

# Canadian Philosophical Reviews Revue Canadienne de Comptes rendus en Philosophie

## Editor · Directeur

*Roger A. Shiner*  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T6G 2E5

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**Raziel Abelson**

*Lawless Mind.*

Philadelphia: Temple University Press

1988. Pp. xix+209.

US \$29.95. ISBN 0-87722-579-6.

This book is a strident critique of determinism and compatibilism. 'The application of mechanistic explanation to human action,' Abelson writes in the preface, 'threatens us with a kind of spiritual annihilation, because it undermines our belief in freedom of the will and with it the reality of choice, value, and moral responsibility' (xvii). The consequences of adopting a mechanistic vision would 'be disastrous. We would come to see ourselves no longer as unique subjects of experience and as moral agents ... and we would come to see ourselves (far too many people already do) as replaceable cogs in the world machine' (xvii).

Abelson discusses a variety of issues to support these urgent claims. If determinism were true, he says, we would not be morally culpable for any of our actions, since, according to determinism, all of our actions are products of deterministic causal chains resulting from events occurring prior to our births. To preserve culpability, we must say that actions are voluntary in a sense that breaks causal chains. Voluntary actions cannot be characterized simply by their rationality ('reasoning and self-monitoring' [25]), as compatibilists assert, since in that case actions would dissolve into 'particularly complex structure[s] of tropisms' (26). And this consequence impales compatibilists on the first horn of the necessity-randomness dilemma.

The first horn of this dilemma states that if actions are causally necessitated, then they cannot be different from what they actually are, and thus cannot be something for which agents are morally responsible. The second horn states that if actions are not causally necessitated, then they are arbitrary and haphazard, and again cannot be something for which agents are morally responsible. Abelson's solution is to say that voluntary actions 'are neither predetermined in a regular pattern, nor randomly generated' (39). This solution hinges on his conception of psychological causality, which is triadic, involving a reason, agent and action instead of just the reason and action of dyadic, determinist causality. The dilemma disappears, says Abelson, if we say that actions are caused psychologically and not deterministically, because then actions are not necessitated – there is more than one possible outcome.

Abelson's treatment of this dilemma is typical of the uneven quality of argumentation throughout the book. At times, he writes lucidly and develops his points nicely. At other times, he moves from point to point too fast. He gives little explanation of psychological causality and its connection, or disconnection, to traditional agency theory. He seems unaware of the compatibilist rejoinder to his solution to the necessity-randomness dilemma: psychological causality does not eliminate randomness because it involves the very states that gave rise to the randomness in the original dilemma – being able to act differently, and being able to choose different reasons. Compatibilists will, consequently, dismiss some of Abelson's arguments as shallow.

Dismissing the arguments, however, is not the same as dismissing the claims. Abelson's key claims are on target in the sense that they hit important dividing issues. Determinists cannot, he says, account for the special admiration we have toward those who rise above their past. Only the presence of moral effort, indeterministically understood, explains such admiration. Determinists cannot differentiate the purposive explanations that human action requires from the causal explanations appropriate to the natural sciences. Nor can determinists differentiate active beings, which people are, from passive beings, which are governed by causal laws. If determinism were true, we would be nothing more than passive spectators of warring forces within ourselves, playing no active part in deciding outcomes (108). We would also be like machines, which cannot properly be said to do anything, because psychological and action predicates, such as purpose, intention, decision and volition, cannot be applied to them.

Abelson also discusses mental illness, the concept of which he rejects on the ground that 'human behavior is not fully determined by causal processes' (92), and the mind-body problem, which he claims to solve, not with dualism, as one might expect from a libertarian, but with an 'indeterministic functional view of mind' (165). According to this view, a mental process is neither physical nor nonphysical. It is the 'intelligent use an organism makes of its body' (165). Abelson underscores 'use' here to indicate mind's active character – its purposiveness, intentionality and lawlessness. The distinction between materialism and dualism, he claims, is irrelevant to the mind-body problem; the important question is whether mind is active. Abelson alludes to this activity when he says, 'Where mind is at work, lawlessness is rampant' (48).

Indeterminists will like much of what Abelson says. Determinists will feel misunderstood. The latter will complain that they can

account for moral effort, for the activity of people as opposed to the passivity of natural objects, and for the difference between people and machines. Both indeterminists and determinists will wish that Abelson had made his case more convincing by probing more deeply. Why must moral effort be understood indeterministically? Why does not the compatibilists' sense of the mind's activity do justice to our intuitive sense of human activity? Delving into these questions would have made Abelson's book a much more significant contribution to the free will-determinism literature than it is.

Some readers will be put off by Abelson's occasional condescension ('Many philosophers who should know better make this mistake' [144]), by his intrusive use of 'I', and by the book's generally strident tone.

### **Clifford Williams**

Trinity College (Illinois)

#### **Philip Alpers, ed.**

*What is Music?: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music.*

New York: Haven Publications 1987.

Pp. x+400. US \$19.95. ISBN 0-930586-30-1.

Francis Sparshott provides the cleverly conceived and skilfully written lead article in which he charts the landscape of problems in the Philosophy of Music – something sorely needed in contemporary aesthetics. His treatment is more programmatic than doctrinal, and so the essays which follow enjoy a philosophical space created for them by him. Authors include some of the leading voices in this emerging sub-field of aesthetics. They include, besides Sparshott and Alpers: Nicholas Wolterstorff, Edward Cone, Peter Kivy, Jenefer Robinson, Joseph Margolis, Arnold Berleant, Morris Grossman, Jerrold Levinson, Stephen Davies, Martin Donougho, Roger Scruton, and Rose Subotnik.

Sparshott suggests that the concept of music remains and will remain contested, that it will remain so as between cultures and within a culture which is unstable or which admits of cultural change (44); that within our culture such instability obtains as its musical

practices are unstable and vary. Sparshott holds further that music might best be thought of as depending on interlocking practices of music-making and music-listening; that these are dialectically related (48-9); that the nature and purpose of music can be determined only by the actual interests of musicians and their publics; and that there is no single 'unvarying' set of determining interests (52). In short, musical experience should be the focus and the context in which we are to understand works of music.

Nearly all of the contributors agree that the understanding of music should begin not with an absolutized view of works of music, but rather with an overall understanding of musical practice. This 'praxial' view resists a universalist approach associated with the projects of Plato and Kant, the latter of whose efforts, says Subotnik (362), '... to preserve a universal basis for human communication have proven futile against the power of the irreducible differences in perceptions, structuring principles and values among differently situated individuals and cultures.' And Wolterstorff underscores the point when he says (119), 'Our traditional ontological focus on works must be expanded to embrace an ontology of practices.' But this is not just a matter of expansion in an additive sense. Rather, the very ontology of a work of music, on such a praxial view, turns out to be of a different sort from that assumed in the 'traditional' view.

As well, such praxial views oppose structuralist approaches, rejected, for example, by Subotnik who says (376): 'Structural listening focuses intensely on its musical object, the definition of which is assumed to owe nothing to the individual or cultural biases of its users.' And, more directly, Joseph Margolis says (215), 'Structuralism is a conceptually preposterous (but curiously attractive) doctrine – *a fortiori*, a preposterous form of semiotics.' The catalogue of reasons Margolis provides are all related to the fact that '...we cannot eliminate the intensional and praxial complexity of musical phenomena' (217).

As well, most of the contributors resist Nelson Goodman's 'all notes right' requirement for musical performance. Of Goodman, Grossman says (258): 'Aware of usual practice, he says, perhaps plaintively, "Could we not bring our theoretical vocabulary into better agreement with common practice by allowing some limited degree of deviation in performances admitted as instances of a work?" His intellectual scheme requires him to answer with a firm "no".' It is perhaps curious to group Goodman with Kantians and Structuralists as the opponents of most of these contributors, since, for well known reasons,

there is a great deal that separates him from them. But most of the contributors take the question about the *plasticity* of constraints on admissible performances to be legitimate. And Goodman, the Kantians, and the Structuralists don't.

So seen, the question becomes, as Grossman aptly puts it (274), how one should proceed in '...fixing what is free, and freeing what is fixed.' Clearly, this involves a consideration of the role of rules in music, about which Scruton says (358): 'The rules of music are summaries of musical practice. To make them prescriptive is to kill the process whereby they themselves are made. ... Only by accepting the expectations which the rules enshrine, can the rules be transcended, so that the truly original work, in breaking with tradition, must at the same time renew it.' Yet it is clear that Scruton means for rules not to be taken in a strict 'whenever *a* then *b*' sense, for, as he says, they are summaries of musical practice, and musical practice is ineliminably plastic or informal, as emphasized in Berleant's contribution.

These issues require consideration of the social and political contexts of music-making and music-listening. As Scruton holds (358): '... a musical culture does not exist in addition to the music which compels it. The culture creates the music which creates it, by providing the only conditions under which composition is possible, or under which the work of music can be heard ... Anyone who hopes for the survival of music must therefore hope for the survival of the cultivated bourgeois music-lover.' Scruton's view is the only well developed political position represented in the volume. Given the consensus amongst contributors about the ineliminability of cultural conditions in the understanding of music, it would have been refreshing to have had more political views represented. But one cannot have everything in one volume.

As regards questions of cross-practice or cross-cultural understanding Sparshott observes (86) that 'someone who hears as a violinist is not free to listen as if he were not. Nor, when listening to music in one tradition, can one exclude from one's mind knowledge of alternative traditions that may affect one's evaluations and must affect one's understanding, however conscientiously one may relativize one's judgements to what one knows to be relevant.' Other contributors join Sparshott in this view. Wolterstorff, for example, says (123): '...the sober truth is that you and I cannot hear old music as it was once heard; our hearing of intervening music has made our hearing practices different from those and there is nothing we can do to undue

that.' And Grossman says (265): 'When a tone is experienced, even a very "isolated" tone, it is not heard in some kind of pristine purity. The world of music crowds in. The tone (for the Western listener) will intimate a key, a tonality, a series of tonal relationships. It cannot be heard otherwise.'

