as ordinary language philosophy (Chapter 4). The book then shifts planes to home in on the rise of analytic philosophy in the United States. Chapter 5 ascribes this ascent to the reinvigoration of liberal capitalism, the formation of technocratic research institutions (like RAND), the influence of European philosophical émigrés, and the political pressures under McCarthyism. Chapter 6 focuses on the analytic confrontation and "conquest" of the competing post-Kantian philosophies (such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, deconstruction) collected under the umbrella term "continental." Chapters 7-9 explore various methodological forms applied under the analytic rubric, including the "linguistic turn", modal metaphysics and the

mathematical approach to ethics. In the final chapter, Schuringa concludes by explaining how, in its current form, analytic philosophy attempts to infringe upon more radical "continental" currents (Marxism, feminism, and colonialism), amounting to a kind of philosophical imperialism.

Overall, the first nine chapters can be understood as an exercise in what may loosely be described as intellectual history. Despite the initial promise of the book to explore how analytic philosophy is both producer and product of the social world in which it is situated, the reader is instead mired in extraneous biographical details and broad historical contextualisation. Interspersed between these digressions, Schuringa makes some attempt to connect back to his central thesis. However, in doing so, more emphasis is placed on the life of the thinker than on the thought itself. Emblematic of this approach is what comes across as a fixation with the socio-economic status of the major analytic philosophers. For example, pages are devoted to a genealogy of the Russell family's aristocratic political dynasty, the "haut-bourgeois" environment from which Moore was raised and extended personal accounts of those who experienced political repression under McCarthyism. It could be argued that these episodes present some evidence to support the connection between analytic philosophy and liberal capitalist institutions. Yet, one cannot help but feel deceived by this approach. Rather than tackling the book's primary motivation—the linkage between the ideological commitments of analytic philosophy and the institutional structures that support it—the analysis remains almost entirely *ad hominem* and on the level of anecdote.

If the proposed problem of exposing analytic philosophy's concealed ideology remains an unfulfilled promise, then it must be said that this was a missed opportunity. Nowhere is this more palpable than in Chapter 6. As mentioned, it is here that Schuringa focuses on the division between continental and analytic philosophy. It is the inclusion of this section that the absence of any discussion on the ideological commitments of analytic philosophy becomes most evident. There was no better occasion to highlight the social dimension of the analytic tradition than through a juxtaposition with its continental counterpart. In this regard, the debates instigated by Heidegger at Davos in 1929 with Cassirer and Carnap are both interesting and relevant. For instance, it would have been thought-provoking to have included some remarks on Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?" essay where he explores, amongst other things, the limits of logic and empiricism. In the same chapter, Schuringa devotes a subsection on Derrida where the focus remains once again on superficial caricatures of his work as well as personal dealings with analytic philosophers. More pertinent would have been a discussion of how deconstruction as a method stands as a radical counter-position to some of the core tenets of analytic philosophy, challenging fundamental assumptions about language, meaning, and truth. It may have also been productive to have included a word on the so-called "Sokal hoax." As Derrida himself lamented, the lack of a serious discussion between himself and Alan Sokal represented a squandered chance to explore the differing presuppositions that are at play in both the continental and the logico-empiricist approach.

In Chapter 10, Schuringa's own voice finally begins to emerge. And here it also becomes clear for whom this voice is intended. As Schuringa explains, the analytic philosophy departments have long been "dominated by privileged white males" who promote a "culture of misogyny" (259). Moreover, recent attempts to instigate a cultural shift have seemed to contribute towards an imperial impulse. The examples he provides are the analytic annexations of Marx, feminism, and philosophy of race. Here Schuringa astutely describes the vacuity of these analytic appropriations by demonstrating how the analytic "schematism of oppression" leaves out of account the actual social texture in which subjugation functions (278). His writing is at times therapeutic when conveying the frustration felt by a philosophical community that is increasingly marginalised by a hegemonic adversary. However, this element also risks spilling over into contempt when it comes

across as a diatribe against liberal capitalism itself. This tendency may ostracise readers who are not necessarily sympathetic to the plight of continental philosophy or who are largely unaware of these issues.

For those less informed about this rift, this book serves as useful point of departure. Another place that such a reader may want to look is to Jonathan Rée's "Professional Philosophers." In this short essay, Rée manages to capture the spirit of Schuringa's text by describing how the professionalization of analytic philosophy and its concern with "rigour" has insulated itself from the concerns of everyday life. The result is a niche academic discipline that conforms to the technocratic carve-up of human knowledge. This is an interesting angle, and one wonders why Schuringa did not pursue it himself. Despite citing Rée's essay, he passes over the fact that the university has essentially become a commercial enterprise committed to the commodification of its subject matter. One cannot help but think that it is precisely the indifference to its social context which has determined the dominance of analytic philosophy—a neutralisation that makes it more readily commodifiable than the variegated field of continental philosophy.

The core idea driving Schuringa's criticism of the analytic tradition is that it is "a 'philosophy' whose wheels spin idly in the service of well-entrenched patterns of thought" (233). It is tempting to level this same criticism at this book itself. Having failed to convincingly articulate how the ideological workings of liberal capitalism are evident in the various methodologies of the analytic philosophy, Schuringa's voice is received as its own kind of ideological echo, a dogmatism that shows itself to be giving in to the same arbitrariness that analytic philosophy is accused of engaging in. Although the book provides a provocative and essential challenge to the self-image of analytic philosophy, it falls short of fulfilling its more demanding task of a critical engagement with its political and economic foundations.

Kyle Moore, LUISS University