

## BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES-RENDUS

**Miguel Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*. Trans. Max Blechman and Martin Breugh. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011; 149 pages. ISBN: 978-0745650104.**

*Review by Devin Zane Shaw, University of Ottawa*

It is taken for granted today that calling a political practice *utopian* is synonymous with saying that it is *impossible*. Miguel Abensour has worked over the past several decades, as Coleridge would say, to desynonymise these terms; he contends that, far from being anti-political, utopianism is an important component of radical and emancipatory politics.

Abensour argues that emancipatory political practice is irreducible to, and in opposition to, the parliamentarianism of statist forms of democracy and the permutations of economism present in Marxism. In this regard, Abensour's work shares many affinities with Jacques Rancière's, from their respective attempts to rethink radical politics, to their critiques of Althusser. (Nevertheless, there are important differences between them: Rancière focusses on the *politics*—*la politique*—of equality, while Abensour deals with a utopian concept of *the political*—*le politique*.) For Rancière, politics, as dissensus, irrupts when the presupposition of the equality of intelligences and abilities is activated against regimes of inequality, in order to introduce new and more egalitarian ways of speaking, being and acting. Abensour's political thought can be characterised much like his characterisation of Pierre Leroux's: political praxis and theory work to democratise utopianism and utopianise democracy. Through this double movement, political practice "refuses the separation [found in early 19<sup>th</sup> century utopianism] between those who know and those who do not know, between the wise (*sages*) and the mad (*insensés*)," while thinking and practicing democracy otherwise than a political regime or parliamentarian enterprise. (*L'homme est un animal utopique*, Les éditions de la nuit, 2010, 91)

It is within this history—or project, to put the terms in the present tense—of utopian self-criticism that Abensour reads Marx's *Cri-*

*tique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (hereafter *Critique*), which is not to be mistaken with the well-known "Introduction" to "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" that was published in 1844. Marx's *Critique* was written in 1843 but not published until 1927, and even then it was overshadowed by another text that was rediscovered and published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844. Abensour argues that the *Critique* introduces, under the concept of "true democracy," a concept of the political that is irreducible to either economism or statism, which, while seemingly absent from much of Marx's subsequent work, reemerges in a radicalised form in *The Civil War in France*. By proposing this subterranean current of anti-statist politics, Abensour aims to undermine the periodisation of Althusser's claim that there is an epistemological break between the early Marx and the later Marx, between the young, Feuerbachian or Hegelian—and in any case ideological—Marx, and the scientific, dialectical materialist Marx who begins to emerge after settling accounts in *The German Ideology* of 1845.

Rather than situating the young Marx between Feuerbach and Hegel, Abensour asks how Marx confronts two directly political problems: utopian anti-statism and the problematic of the "Machiavellian moment" (a term Abensour appropriates from J.C.A. Pocock). The first few chapters of *Democracy Against the State* are dedicated to showing how Marx comes to conceive of an anti-statist "true democracy," which has no antecedent in either Feuerbach's quasi-religious "majestic" state or Hegel's "bureaucratic solipsism." (18, 41) The significance of the Machiavellian moment is less clear at the outset. In the early chapters it seems that the reference to Machiavelli is superimposed on the discussion of Marx, but the later chapters make it clear that Abensour associates a modern, anti-theological concept of the political with Machiavelli—with more of an emphasis on *The Discourses* than on *The Prince*. According to Abensour, Machiavelli breaks with classical political theory when he makes conflict the basis of political liberty, that is, when he "makes discord and internal disunion—the struggle in Rome between the senate and the plebs—the origin and wellspring of Roman liberty." (75) Yet this emphasis on discord does not make Abensour's Machiavelli a liberal, for the centrality of conflict prevents the possibility that the opposing classes of society, characterised as those who desire to command and to oppress and those who desire liberty, could be peaceably recon-

ciled into a self-present social body. (74) The politics of consensus is statist, while the politics of conflict or dissensus (in Rancière's terms) is anti-statist. Hence for Abensour, the relationship between Marx, utopian anti-statism and the Machiavellian moment is more important than his relationship with Feuerbach and Hegel.

Abensour argues, in consequence, that Marx's *Critique* is not concerned primarily with a political epistemology that seeks to settle accounts (be they ideological or scientific) with his predecessors. Instead, Marx engages what Abensour calls a "hermeneutics of emancipation," in which "the task of the critic is to interpret every political question so as to translate the particular language of politics in the more 'general' language of emancipation." (36) Marx's reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, then, turns on reconceptualising the political, beginning with the "real subject" of politics—the *demos*—and its activity.