From these remarks we must conclude that the original instruments movement or the authentic music movement – whatever else it may provide – cannot deliver what it promises. However recontextualing its various devices may be, there is no way in which the original (whatever that may mean) can be retrieved. As Donougho says (344): '... music never was "as it actually was" ... Scraping away the Romantic patina is one thing: actually recovering a supposed original is another.' Further, Donougho remarks (330) that: '... the discipline of history constitutes, along with ethnography (or ethnomusicology as it is now called), a clear challenge to traditional musical aesthetics. Both disciplines would put music into a context which cannot be assumed invariant or universal. That assumption is often made, however, as if the highly specialized (and complex) notion of music as art which Western cultures have developed were potentially there even in primitive societies.' Significantly, Donougho puts his point in the negative, and thus leaves *open* the question of the universality of musical understanding. But the question is exceedingly difficult. One might move ahead with it by taking up the question of the universality of emotions. As a prelude to such an examination, one might consider the relation between emotions and music, about which Kivy's is a careful treatment.

Despite the persistent message that music should be understood in praxial terms, there remains in this volume a lingering question whether it can be *fully* understood in such terms. Two essays particularly suggest the question, though they do not take it on in a frontal way. They seem nostalgic for the 'traditional' approach. Grossman's piece, concerned with moral obligation in performances (though, incidentally, he does not tell us why the obligation is specifically *moral*), speaks of the need for something transcendent in relation to which musical fidelity can be made intelligible. He says (279): 'A Beethoven sonata exists as a physical score and as a series of performances. But it also exists as an abstract or ideal notion of its correct rendition. We cannot talk about an obligation to accuracy without generating the idea of prior existence and correctness. But our sense of obligation supersedes the past as it aims for a perfection as yet unknown. The sense of obligation generates its object as much as the



object generates the obligation; the object generated has an indefinite future, a future linked with an unfolding self.' Quite so, if we construe Grossman's ideal as summaries of musical practice. But Grossman goes on to say (280): 'The true Sonata, the Platonic form, prior and subsequent to his efforts, was likely something poor, deaf Beethoven was loath to think he could approach. Seen this way, performance is a continuation of a search, not the presentation of a settled discovery. A performance is not so much a member of a class as a longing for an impossible way of being.' It seems that Plato lives on.

And in the case of Wolterstorff, the transcendental is posited as a realm in which one may find freedom. He says (128): 'In short, around autonomous art we have constructed an ideology in which such art is seen as transcending the alienation of everyday society. To immerse oneself in a work of art is to enter a higher realm – a realm of freedom and transcendent universality: freedom from social demands alien to the artist, transcending the particularity of the artist's society so as to put us in touch with universal humanity. Our picturing of the artist as socially oblivious is an unavoidable corollary of his ideology. If freedom and universality are principally what one looks for in art, then the embodiment in art of social reality will never catch one's eye ... And if, finally, we ask why we in the modern West have felt impelled to see in art something transcending the bondage and particularity of society, imparting to us a glimpse of nonalienated existence, of humanity at home on earth and in society, then no doubt part of the answer will have to consist of taking note of the fact that as the Christian religion lost its grip on the minds and hearts of Western humanity, some filled the gap with faith in the present and future wonders of science and technology, while others filled it with Art – art understood now as *opera perfecta et absoluta*.' Wolterstorff's absolute speaks for itself.

Of course, such tensions between praxial and foundational strains in the Philosophy of Music prompt larger philosophical questions. At the same time, theorizing about those larger questions may be well served by considering the textured discussions of musical practices provided in this volume. In any event, Alperson has provided a coherently related group of informative essays, furnishing a lot of good material with which to pursue the Philosophy of Music. The book would make an excellent reader for a course in the Philosophy of Music, and I intend to use it for that purpose myself.

**Michael Krausz**

Bryn Mawr College

**D.S. Clarke, Jr.**

*Rational Acceptance and Purpose:*

*An Outline of a Pragmatist Epistemology.*

Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers 1988. Pp. x+148.

US \$29.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-8476-7599-8);

US \$14.95 (paper: ISBN 0-8476-7600-5).

It is fashionable these days to follow Rorty down a pragmatist path which denigrates truth and knowledge. In *Rational Acceptance and Purpose*, Clarke instead follows Peirce, Dewey, and more recently, Isaac Levi, in arguing for a pragmatist epistemology which links knowledge to inquiry. Such an epistemology takes the inquirer's body of background belief seriously – it is a standard for what is rational and it provides a guide for action and deliberation. In this book we get an account of acceptance which links the rational acceptance of a hypothesis with the purposes and actions involved in inquiry.

That is, Clarke wants to spell out two relationships – that between acceptance and action and that between acceptance and purpose. With respect to the first, his claim is that acceptance of a hypothesis (be it a practical or a theoretical hypothesis) involves a commitment to action. The hypothesis becomes part of our background corpus of knowledge which guides us in our actions and future deliberations. This claim is nicely argued for and fleshed out in section 1.3. A fairly detailed account is given as to just how our corpus of background knowledge functions in inquiry.

With respect to the second relationship, Clarke seems to me to be on shakier ground. He argues that 'the standards used in justifying acceptance of a proposition as rational must include reference to individual or community purposes' (ix). Justification is not a matter of purely epistemic criteria or logical relationships between propositions. Rather: 'x is justified in accepting a proposition *p* relative to evidence *e* only if the expected cost of acquiring additional relevant evidence *e'* is higher than the expected cost of acting on the basis of *p* which would be incurred if *p* were later proven mistaken' (82).

Now if the expected costs in question were only the costs of the accepted proposition being mistaken, Clarke's position would be unremarkable. We aim for true hypotheses and so we ought to assess the risk of a hypothesis being false and make that assessment relevant to whether or not we accept it. But Clarke has other, 'non-cognitive' costs in mind, such as the costs of acquiring evidence (73ff, 87). The

cost of research is relevant to whether you ought to accept a hypothesis. Clarke holds this thesis, I suggest, because he blurs the distinction between provisional acceptance and acceptance proper.

He follows C.S. Peirce in identifying three stages of inquiry. Inquirers first arrive at a plausible hypothesis through abductive or retroductive inference – something like an inference to a good explanation. Predictions are then derived from the hypothesis and the hypothesis is then, in the third stage of inquiry, tested by induction (11, 47). If it passes these tests, it will be accepted. Like Peirce, Clarke takes the first stage of inquiry – the abductive stage – to be a matter of ‘provisional acceptance of a candidate for testing’ (87). Acceptance here is acceptance as plausible. And the final stage of inquiry – the inductive stage – is where a hypothesis gets added or fails to get added to the inquirer’s body of belief. Acceptance here is terminal acceptance or acceptance as true.

But unlike Peirce, Clarke seems to think that provisional acceptance is on a par with acceptance proper; he does not want to make anything out of the distinction between the two kinds of acceptance. He shows how both are related to action and tries to show how both require reference to the purposes of inquirers. He relies, however, on provisional acceptance to provide ‘clear and far less controversial examples’ of how rational acceptance is related to purposes; of how the potential non-cognitive benefits and burdens of accepting H are part of the evaluation of the acceptance of H as rational or not.

The Peircean pragmatist will think that the inquirer’s interests and purposes will play a role in provisional acceptance or abduction. Inquirers will only entertain what is a serious possibility according to their existing corpus of belief and they will only entertain what is relevant to the purposes of the inquiry in question. These are cognitive considerations; they are related to the likelihood of the hypothesis being the best explanation of the data. Peirce thought that non-cognitive considerations (such as saving money) are also relevant for acceptance as plausible – we must choose hypotheses that are ‘economical’ in money, time, thought and energy.

But Peirce saw clearly that provisional acceptance is not acceptance at all. Abduction is the process of forming explanatory hypotheses. These hypotheses, however, are not accepted – they are mere conjectures: ‘Abduction commits us to nothing. It merely causes a hypothesis to be set down upon our docket of cases to be tried’ (5.602, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss [Belknap Press 1935]).

In short, with Clarke, the pragmatist ought to try to bridge the gap between practical and theoretical deliberation – both commit one to action and must be seen in the context of the interests and purposes of the community. But, against Clarke, the pragmatist ought not to bridge the gap between acceptance as plausible (abduction) and acceptance proper. Certain interests and purposes are relevant to the former but not to the latter. The values relevant to acceptance proper are cognitive values such as fit with experience, acquiring new information, prediction, fit with existing theory, avoidance of error, etc. Some of the values relevant to the former are non-cognitive values such as economy.

*Rational Acceptance and Purpose* ought to be on the required reading list for those interested in a pragmatist epistemology which takes account of our background beliefs and the fact that we are members of a community engaged in inquiry. But one should not stop here. In particular, one should move on to Levi's *The Enterprise of Knowledge*, a work that is referred to frequently by Clarke. For Levi gives the most rigorous account of how our corpus of background belief functions in inquiry. And Clarke is surely right in thinking that this lies at the heart of the pragmatist's epistemology.

**Cheryl Misak**  
Queen's University

**John J. Cleary and Daniel C. Shartin,**  
eds.

*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium  
in Ancient Philosophy, Volume IV 1988.*

Lanham, MD: University Press of America  
1989. Pp. xv+371.

US \$34.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-8191-7335-5);

US \$19.75 (paper: ISBN 0-8191-7336-3).

This volume includes nine papers, each accompanied by a commentary. The Preface by Cleary explains the organization of the book; the Introduction by Shartin summarizes the contents of the papers uncritically (are such introductions useful?). There is a Bibliography,

an Index of Passages, and a General Index, all of which *are* clearly useful to the reader.

*These proceedings are worth publishing, for at least two reasons.* First of all, the papers, with only one or two exceptions, are good. All collections are uneven; this one is less so than most. Second, the proceedings give the reader a good sense of what research in ancient philosophy (at least in English) is currently concerned with, as regards subject areas, issues and approaches. This is especially true because the collection includes commentaries, which make clear what is controversial or interesting in the papers.

The editors claim that the Colloquium organizers aim for diversity in subject matter and philosophical style (v). Despite this aim, despite the absence of any declared theme, the collection is less diverse than one might expect, and makes apparent certain recent trends in scholarship in ancient philosophy. Of the nine papers, seven are concerned with Aristotle or Hellenistic philosophy, or Aristotle *and* Hellenistic philosophy (with a short section on Anaxagoras in Sorabji's paper on ancient views about chemical combination). Of these seven, all focus on issues in Aristotle's natural philosophy or Hellenistic ethics. The only other papers in the collection are concerned, in one instance, with Homer and political thought, in the other with myths in Plato's *Republic*.

A renewed interest in teleological theories and the problems that beset such theories is evident in the papers on Aristotle. The clearest instance is Gotthelf's piece, 'The Place of the Good in Aristotle's Teleology'; he argues that, 'The account of what it is to be an end, and the criterion for determining what stage of some end-directed process is its end, can be given – ultimately *must* be given – without reference to the goodness of the end in question' (115). This claim contributes to the more general argument that Aristotle did not intend to attribute conscious or unconscious wishes to nature.

Gallop shares Gotthelf's view that Aristotle's ascription of purpose to nature is 'merely a *façon de parler*,' in Gallop's words (260). While this is more or less received opinion now, his argument is of interest because he claims to find positive evidence for such a view. Gallop considers the operation of natural teleology in Aristotle's explanation of sleep and of dreams in the *Parva Naturalia*. He points out that Aristotle in general explains dreams by analogy with perceptual errors, and that explanations cannot be provided for perceptual failures. As a result, he claims, 'Aristotle need no more assign a final cause to dreams than to other side-effects that he attributes to "decaying

sense" (271). Gallop then focusses on a remark in the *de Divinatione per Somnum* at 463b14-15, where Aristotle says that dreams, like nature, are not divine but daemonic. He argues that Aristotle's point here is that both fortuitous events (like veridical dreams) and the operations of natures, 'exhibit the appearance without the reality of intelligent design' (282).

The two papers on Hellenistic ethics in this volume have a common feature: each tries to make more plausible some claim that may seem wildly implausible to our philosophical sensibilities. Long defends the Stoic conception of happiness against the objections that it is impoverished and disingenuous; Mitsis argues that one can give some account of why 'the Epicurean strongly denies that death in any way diminishes life's pleasures by cutting them short' (304). Mitsis concentrates on a passage in Lucretius which compares the time after we are dead to the time before we are born. He takes this passage to be a defense of the Epicurean doctrine on the grounds that it is irrational to have different attitudes towards our past and future non-existence, and that the rational attitude to have towards our past non-existence is one of indifference. His paper has a beautifully structured argument, calling on Nagel and Parfit's work on personal identity both to support the Epicurean view and to offer objections to it. But perhaps the best piece in the collection is Striker's commentary on Mitsis, which opens with the remark that, 'If Epicurus wanted to persuade us that we should be indifferent as to the prospects of dying at 18 or 80, something must be wrong with his argument' (323), and proceeds to point out that the issue is not so much duration of life as completeness of life, by appealing to a distinction between premature death and eventual death. She allows that fear of eventual death might well be irrational (though she recognizes that this does not necessarily prevent us from fearing it), but that fear of premature death is not irrational, because a desire for completeness is not irrational, and a very short life is unlikely to be a complete life.

Finally, Annas's paper in this volume, 'Naturalism in Greek Ethics: Aristotle and After' is a consideration of three standard and powerful objections to the appeals to nature in Greek ethics. These objections are: 1/ that such appeals must be teleological (her response to this again presents an interpretation of Aristotle's teleology which denies that it committed him to the view that human life has a purpose); 2/ that appeals to nature presuppose a single form of human life; 3/ that it is a mistake to suppose that all or even many worthwhile aims can be fulfilled harmoniously in a human life. Annas's

point is that appeals to nature do not necessarily make an ethics naturalistic, in the ordinary sense. What is impressive in her paper is that she manages both to offer a subtle reading of ancient texts and to take up issues currently of considerable interest in moral philosophy. This combination of sensitivity to the ancient texts and philosophical insight is characteristic of this collection at its best.

**Marguerite Deslauriers**

McGill University

**Bernard den Ouden and Marcia Moen,  
eds.**

*New Essays on Kant*

New York: Peter Lang 1987. Pp. 269.

US \$51.50. ISBN 0-8204-0365-2.

This book presents a collection of 11 previously unpublished articles on Kant, 6 of which are on central themes arising from the First Critique, the remainder dealing with issues from the Second and Third Critiques as well as other writings. What follows is a brief summary of the contents of each of the contributions.

1. *G.G. Brittan, Jr.* Brittan claims that theoretical entities, like the entities introduced in fiction, are incomplete objects, indeterminate with respect to 'predicate bivalence'. Theoretical entities are thus 'ideal' in the sense in which point masses in Newtonian physics are ideal: they are constructed entities which may nevertheless be real since they have spatio-temporal existence. Brittan seeks to interpret Kant's commitment to Transcendental Idealism in terms of this conception of ideality.

2. *C.J. Posy.* Posy provides a commentary to Brittan in which he gives good expression to skeptical doubts about indeterminate objects, replacing Brittan's account of Kant's transcendental idealism with his own interpretation which sees Kant committed to an account of truth as warranted assertability in the long run. To save the empirical realist part of Kant, Posy suggests that Kant had in mind (or could have had in mind) a realist account of reference. (Cf. the work of Ian Hacking, who similarly endorses a strategy of dividing the issue of

realism about truth from realism about entities or referents. Cf. also my own review article 'Perceiving and Representing: Reflections in Ian Hacking's recent book *Representing and Intervening*' *Dalhousie Review* 68.3, 617-25, where I suggest that Hacking's distinction has its roots in Kant's distinction between intuition and knowledge.)

3. *M. Kuehn*. Kuehn offers an account of The Transcendental Deduction which sees its purpose as the negative one of proving that experience beyond the bounds of sense experience is impossible. This negative task is contrasted by Kuehn with the positive anti-skeptical task usually attributed to The Deduction.

4. *R. E. Aquila*. In his book *Representational Mind* (Bloomington: Indiana ;U.P. 1983) R.E. Aquila treats the objects of Kantian intuitions as intentional objects. In this paper he extends his account by focusing on a text in the A-Edition Deduction in which Kant asserts a connection between associative rules of the imagination and their 'ground in appearances'. After some 'text teasing' – a bit too much for my taste – Aquila offers his positive thesis that the associative rules of the imagination provide that additional element of sensuous determinateness needed to turn appearances – the undetermined objects of empirical intuition – into the empirical objects themselves. Aquila credits Croce with the leading idea upon which his own analysis is based. The piece also contains a useful summary of the main ideas of *Representational Mind*.

5. *R. Meerbote*. Meerbote's contribution is on the Refutation of Idealism. His discussion focuses on the transition from Kant's claim that temporal determination requires something permanent in perception to his conclusion that the permanent something is an actual outer object. Meerbote finds Kant's argument to be unclear and ambiguous in places but thinks that the reconciliation of these ambiguities requires reading Kant as holding 'that the inner, to be determinable, is [token identical] with the outer' (129).

6. *R.P. Wolff*. The puzzle that Wolff raises is how, in light of (what Wolff regards as) the Kantian assumption that the people I encounter in moral interactions must be characters in a story I myself tell, can such people be held responsible for their actions as noumenal agents. Wolff considers various Kantian responses to this puzzle deciding, in the end, that none are really satisfactory.

7. *H.E. Allison*. In *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven, CT: Yale U.P. 1983) Allison has presented an interpretation of Kant's doctrine of Transcendental Idealism that treats Kantian conditions on experiences as *epistemic conditions*. By this Allison means the con-



ditions enabling an object to be something which we can mentally represent. This article provides a useful summary and, in some respects, an extension and clarification of these ideas. He also replies to some of his critics.

8. *K. Ameriks*. This article is an original and scholarly discussion of the Hegelian critique of Kantian ethical theory. The article includes a discussion of three sets of philosophical commentators who have written about this critique as well as exegetical arguments of his own regarding the evolution of Hegel's critique and its ultimate significance.

9. *R.M. Schott*. Schott regards Kant's epistemology as 'anti-sensuous' and sets out to track the source of the 'hostility towards the body' which she finds in Kant's thought. Her course takes her in the way of Kant's theory of emotions and sex.

10. *W.F. Buck*. Buck introduces readers to Kant's justification of property rights in *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, a text somewhat off the beaten track of Kantian primary sources available to English readers. Buck identifies a two part argument consisting (1) of a component in which the right to property is established and (2) a 'deduction' of this right including proofs *that* such rights are possible and an explanation *how* they are possible. Buck develops an analysis of the *how-possible?* component that leads from a contractarian conception of how rights come to be in force to the enabling condition that rights holders must have originally existed in physical community with one another and from thence to a geographical condition that they must have inhabited a finite space on the surface of a globe. Buck presents an interesting internal criticism of this idea.

11. *M. Moen*. Moen discusses the doctrine of 'hypotyposis' as it presents itself in Kant's three Critiques, focusing on the form it takes in the Third. This notion is Kant's generalized notion of concretization familiar to readers of the First Critique in the guise of transcendental schematism. Moen notes that Kant usually characterizes hypotyposis in epistemic terms, as a condition of the application of concepts. However, she thinks that it is also legitimate to regard hypotyposis as a kind of interpretation function.

One of the standard complaints of students newly encountering the secondary literature on Kant is that this literature is as hard to understand as the primary source itself. Some of this is due to the fact that an adequate exposition of conceptually complex material will itself be conceptually complex, but part of it is due to factors less inevitable than this. One such factor is an unwillingness on the part

of some commentators to give a clear and simple statement of the basic vision of Kant underlying their exegetical treatment; another is an excess amount of 'text teasing'. Though not entirely absent from this collection, generally the contributions are free of these vices and thus should appeal to readers wishing to gain an entry into recent Kant scholarship at a level that falls somewhere between the introductory and the expert.

I recommend this book not only for Kant scholars but also for teachers wishing to provide their students with an interesting and readable sample of some of the best in contemporary Kant scholarship.

Unfortunately for a book with such good content, the production values are quite poor. Indeed, I have never encountered a book produced by a professional publishing company with so many formatting problems. Peter Lang Publishers (New York) need to get their act together.

**Tom Vinci**

Dalhousie University

**Mary McCanney Gergen, ed.,**

*Feminist Thought and the Structure  
of Knowledge.*

New York: New York University Press  
1988, Pp. xix+200.

US \$35.00. ISBN 0-8147-3013-2

The impact of feminist thought on the structure of academic knowledge is both critical and reconstructive. On the critical plane, feminists have taken issue with the governing ideals of rationality and objectivity that have served, since the Enlightenment, as touchstones for establishing epistemic certainty. Arguing that an ideal objectivity that pretends to value-neutrality, universality, and detachment is at best self-deceptive and at worst oppressive of marginalised groups, feminists have engaged in sophisticated critiques of the politics of knowledge. They have emphasized the imperative always to ask *who* an enquirer is, to analyse the significance of her or his epistemic location to the knowledge that he/she constructs. They have

resisted the essentialism of appeals to autonomous reason or Universal Man, and have exposed the structures of power and privilege that sustain abstract epistemic individualism.

On the reconstructive plane, feminists are developing contextualized, interpretive, dialogic approaches, where knowledge constructed in debate, conversation within and across communities of enquirers, is analysed and evaluated communally. They argue for self-critical epistemic standpoints, where enquirers account for the specificities of their position on the epistemic terrain and acknowledge the constitutive role of that position in the production of knowledge. Feminists look for epistemological methods that take differences and specificities seriously; that can accommodate the fact that knowledge is both subjective and objective – and yet it is *knowledge* worthy of the label.

This collection of twelve essays, developed out of papers presented at Penn State in 1986, conveys the impact of these projects on disciplines as disparate as history, psychology, anthropology, and biology. Ruth Hubbard's provocative challenge: 'Every fact has a factor, a maker...[H]ow do we sort those aspects of [the world] that we permit to become facts...? [W]hat criteria and mechanisms of selection do people use in the making of facts?' (1) sets the stage for the critique of objectivism central to many of the essays; and for the concern with the *agency* of knowers and the asymmetrical positions of authority they occupy. Even the past is a social construction, not an objective, empirical given, Emily Grosholz claims. She argues for reflexive, self-conscious practical deliberation as a tool for examining the standpoint of the historian analysing the moral significance of the past in its bearing upon, and reconstruction in, the present. For Grosholz, a feminist historian must 'take sides, make moral discriminations about history, and try to render [her] judgments persuasive ...' (179). This is no detached, value-neutral project.

With the exception of Hubbard, who is concerned with the production of knowledge in the natural sciences, the contributors deal with social scientific knowledge. Peggy Sanday contends that anthropological conclusions about women's social positions are determined less by neutral observation than by an anthropologist's model of human society. She distinguishes a 'patriarchal model' (p.51ff) that emphasizes the peripheral social position or symbolic devaluation of women, from a 'matrifocal model' (54ff) that foregrounds places where the importance and efficacy of female power are visible. Sanday is not indulging in nostalgia for a lost maternal realm, a forgotten closeness

to nature. She is arguing for the potential of a matrifocal model to destabilize assumptions of universal male dominance whose 'terms of...opposition [are posed] as a static rather than a progressive dialectic' (63). In her view, feminist anthropology is 'myth making for change' (65), whose success is bound up with an observer's maintenance of an honest acknowledgement of her place within the enquiry. She cannot remain detached, disengaged.

There is considerable optimism in these essays about the development of successor epistemological positions informed by feminist interests. It is an optimism born of faith in the capacity of practitioners to be self-aware, to be self-critical in knowing the implications of their own participation. There can be no doubt that efforts to achieve critical self-awareness are fundamental to most feminist projects, whatever their ideological stance. Yet few of these authors develop a structural analysis adequate to the task of exposing the material, social, ideological, and cultural conditions that constitute any enquirer's position and practice. Hence despite their rejection of the individualism of traditional epistemology, the authors often represent reflexivity as the privileged introspection of a transparent, unified self who can, with effort, be clear about his biases and motives. Such a conception of subjectivity is insufficiently complex to accommodate the positive valuation of ambivalence and ambiguity (cf. Joan Meyer, p.116), and the full contextualization of both knower and known, that many of the authors advocate.

The most elaborated repudiation of individualism comes from Polly Young-Eisendrath, who deplores the denigration of 'ordinariness, shared intelligence, limitation, dependence, and collectivity' (154) occasioned by the belief that people are, by nature, 'unique individuals'. Young-Eisendrath argues for a relational conception of self that privileges communal experiences as constitutive of selfhood. She attributes to the tenacity of the individualist illusion women's persistence in constructing 'personal theories of inadequacy and inferiority' (159) that fail to recognize that devalued traits are constructs of male-dominated social orders; and aims to reconstruct female epistemic authority through 'the rebonding of women and the integration of female community' (170).

John Shotter and Josephine Logan would be less than sanguine about her chances of success. In the least optimistic – but perhaps most realistic? – piece in the book, they argue that because the women's movement must develop within a society where 'men and women alike, are "soaked" in [patriarchy]' (68), there is a tendency unwit-

tingly to reproduce the very categories and structures feminists are committed to renouncing. Even the 'other kinds of knowing' feminists construct – situated, particularized, relational, participatory – are frequently blocked or assimilated by the mainstream, whose methods feminists often have to apply in order to challenge it. Only in an ironic distancing from patriarchal practices (72), achieved through the conversational 'creative, formative power of talk' (82) do they anticipate progress in the realization of feminist goals. Perhaps it is because of their cognizance of the power structures within which revolutionary projects are implicated that Shotter and Logan strike so cautious a note. In many of the essays, questions about power are only cursorily addressed.

The fascination of this book – and its value for feminist epistemological enquiry – is in its case-by-case demonstration of how specific enquirers and practitioners in specific disciplines are struggling, often successfully, to put feminist methods to work in 'their' areas of enquiry. Its frustrations derive from the fact that there is so little analysis of differences – of class, race, sexual preference, of economic, cultural, and religious location; so little consideration of the epistemic power and privilege that enable many of these differences to legitimate oppressive epistemologies. Because a unified voice obliterates differences, it is hard to see the political value in Mary Gergen's vision for the book: that 'one clear song of feminism may some day hold' (x). Feminist enquirers need to produce knowledge that has a place for many voices, with no presumption that they will sing in unison.

**Lorraine Code**

York University

**William S. Hamrick**

*An Existential Phenomenology of Law:*

*Maurice Merleau-Ponty*

Phaenomenologica, No. 104. Norwell, MA:

Maritinus Nijhoff Publishers 1987.

Pp. ix+246.

U.S. \$68.00. ISBN 90-247-3520-3.

In this book Hamrick tries to set out the phenomenology of law that Merleau-Ponty would have written but never did. Despite its shortcomings, Hamrick's effort to have Merleau-Ponty speak to some issues in legal philosophy is an interesting and worthwhile attempt to bring phenomenological insights to bear on these issues. One can look forward to the promised statement of Hamrick's own theory of law which will be based on an existential phenomenology and critical legal studies.

The first problem with which Hamrick must deal is the nature of phenomenological enquiry according to Merleau-Ponty, for the latter's view of the relationship between phenomenology, metaphysics and science underwent a fundamental change between his earlier and his later work. In the earlier works, nature is not normatively significant for culture and the meaning of action is determined within a context of sedimented meanings; in the later works, nature arises from Being and is now normatively significant. Hamrick chooses to base himself on Merleau-Ponty's earlier works.

According to Hamrick's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, law is a social structure or order of meaning (praxis) of living intersubjective relationships which has its origin in politics. It is a mode of expressing meaning and more particularly a mode of expressing values. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no a priori meaning, truth, or values and the task of humanity is to make sense of the world. According to Hamrick, the task of law, like the task of ethics and politics, is to concretize values, to bring them into being. Law interacts with other systems of expressive possibilities, while sharing their structural characteristics; equally, these other orders of social meaning are reflected within law. Yet although there is a certain similarity between values propounded by law and those propounded by morality, they are not reducible to one another.

Hamrick says that law differentiates itself from these other means of social ordering in the manner by which it institutes values; first, changes wrought by law occur more slowly than those brought about

by other means of social ordering; secondly, law is formally compulsory; and thirdly, law is formally established. It is unclear how the three distinctions put forward by Hamrick can constitute the essential difference between law and other means of social ordering. While it is true that law operates rather slowly, it is by no means evident that other normative social institutions operate changes any more quickly than law does. Also, one can think of other means of social ordering that are formally obligatory and formally constituted. Given Hamrick's presentation of law as a mode of expressing values which interacts with other orders of social meaning, it may be more useful to look at law as an institution brought into being when society has reached such a degree of complexity, such a critical mass, that it is necessary to have some formal social structure upon which society may rely to constitute the horizon of meaning of its world. This interpretation of the relationship of law to other normative social institutions is at least equally consonant with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the social world.

According to Hamrick, when legal rules are examined within their experiential context, they are seen to have an objective or sedimented meaning which structures the context in which they appear and are used; yet they are not pure objects, they can take on new meaning, express new possibilities. Judicial decision making can then be neither the purely mechanical application of legal rules nor the arbitrary imposition of the judge's value system to a given fact situation. Judges take up the constituted meaning of legal rules (*la langue*) and modulate them to make them express new meaning (*la parole*), thus bringing about the sedimentation of new meaning. They make rules say something new but still something that they were already capable of saying.

In a section entitled 'Interests and Justice', Hamrick takes up Merleau-Ponty's conception of the new liberalism as presented in *Les Aventures de la dialectique* and applies it to the question of the relationship of law to justice. The task of law is then to assist the new liberalism and its institutions such as parliament both to respect individual freedom and to bring about justice (universality). The goal of justice is to bring about a society where individuals are treated as ends in themselves and where those who are systematically disfavoured can be fully respected. Here, Hamrick has not fully exploited the possibilities inherent in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology for a theory of law. The whole argument which grounds respect for the other as a fundamental value can be made much stronger by utilizing

Merleau-Ponty's insight that the thetic consciousness of oneself is dependent upon the non-thetic awareness of the other. The other, being what makes possible the awareness of oneself, must then be respected. Fidelity to law can then be justified as a fundamental value insofar as law makes possible the respect of the other.

Hamrick's presentation of the ideal of respect for law is solidly within the western tradition. How well this coheres with other traditions, such as those of the native Indians of North America, for example, is not addressed. Nor is it clear how it would. In our society, individualism is a very strong value; in other societies where existence is much more precarious, there is a felt need for social ordering mechanisms to apportion scarce resources. Recourse to the new liberalism does not seem to allow for answers to such questions when posed from outside the western tradition of individualism. It may be true that parliamentary democracy is the best institution yet developed to deal with our western problems but whether this solution is applicable to other societies needs to be examined more critically in a broader cultural context.

### **Henri Paillard**

*(Department of Law and Justice and Department of Philosophy)*

Laurentian University

### **Michael Krausz, ed.**

*Relativism: Interpretation and  
Confrontation.*

Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame  
Press 1989. Pp. vi+503.

US \$34.95. ISBN 0-268-01636-4.

This collection contains twenty-one essays by twenty-two different authors and an introduction by the editor. Five of the essays – ones by Geertz ('Anti Anti-Relativism'), Putnam ('Truth and Convention: On Davidson's Refutation of Conceptual Relativism'), MacIntyre ('Relativism, Power, and Philosophy'), Harman ('Is There A Single True Morality?'), and Harré ('The "Self" as a Theoretical Concept') – have been previously published. Richard Rorty's 'Solidarity or



Objectivity' has been previously anthologized (although each anthology appears to claim the essay as its own); Thomas McCarthy's 'Contra Relativism: A Thought Experiment' has appeared in substantially the same form elsewhere. The essays vary quite widely with regard to the aspects of relativism which they address and the conclusions they draw with respect to the viability of relativist claims. The quality of the essays is also quite varied. The topical groupings of the essays which follows are my own.

Krausz's 'Introduction' provides a helpful statement of the notion of relativism and a concise summary of the thesis of each essay. His distillations of some theses are clearer than certain authors' themselves manage to provide. While I do not share the editor's expressed regard for some of the contributions, Krausz offers an apt guide to the volume's diverse contents.

The most interesting essays in the volume center on the topic of the notion of the self. Each examines how self-identity is subject to social determination and so is, insofar as it is contingent on local social factors, a relativistic concept. This category includes Harré's essay mentioned above, Amélie O. Rorty's 'Relativism, Persons, and Practices', and Mark Johnston's 'Relativism and the Self'. The essays display an interesting range of philosophical methods by way of approach to the notion of the self. Harré, whose essay is drawn from his book *Personal Being*, predicates his analysis on a distillation of research from several social sciences. He aims 'to drive a wedge between the concept of a person as a being whose identity consists in the unity of an embodied perceiver and the concept of a person centered on an identity as the one author of that beings' thoughts and actions' (416). Relatedly, A.O. Rorty reflects on a range of cultural and conceptual issues in support of her contention that the 'variety of functions that the concept of a person plays ... cannot plausibly be combined in a single concept' (436). Johnston's approach, although sharing the relativist sympathies of the authors just mentioned, approaches the topic as an exercise in conceptual analysis, and so stays within the more traditional confines of the analytic tradition.

I would include in this group Donald Davidson's important contribution, 'The Myth of the Subjective', although the scope and implications of Davidson's essay range well beyond issues of self-identity. Davidson develops and extends his now familiar and rightly celebrated attack on the 'third dogma' of empiricism – the scheme-content dichotomy – in an effort to naturalize the subjective-objective distinction. Davidson's bold assertion is that 'beliefs are true or false,

but they represent nothing' (165). Davidson takes the philosophic torch from Quine, Sellars, and Wittgenstein and moves forward the attack on the 'privacy' of thoughts.

Two essays concern themselves with recent criticism of objectivity in natural science mounted by sociologists of science. Both essays, Russell Keat's 'Relativism, Value-Freedom, and the Sociology of Science', and McCarthy's essay mentioned above, are critical of sociological attempts to view processes of justification in science as covert rationalizations of non-scientific concerns. Keat presents an analysis which, as a characterization of the sociological program in question, is inaccurate, and which, as a defense of value-free inquiry, is unconvincing. McCarthy's analysis develops a *Gedankenexperiment* which purports to establish that the nature of inquiry is such that it make claims to truth which relativists are committed to denying. Hence, no form of inquiry is relativistic in the sense that the sociological views under scrutiny claim to be.

Not too surprisingly, the topics of a third of the essays occupy the most traditional arena for discussions of relativism: moral and cultural matters. Harman's essay cited above casually reviews his own argument for moral relativism as well as countervailing considerations. Most interestingly, Harman links moral relativism and epistemological naturalism. MacIntyre and R. Rorty provide, in their respective contributions, further fuel for firing their ongoing debate regarding the nature and constitution of moral and social traditions. MacIntyre sees tradition, properly understood, as the escape from relativism; Rorty, in turn, urges an existential embrace of one another as the only solace we have in the absence of eternal truths.

Anthropological considerations weigh in, to very different effects, in the essay by Clifford Geertz previously cited and Richard Schweder's 'Post-Nietzschean Anthropology: The Idea of Multiple Objective Worlds'. Geertz debunks a number of the alleged consequences of endorsing a relativist view of cultures. Moral indifference is not a consequence of an appreciation of difference. Schweder's essay is every bit as silly and pretentious as his title suggests.

David B. Wong, in his essay 'Three Kinds of Incommensurability', and Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, in 'Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions', engage issues of how cross-cultural evaluations of, e.g., moral practices might be accomplished. Wong strikes a Geertzian note in his essay by maintaining that 'we may reject the notion that all forms of life are equally good and accept the notion that there is more than one form of life that is best' (154).

He also raises the interesting and important issue of how the evaluation of values is tied to self-knowledge, to one's concept of truth, and to an account of human flourishing. Nussbaum and Sen's essay is disappointingly vague. The view they urge is that the 'rational assessment of the values of a culture ... [is] a dynamic process requiring internal and immersed critical appraisal and involving emotional and imaginative responses to the challenges involved' (316). That's fine, but, as their later remarks indicate, one may 'expand' what counts as 'internal' criticism of, e.g., the position of Iranian women, in order to derive a 'politically correct' solution.

Confrontation with Harman's defense of ethical relativism is found in B.M. Matilal's essay, 'Ethical Relativism and Confrontation of Cultures'. Matilal maintains that one finds, across a broad range of ethical theories, the 'attribution of moral personality' (357). In this attribution he sees the way out of ethical relativism. For the moral universal requires only that people, however diverse, share a world and that cultures are never hermetically sealed. However, Matilal identifies no specific moral consequences to be drawn from this, and I am hard pressed to suggest any on his behalf.

The last set of essays I group under the general rubric of a concern with epistemological aspects of relativism. By and large, these are the most disappointing group. Putnam's essay, mentioned earlier, argues for the claim, apparently contra Davidson, that a 'radical interpreter himself may have more than one "home" conceptual scheme' (181). The explicit contrast here is with Carnap's distinction between internal and external questions. Davidson, Putnam thinks, construes all questions as internal questions only. Putnam maintains that a Davidsonian scheme of translation cannot tolerate the possibility that one adopts different conceptual schemes, depending on one's purposes.

Gordon C.F. Bearn's essay, 'The Horizon of Reason', is also deeply concerned with Davidsonian-related themes. However, the philosopher who ultimately casts the longest shadow over Bearn's essay is not Davidson but Cavell. It is Cavellian anti-skepticism – a defense of the ordinary – with which Bearn is most concerned. Davidsonian concerns with translation transmute into Wittgensteinian/Cavellian concerns with 'attunements' in judgment. While there is much in this intelligent essay that is suggestive, too much is left only so.

Nelson Goodman's position is well known; perhaps this is why he is content to hold "Just the Facts, Ma'am!" to 5½ pages. Catherine Z. Elgin's 'The Relativity of Facts and the Objectivity of Values' reads

as if it were a lecture to a first-year class. It is not a very good lecture, however. Witness her 'proof' that moral relativism need not render moral judgment toothless: 'Advocates of apartheid, however adamant, are simply wrong. And they remain wrong even if they are too ignorant, biased, or closed-minded to recognize it' (97). Since Elgin knows she is right, lack of argument does not trouble her.

Joseph Margolis is an author who has read widely and insists on citing it all in his essay, 'The Truth About Relativism'. He argues there as follows: 'Relativism, then, is the thesis, at once alethic and metaphysical, that particular sectors of reality can only support, distributively, incongruent claims, that is, claims that on a bipolar model but not now would confirm incompatible or contradictory claims' (252). Eddy M. Zemach's 'On Meaning and Reality' refutes all major contemporary relativists and establishes metaphysical realism (including meaning realism) in twenty-nine pages. I can only assume that if one believes that this can be done, one believes that it can be done briefly.

**Paul A. Roth**

University of Missouri-St. Louis

**Peter J. McCormick**

*Fictions, Philosophies, and the Problems of Poetics.*

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1988.

Pp. xvi+351.

US \$42.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-8014-2204-3);

US \$15.95 (paper: ISBN 0-8014-9519-9).

Peter J. McCormick's *Fictions, Philosophies, and the Problems of Poetics* is an ambitious, painstaking discussion of some basic problems in literary criticism. These problems include pinning down the difference between fictional and non-fictional texts and explaining the cognitive status, emotional effect, and practical impact of literary works. In addressing these problems, McCormick typically starts with a literary text: a Korean Lyric, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, Milan Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and several poems by

Wallace Stevens are among his examples. McCormick then reports what the text has meant or done to competent communities of readers. After recording this response (being moved by a character in Kundera's novel, for instance), McCormick tries to explain it philosophically, first in linguistic, then in analytic, and finally in hermeneutic terms. Although each account improves on its predecessor, none does justice to the richness of the literary text or experience that McCormick wants to illuminate.

Returning to the literary work thus exposes the limitations of contemporary philosophical approaches to moral knowledge, action, and the other issues that literary experience raises. For McCormick, these limitations result from philosophy still being held captive to a scientific picture of rationality. Construing reason in scientific terms, philosophers discount literary treatments of action, for example, turning instead to scientific work in cognitive and motivational psychology. McCormick thinks that the richness of literature should 'force us to revise many of our as yet insufficiently critical accounts of reason and rationality' (304). He sees us as wandering between two worlds – a Lockean, scientific one that is dying and a post-Fregean, literary culture struggling to be born. In calling for 'a fresh idiom that incorporates the revalorization of the fictional' (324), McCormick feels that he is abetting the birth of a new, still inchoate post-Enlightenment era.

As a literary critic, I very much agree with McCormick that 'what is to be gained from turning to a case of action in poetry is the richness of the example, from which philosophical reflection can only hope to benefit' (156). McCormick's playing off literary texts against philosophical reflection – in particular, John Searle's speech-act theory, Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* and Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* – shows that there is more to human experience than even our most capable philosophers have dreamt of.

Even so, despite my considerable respect for McCormick's achievement, I am concerned about how literature is always showing up the inadequacy of philosophy in his book; philosophy is never challenging our understanding of literature. Although McCormick speaks of 'the give and take between literary presentation and philosophical representation' (xi), philosophy is always taking and literature always giving. In dealing with literature, McCormick defers to standard readings of literary works, at one point saying of an interpretive crux in Stevens 'surely here we can leave the problem of attempting a consensus on such a matter to the poets and literary critics who largely

constitute our communities of competent readers' (260). His fondness for recondite examples – a Korean lyric opens his first chapter and some Japanese poems are central to his last chapter – adds to his reticence. 'Had we the competence necessary for interpreting such pieces [as these Japanese poems]' (326), he says toward the end of the book, we would need to look at many things. But 'since this competence is lacking' (326), he calls attention to only one (obvious) aspect of the poem, the image that it begins and ends with.

I leave aside the difficulties besetting the determination of interpretive competence. My point is that McCormick takes from poetry only the bare minimum he thinks he needs to uncover the shortcomings of much contemporary philosophical analysis. No book can do everything, of course, and this one does enough to make at least some of us 'think twice about our habitual and perhaps too narrow philosophical understanding of the world' (261). But I fear that McCormick will mainly persuade the already persuaded. I cannot imagine an analytical philosopher being jolted by a conventionally read passage from Eliot into rethinking Richard Brandt's *Intending and Acting* (to use one of McCormick's examples). In any case, by acquiescing to the established reading of literary works (that is, the reading established by competent experts in literary criticism), McCormick leaves intact the disciplinary barriers that he rightly wants to assault. I prefer even more give-and-take between philosophy and literature. Martha Nussbaum's work on Henry James and the moral imagination comes to mind, as well as Stanley Cavell's work on Shakespeare and skepticism. When these philosophers put literature in touch with philosophy, both kinds of writing are transformed. Literature is as important as McCormick argues – too important to be left to literary critics.

**Michael Fischer**

(Department of English)

University of New Mexico

**Kai Nielsen**

*Marxism and the Moral Point of View: Morality, Ideology, and Historical Materialism.*

Boulder: Westview Press 1989. Pp. 302.

US \$48.50. ISBN 0-8133-0653-1.

Nielsen's latest book is an extended and detailed consideration of whether those who accept the canonical conceptions of Marxism can also adopt the moral point of view and a principle of justice. Ideology and historical materialism are discussed as required for this purpose, as are other canonical Marxist conceptions such as class struggle, a future communist society, the dialectical method, and the labor theory of value (cf. 120f, 278f). Accordingly, Nielsen is not primarily interested in what Marx or Engels themselves said. He allows that what Marx held was not, ultimately, consistent (276). The upshot is that Nielsen does not explicitly turn with great frequency to the writings of Marx, Engels or Lenin. In fact, he is much more concerned with the writings of contemporary Marxists (or Marxologists) such as G. A. Cohen, Allen Wood, and Richard Miller. Somewhat less frequently he considers Jon Elster, Ziyad Husami, William Shaw, Robert Tucker and Gary Young. These writers divide into those who defend a Marxist 'anti-moralism' or a Marxist 'moralism'. The dispute between these two groups is the unifying theme of this book.

Nielsen's own brand of Marxist moralism goes something like this. In accord with historical materialism, morality is conditioned by class interests and struggles within historical society. However, this provides a sociology of morals, not an epistemology of morals. It is false to hold that morality is simply culturally or class-relative. Instead, it is possible to identify within such class interests and struggles a set of impartial beliefs and values such as pleasure is good, health is good, freedom is good, servitude and suffering are bad (34f). These are independent of any particular class's interests. They can be used to develop an objective, though fallibilistic, morality which, though superstructural, is not ideological. This can be accomplished through a coherentist model of justification along the lines of Rawls's wide reflective equilibrium (11). The resultant moral theory can be used to criticize views across societies and historical times. Those who have denied that Marxists can morally condemn capitalism or adopt the moral point of view are simply mistaken. Marx (or a consistent Marxist) could and would do both. Within this morality, a Marxist would

hold a complex hierarchical view of justice, culminating in the communist principle of justice, 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.' This principle can also be applied trans-historically to other modes of production. For instance, it condemns the injustice of capitalism even at its birth from feudalism.

Nielsen's book repeatedly hammers these themes. In fact, the book is not so much one long argument in defense of the above views, as a number of overlapping arguments which defend the above views from different directions. Indeed, it would seem that, after the first introductory chapter, one might equally turn to most any other chapter to pick up Nielsen's argument. Part of this is due to the fact that approximately one half of the chapters have been previously published as independent articles. This results in a measure of repetition, if not in particular arguments, at least in formulation of the questions to be addressed and issues to be considered.

The strength of Nielsen's work lies in his meticulous discussion of the major arguments and views currently circulating regarding Marxist views on morality and justice. One who reads this book will have a very good understanding as to where the current debate stands and what arguments can be mustered for the moralist interpretation of Marxism. Among the issues, arguments and objections that Nielsen considers to defend his moralist view (and can only be mentioned here) are the following: the argument that historical materialism and class interests render all morality class bound and relative; the contention that morality is necessarily ideological and mystifying; the claim that the nature of justice is incompatible with communism; the view that the relation of production and distribution undermines a Marxist principle of justice; and the objection that morality undermines revolutionary practice.

Nielsen's discussion is noteworthy in the care and even-handedness with which he approaches the authors and issues he considers. Nielsen applies principles of interpretive charity not only to classical Marxists, but also to the contemporary Marxists (and Marxologists) who are the main object of his consideration.

Throughout these discussions the primary thrust of Nielsen's argument is to establish the possibility of a Marxist morality and principle of justice. Thus, Nielsen spends relatively little, if any time, with related notions such as freedom, coercion, domination, fraternity, or community. Similarly, the Marxist principle of justice is given relatively little elaboration. It is the possibility of Marxists holding such a principle that Nielsen is most concerned to defend, not its specific



nature. As a result, one learns a great deal about the relations among Marxist canonical conceptions, morality and justice, while somewhat less about the particulars of the last two.

Consequently, a major theme of the book is the nature of Marxism itself. Since Nielsen is not wedded to Marx's own statements (cf. 166) and allows that Marxists can differently identify and interpret the canonical conceptions of Marxism, he allows himself considerable room to defend a Marxist morality and principle of justice. It is to be doubted that all Marxists will see their own brand of Marxism in Nielsen's account. Indeed, how important it is to identify the resulting theory as 'Marxist' is itself open to question. Nielsen comments that 'talk of either "orthodox Marxism" or "revisionism" should be rejected as being more appropriate to theology than to a scientific social theory' (279). It is the theory, I suspect, and not the label that is ultimately important.

The book is nicely produced. I noticed only a couple of typos. The print is clear. Notes are collected at the end of each chapter, which provides for easy reference. There is no bibliography, but the notes contain copious references to relevant and current materials. It has a very useful index.

**George G. Brenkert**  
University of Tennessee

**David Pears**

*The False Prison: A Study of the  
Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy.*  
Volume II.

Don Mills, ON and New York: Oxford  
University Press 1988. Pp. ix+343.

Cdn \$97.50; US \$39.95

(cloth: ISBN 0-19-824487-8);

Cdn \$29.95; US \$16.95

(paper: ISBN 0-19-824486-X).

This study of the development of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the sequel to the first volume of *The False Prison* (Oxford U.P. 1987), which was primarily concerned with Wittgenstein's earlier philo-

sophy. While the second volume does not presuppose any acquaintance with the first and could be used by itself in a course on the later Wittgenstein, most readers of this volume will probably want to read it together with the first. Even those who only want a guide to Wittgenstein's later philosophy would do well to start with the introduction to the first volume, which provides a synoptic overview of the territory covered by both volumes. And in the end, once those readers have recognized how closely related the early and late Wittgenstein really are, they will probably want to read the interpretation of Wittgenstein's earlier conception of subject and object in the first volume, which is the starting point for the second.

This book provides a detailed and perceptive account of both the continuities and discontinuities in the development of Wittgenstein's later treatment of the ego, sensation and rule-following. This is achieved by a judicious combination of close reading of crucial texts, extended exploration of objections to Wittgenstein's train of argument, and some tantalising discussion of the metaphilosophical issues raised by Wittgenstein's later philosophical method. As a result of this combination of close focus and broad overview, Pears steers clear of the usual exegetical oversimplifications which have fuelled the debate over whether there were one, two or three Wittgensteins and the standard caricatures of Wittgenstein as a conventionalist or behaviorist, while providing a sympathetic exposition of the dialectical pressures which have made these readings seem so plausible.

Pears sees the the continuities in Wittgenstein's philosophy as arising out of his commitment to a conception of philosophy as an essentially critical enterprise, quite separate from science:

The simplest general characterization of his philosophy is that it was critical in the Kantian sense of the word. Kant offered a critique of thought and Wittgenstein offers a critique of the expression of thought in language. The human intellect is a limited instrument and philosophy's task is to turn it back on itself and to make it discover its limitations and then mark them in a self-abasing but salutary way. (3)

However, Pears goes on to say that this generalisation must be qualified by the caveat that the early system is, strictly speaking, only 'semi-critical,' for it incorporates an uncritically realistic conception of the world about which we speak: the meaning of a name is wholly determined by the object it refers to, and the structure of language reflects the fixed grid of possible combinations of objects. On this

reading, the most important discontinuity in the emergence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the critically motivated rejection of the *Tractatus*' residual realism and the consequent recognition of the significance of the contribution that we make to the stability of our language. This further twist to Wittgenstein's earlier critical turn is the leading theme in Pears' reading of Wittgenstein's later work.

Perhaps Pears' most impressive contribution to our understanding of the development of Wittgenstein's thought is his detailed demonstration that the Tractarian critique of the solipsistic conception of the ego and the later 'private language argument' are parallel arguments against closely related forms of private language. The former leads to the conclusion that identifying reference to individuals within an egocentric world is impossible, while the latter demonstrates that the use of terms for types is impossible within a world of sense data. The analysis of the relationship between the two is considerably more complex than this initial outline might suggest, primarily because the Tractarian argument is 'external,' directed against the idea that one can empirically identify the starting point of a private world within a common world, while the *Investigations* argument is 'internal,' directed against the conception of identifying reference conducted wholly within a private world. This leads Pears to identify versions of an 'internal' form of the argument against reference to the ego and an 'external' form of the private language argument in Wittgenstein's transitional writings.

The discussion of rule-following begins from an exposition of Wittgenstein's critique of two complementary types of theory as to how the meaning of the words we speak is determined. The first is the Tractarian view that determinacy of sense is explained by postulating something mind-transcendent, the pure essence of language; the second is the view that meaning is fixed by the thoughts which accompany our words. Pears brings out the underlying similarity between these two seemingly disparate views: they are both responses to the mistaken drive to find something which will lock a word on to its meaning, thus anticipating the whole series of correct applications of a word. The first postulates something remote and recondite, the second makes use of something familiar, but in either case, they take it for granted that the item in question will ensure that meaning is determinate, without requiring any further contribution from the speaker.

The main ideas I have just sketched provide the framework for an original and highly sophisticated interpretation of some of the main

themes of Wittgenstein's philosophy. However, the book should be of interest to a wide audience, for the discussion of detail is always motivated by a firm grasp of the underlying issues. Thus there are also valuable discussions of some of the main weaknesses of Wittgenstein's later treatment of experience, such as his excessive focus on the example of pain and his resultant failure to consider the full range of experience, and his apparent avoidance of the issue whether a solitary person could speak a language. But perhaps the deepest difficulty which Pears raises is the tension between Wittgenstein's naturalism and his conviction that philosophy is an autonomous, critical discipline. Pears characterizes Wittgenstein's later view of language as a self-correcting system built on pre-linguistic foundations, showing how it leads him to describe our linguistic practices and their place in our lives. But then that description always comes to an end at 'the point at which the speaker's reasons for saying what he does run out,' and he can only tell us that this is the way in which he finds it natural to go on. Why not try to explain naturalness instead of leaving it to the speaker to do the only thing he can do, namely report it as a plain phenomenological fact?' (515) Pears is not reverting to the speculative errors that he has spent several hundred pages exploring, simply noting that there 'is a strong case for extending the scope of [Wittgenstein's] naturalism and including any facts about our lives that help us to understand our own systems of thought' (516), even if those facts are the result of scientific investigation. In the end, Pears' study suggests the conclusion that Wittgenstein's unwillingness to make use of such facts was a matter of his running up against the limitations of critical philosophy.

**David Stern**

University of Iowa

**Robin May Schott**

*Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the  
Kantian Paradigm.*

Boston: Beacon Press 1988. Pp. 248.

US \$21.95. ISBN 0-8070-1406-0.

In her interesting and provocative book, Robin May Schott focuses our attention on two central themes emerging from the context of an examination of sexual relations in which philosophy has operated. First, she asks the reader to wonder about the philosophical significance of the historical absence of women from philosophy, and, second, to consider the social implications of a philosophy constructed on this basis. Her conclusions are to see the suppression of the erotic theme of human existence from philosophical contemplation to be an expression of a philosophical response to morality; women have been viewed not only in terms of their life-giving sexuality, but also to embody the threat of death as well. The philosophical move to transcend death through the purity and immortality of knowledge proved to be at once the repudiation of and distancing from women. Thus, the stunning absence of women from the history of philosophy is no mere coincidence. Rather, it suggests the character of western philosophy to dismiss as cognitively significant the erotic dimension of experience, and women as such, who have been historically identified with that eroticism.

The main thrust of her work, then, is to invite the reader to rethink the kinds of epistemology that have been traditionally embraced. Historically speaking, epistemological enterprises from Plato through Kant, have sought the knowable in terms of 'purity', 'eternity', and 'immortality'. Such terms suggest that the body and bodily concerns contribute nothing significant to cognition. This position reflects a vision that philosophy, as Kant maintained, has no history, that historical considerations are irrelevant to philosophy since they can furnish no more than mere contingencies, while philosophy proper deals with timeless truths. In this sense, Schott's work rejects the traditional western epistemological project as a search for atemporal objects and necessary truths alone. She suggests that we ought rather come to see these particular enterprises in terms of the historical circumstances that gave rise to them, and certified their value.

*Cognition and Eros* is divided into three parts: (I) Historical Antecedents of Ascetic Philosophy: Greek and Christian Origins; (II) The Kantian Paradigm of Objectivity; and (III) Conclusion. Part I consists in six chapters beginning with the origins of asceticism that Schott

traces back to Plato and Greek religion. More than anything else, Greek religion viewed the search for purity to be an activity of overcoming pollution. Women were commonly and centrally identified with that *miasma*. Plato's program is viewed within this historical setting that he embraces. Philosophy de-eroticized is then traced through the careers of Augustine and Aquinas where, with minor variations, the same theme is perpetuated. Finally, the pursuit of timeless knowledge is examined in terms of the Reformation and then the ascetic origins of the University. The ascetic impulse, according to Schott, consists in the denial and control of sexuality. The cognitive consequences were to distance women and the bodily dimension of experience with which they were equated, from the realm of knowledge. The social implications take varied forms. By the close of part I, she has invited the reader to think deeply about the hierarchical relations between the sexes implicit in commodity relations and the flourishing capitalism. The sexual implications of the ascetic heritage find expression in the economic structures that perpetuate it.

In part II, Schott focuses on Kant's theory of objectivity. She regards the theory to be a paradigm for modern views of knowledge. Her analysis is intended to demonstrate that rationality purified of sensual content is neither a natural nor necessary condition for knowledge. To make her case, she offers an analysis of Kant's fetishisms of 'objectivity' in his treatment of sensibility and theoretical knowledge, morality and practical knowledge, and the aesthetic pleasure in experience. Schott identifies the formal abstractness of persons and objects in Kant's work to be expressions of a capitalist economy. The Kantian paradigm not only reflects fundamental ingredients of this institutionalization of social relations, but fosters an ideology that has been called upon to justify the exclusion of women from the pursuit of knowledge. In Schott's view, the Kantian paradigm is deleterious to the development of individuals not only by admonishing them to remain distant from the emotional and sexual facets of existence, in the name of cognitive rigor, but also by legitimating this unfortunate standard for human relations generated by the world of commodity production.

Robin May Schott has offered readers a challenge to reappraise the values of rationality and autonomy that are admittedly in a crisis. What she has not provided is a constructive model for a liberated epistemology. Readers will look forward to her next book.

**Robert Hahn**

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

**Peter A. Schouls**

*Descartes and the Enlightenment.*

Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's  
University Press, 1989. Pp. 194.

Cdn. \$29.95. ISBN 0-8522-4562-9.

The label 'the Enlightenment' is deeply entrenched in the historiography of the early modern period. But as with many hallowed classifications (compare 'the Renaissance'), its edges are, to say the least, blurred. Alongside such canonical figures as Diderot, D'Alembert and Voltaire, many scholars are inclined to accord what Stuart Brown has termed 'honorary and retrospective membership' to philosophers of an earlier age such as Locke, or even Bacon. It is the central claim of Schouls' perceptive and lucid study that Descartes has perhaps the best claim to the accolade of herald of the Enlightenment: it was he who 'unmistakably articulated the Enlightenment's central ideas' (12).

The principal concepts which, on Schouls' reading, shaped the thought of the Enlightenment, are those of freedom, mastery and progress, and it is the place of the first of these that is his dominant theme. Descartes is standardly seen as the 'rationalist' *par excellence*, the central figure of the seventeenth-century 'age of reason' which is so often contrasted with the age of enlightenment. But for Schouls, 'Descartes takes free will, not reason, to be primary' (39). 'The autonomy of the will is fundamental for Descartes ... Unless we presuppose the existence of an autonomous will ... reason cannot be liberated and its trustworthiness cannot be established' (48). This primacy is operative right from the start, in the articulation of Descartes' first principle: in the Cogito, 'the thinking takes the form of doubting, and doubting ... cannot occur apart from an act of free will. To think is an exercise in freedom' (58).

Descartes' account of human freedom is, of course, notoriously complex and controversial; many indeed have regarded it as blatantly inconsistent. The key text is the Fourth Meditation in which we are offered two apparently incompatible accounts of free will: it is, on the one hand a contra-causal two-way power to do or avoid, to affirm or deny, and, on the other hand, a spontaneous and irresistible inclination to assent to the deliverances of the *lux rationis*. The riddle, as Anthony Kenny has pointed out, is not made any easier to solve by the fact that Descartes links the two definitions together, seemingly offering the second as a gloss on the first: freedom is liberty of indifference 'or rather' (*vel potius*) liberty of spontaneity (AT VII 57).

In a detailed analysis of the role of free will in the *Meditations*, Schouls argues that the phrase 'or rather' signals a 'submerged tension' between autonomy and reason. The 'essential task placed before man' is that of 'constantly exercising his liberty of indifference in order to attain for himself the state of liberty of spontaneity' (109). 'Indifference' emerges here as a radically ambiguous term. Sometimes it denotes that 'lowest grade of freedom' where the judgement is exercised, illegitimately and as it were blindly, in the absence of good reasons for or against. But there is another far more important species of indifference which Schouls terms 'liberty of opportunity'. This can be exercised in the wilful withdrawal of attention from the clear deliverances of reason (what Kenny has termed 'liberty of perversity'); but, more positively, it can be employed in beneficial acts of autonomous self-determination – in our willed decision to free our minds from prejudice, and in our decision resolutely to focus on the clear perceptions of the intellect (98).

At one level this is clearly a correct analysis. Descartes frequently observed that his metaphysical conclusions could be grasped only by those who were prepared to make the effort of will necessary to follow the order of discovery in the *Meditations*. And the truth of the Cogito, as Schouls highlights, is said to be reached when the mind 'makes use of its own liberty' (*propria libertate utens*) in pushing doubt to the limit and attending to that which cannot be doubted (Synopsis to *Meditations*). But is it right to describe all this in terms of the primacy of the will? Descartes' method is *par excellence* a method of 'rightly conducting reason' (*bien conduire sa raison*). The 'conducting' certainly requires acts of will – but even, for example, in the suspension of previous beliefs, what seems to be involved is not so much an arbitrary and autonomous *decision* as the systematic construction of 'powerful and well thought out reasons' (*validae et meditatae rationes*, Meditation One). Cartesian man is, unlike the deity, never in control of the truth; moreover, the development of the other 'enlightenment' values of progress and mastery of nature depends on the passive subordination of the intellect to an order of objective, rationally intelligible reality that is not of his making. It is not indifference but spontaneity – the 'divinely produced disposition of my inmost thoughts' (Meditation Four) that seems the primary notion here. Only with God, in Descartes' remarkable doctrine of the creation of the eternal verities, does will truly triumph over reason – but this doctrine, curiously and disappointingly, is not discussed by Schouls.



In his central arguments on the status of the will, and in some other places (e.g., where he sees Descartes as anticipating the Humean view of the subordination of reason to the passions), Schouls seems, to the present critic, less than fully convincing. Another highly controversial though interestingly argued claim (which there is unfortunately no space to discuss here) is that 'Descartes' position tends towards making God irrelevant for philosophizing' (60). But even those who want to resist Schouls' interpretation of the metaphysics of Cartesian liberty will find a great deal else in his book that both stimulates and illuminates. The later chapters, which unfold the debt which Condorcet and Diderot owe to the Cartesian conception of progress, are particularly impressive, as is the carefully nuanced demonstration of how much the eighteenth-century *philosophes* borrowed from Descartes' method, even while they were busy berating his metaphysics. The volume as a whole is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the origins of modernity.

**John Cottingham**

University of Reading

**David Sprintzen**

*Camus: A Critical Examination.*

Philadelphia: Temple University Press,  
1988. Pp. 310.

US \$34.95. ISBN 0-87722-544-3.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s whenever I would begin to teach a course on existentialism I would ask the students if they had read Kierkegaard, Sartre, Marcel or Camus. Almost no one had read anything by the first three but it seemed as though a majority of the students had read something by Camus. That has changed and at least among college students Camus seems to have joined the ranks of the unread. This is unfortunate. Also unfortunate is the attitude toward Camus that predominates among academics. Early in his scholarly and clearly written study of Camus, David Sprintzen notes that though few writers have achieved greater recognition than Camus, the French Algerian has been dismissed by most academics

as not very profound and as merely a dated product of the immediate post-war period. Praise has been lavished on Camus's writing style but the content of Camus's thought has not been paid serious attention. Sprintzen's book is convincing in its insistence on Camus's philosophical insight and depth. It should persuade readers who need to be persuaded of the importance of Camus in twentieth-century philosophical thought.

The proximity of Camus's thought to some American philosophy is one aspect of Camus's philosophy that was illuminated for me by Sprintzen's book. Noting that Camus's thought should be of special interest to Americans Sprintzen points out that

... it draws its strength in large part from a manner of thinking far closer to the American pragmatists, especially John Dewey, than has been generally noticed. Like Dewey, for example, Camus treats theories as hypotheses and treats goals as guides to action, while requiring that values be grounded in and tested by experience. And, like Dewey, he sees experience threatened both by the dead weight of sanctified habit and by the rigidity of absolutist thought, what Dewey called the quest for certainty. The failure to appreciate adequately what might be called Camus's ethical pragmatism contributes to much of the misreading to which he has fallen victim. (xv)

Correctly Sprintzen characterizes Camus's vision as a metaphysical naturalism that is marked deeply by a sense of the absence of God. It is a vision that is profoundly personal and yet cosmic. Noting the influence of Camus's Algerian upbringing in the sunbathed and impoverished working districts of North Africa, Sprintzen describes that upbringing as a pagan body coming to consciousness in a Christian world. Clearly Camus's preference was for the Greek vision rather than the Christian. He saw the latter as condoning suffering. For Camus Christianity was a doctrine of injustice because it was founded on the acceptance of the suffering of the innocent. The following paragraph from Sprintzen can serve as a good summary statement of Camus's outlook on Christianity.

Ultimately, Christianity sacrifices not the individual, but rationality – our sole resource for working out our natural destiny – on the altar of messianism, thus bathing the suffering of innocence in the waters of a transcendent and mysterious grace. Greek light is overwhelmed by Christian shadows. Totality replaces moderation. And the body,

rooted in the present and demanding dignity and happiness while lucidly facing death, is reduced to a humiliated supplicant bowing down in prayer and hoping to see as through 'a glass darkly' an infinite and unknowable God upon whose will our salvation depends. (9)

Though Camus's admiration of the Greek vision even extended to his preference for Greek tragedy, Sprintzen notes that Camus's view does not imitate the Greeks in either resignation or despair. Camus's philosophical vision is centered on rebellion. The absurd can never be conquered completely but like Camus's Sisyphus we should refuse to surrender.

Paradoxical as it seems Camus saw the absurd as an invitation to happiness. Not believing in any other worldly salvation, Camus wanted us to lead happy, meaningful lives in human community. Sprintzen points out that for Camus neither the universe nor man was absurd. What was absurd according to Camus was the confrontation between the two. The human mind desiring order, purpose and ultimate meaning, confronts reality with radical questions and is frustrated in its probing. Sprintzen suggests that for Camus the absurd was delivered to us by the failure of Judeo-Christianity which had been at the center of people's experience for centuries. Encountering the absurd was only the beginning. The absurd was not a conclusion but only a starting point for Camus. Consciousness confronting reality introduces the absurd but after the absence is recognized consciousness can construct a meaningful human life. For Camus this demanded human community.

I especially enjoyed Sprintzen's analysis of *The Stranger*, *The Plague* and *The Fall*. In his discussion of these novels Sprintzen reveals not only a grasp of Camus's thought but the ability to summarize clearly Camus's tenets for the reader. In discussing *The Stranger* Sprintzen correctly indicates that Mersault's main offense, and this is what makes him the most dangerous of rebels, is that he rejects the metaphysical bases of normal social order. Because of this rejection he must be killed. For Camus this was a serious problem with those who held absolutes: they allow no opposition. In pinpointing Mersault's 'sin' Sprintzen has laid bare the meaning of the novel, a meaning which I find college students often miss on a first reading. Until they grasp what Camus's philosophical point is, students find Mersault an unappealing and basically uninteresting character. Once they come to see that Mersault is refusing to play society's game and why he is refusing, they may not agree with either Camus or Mersault

but both the book and its anti-hero are more appreciated. Sprintzen makes clear what Camus meant in claiming that Mersault was the only Christ that people today observe. In Camus's eyes though Jesus accepted his death, Mersault was right in refusing to accept his. For Mersault, who did not believe in an afterlife, resignation and forgiveness would be compounding the injustice of his death. So Mersault's rebellion at his death makes him a fitting contemporary Christ figure for those who confront the absurd.

In *The Plague* through Dr. Rieux's diary, his chronicling of the daily struggles of those enduring the plague, and perhaps especially in the character Grand, Camus expresses his admiration for those who experience suffering. Sprintzen points out that in a character like Grand, Camus is celebrating the dignity of all those who have no way to make their voice heard. The touching last page of *The Plague* in which Rieux announces that in times of trial there is more to admire in people than to despise expresses succinctly Camus's vision of human dignity.

In discussing Camus's corpus of work, Sprintzen reveals both the depth of philosophical insight that Camus had and why he seems an especially apt spokesperson for a death of God generation. Especially interesting and instructive is Sprintzen's discussion of Camus's theory of art. The Nobel Prize winner's view of the role of art as explained by Sprintzen is strikingly similar to John Dewey's.

Opposed to what he called a museum conception of art, a conception that removed art from lived experience, Dewey wanted people to become artists in relation to their lives. Though he did not view life as absurd, he did want people to shape and form their lives so that human living would have an aesthetic integrity and wholeness. Camus assigned a somewhat similar function to art. Sprintzen stresses that for Camus art had a special role in an absurd world. The artist tries to present an integral work to us, a work in which there is meaning and coherence. He or she tries to present an aesthetic whole to us. For Camus artistic creation becomes a microcosm of an absurd macrocosm. The artists provide images for people through which they can see the world as it is, see it in all its absurdity. Camus believed that the absurd work of art offered not an ultimate resolution but the multiplication of tentative perspectives. Sprintzen says of Camus's vision of art

But if life can be found to be filled with qualities immediately experienced – with truths we can feel – then the role of absurd art becomes clear and important: it lives in the multiplication of those

qualities, in the diversification of perspectives, in the way in which it offers itself for contemplation and enjoyment. Art speaks for diversity, for the proliferation of qualities ad infinitum, and against exclusiveness and finality. It thus serves to reconcile humans to a life without ultimate justification. (234)

Sprintzen stresses that helping people make their lives artistic wholes is the task of politics according to Camus. People want a community experience that approximates an aesthetic whole and politics should help them achieve that.

After discussing *The Myth of Sisyphus* Sprintzen gives a summary statement of what Camus is trying to do in that book. I think Sprintzen's statement can serve as a summary statement of Camus's entire philosophy.

Torn between the nihilistic abyss of metaphysical despair and the illusory summit of metaphysical hope, Camus searches for a middle way – 'I only wish to remain on this middle path where the intelligence can remain clear' – a path that, while remaining true both to the experiential givens and to reason as our only but limited guide, leads us into a life that, though without ultimate significance, is found to be worth the effort. (49)

I confess that neither Camus nor Sprintzen's excellent explanation of Camus's philosophy has led me to believe that a life without ultimate significance is worth the effort. Though I cannot agree with Camus's philosophy I am indebted to David Sprintzen for his scholarly, detailed, reflective treatment of one of the more important philosophers of this century.

**Robert E. Lauder**  
St. John's University

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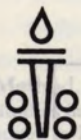
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