Through a reading of Marx's *Critique*, Abensour delineates four characteristics of "true democracy." With the first two characteristics, Abensour underlines how democratic practices are the basis of the political rather than the state. Rather than being the "actuality of the ethical Idea" (Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, §257), the state is premised on political domination rather than participation. First, for Abensour, Marx opposes two concepts of political sovereignty: that of the monarchy (or any other political regime), which is premised on relations of domination and servitude (the sovereign reign *over* the people), and then that of the "sovereignty" of the *demos*. More specifically, for readers familiar with Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, I think that Abensour's account suggests that the activity of the *demos* cannot be conceptualised as a form of sovereignty; instead, anti-statist democratic politics explicitly undermines state or sovereign power. Democratic praxis is defined in opposition to the state: as "democracy expands and experiences a real fullness of life, the State diminishes." (2) Second, if the political is defined by the activity of the *demos*, then the state and constitution can no longer be considered as the determining factors of political space. Instead, Abensour argues, the *demos* determines the constitution of the political.

The third and fourth characteristics focus on democratic praxis, the "self-institution of an ongoing self-determination." (58) The third characteristic is the most problematic. According to Abensour, Marx conceptualises democratic politics as an ongoing battle against political alienation, as an attempt to prevent the objectification of democratic life

from becoming a reified and alienated expression of this life. This implies that for the young Marx, political praxis is thought as a project of continual self-presence. If the political subject—the *demos*—is conceived as self-present activity, this empties the concept of the political of temporality and alterity. (61) Abensour proposes that appropriating Marx’s concept of the political today requires thinking praxis with temporality and with difference. On this point, Abensour introduces a Levinasian problematic of alterity and finitude, while I would suggest a problematic that turns on solidarity and dissensus in a manner similar to Rancière.

In any case, the fourth characteristic of true democracy conflicts with the idea that the *demos* must be reconciled as self-presence or self-identity. Democratic activity reduces the state to a “moment” of political life in order to open “the possibility for the democratic institution of every realm.” (64) This process of the “reduction” of the state has a negative and a positive moment. In the negative moment, the reduction defines the limits of the state: instead of imposing the organising form of state sovereignty over every part of society, the state is reduced or subordinated as only one part of society. This negative determination reduces the reach of the state, but it does not signal the end of politics. By curtailing the reifying and dominating effects of state power, democratic praxis makes possible a greater “fluidity” and plasticity—not to mention specificity—of social and political forms. The positive effect of the reduction is “opened by the democratic institution of society, such that the *demos* manifests and recognizes itself as *demos* in all realms of human life while respecting the specificity of each one.” (66)

After defining true democracy, Abensour examines how the *Critique*, this “fundamental text of democratic modernity,” fits within Marx’s larger *oeuvre*. Though Abensour concedes in part Althusser’s thesis that the epistemological project of a critique of political economy orients Marx’s thought after 1844–1845, he argues that the problem of the relation between democracy, the state and the political, which orients the *Critique*, remains as “a hidden and latent dimension of Marx’s writings, ready to resurge, susceptible to awaken by the shock of the event.” (84) As a case in point, Abensour shows that Marx’s texts on the Paris Commune radicalise the conclusions found in the *Critique*. On the one hand, the “metaphysical” dimension of the *demos* or the working-class is abandoned: the political is thought as an antagonistic space rather than as

the reconciliation the *demos* with itself in the fullness of self-presence. On the other hand, Marx amplifies the necessity of smashing the modern state. Given the direct opposition of democracy and the state, the possibility that a “reduction” or “withering” of the state could proceed as a gradual process must be rejected. The Paris Commune is “a permanent insurrection against the state apparatus, with the foreknowledge that, as it were, any fall under the hold of State power—whatever the name or tendency—would immediately signify its death sentence.” (87)

I find the link between the *Critique* and Marx’s later work on the Paris Commune to be compelling. However, Abensour concedes too much to Althusser’s problematic of the epistemological break when he opposes the political texts to the scientific texts. In fact, Abensour’s interpretive framework—the discussion of Marx’s “hermeneutics of emancipation” and political orientation—should be just as applicable to the critique of political economy. In addition to the political question, we should also investigate the ways in which Marx turned political economy into a weapon, as Harry Cleaver calls it, of working-class emancipation. When Abensour underlines how the *Critique* demonstrates that as “democracy expands and experiences a real fullness of life, the State diminishes,” we must also investigate how, “as democracy expands and experiences a real fullness of life, the power of *capitalism* diminishes.” (2) Nevertheless, Abensour’s *Democracy Against the State* is an important reconsideration of the political Marx.

**Rob Boddice (ed.), *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*. Leiden: Brill, 2011; 348 pages. ISBN: 978-9004177948.**

*Review by Tracy Colony, European College of Liberal Arts*

One of the most important themes in recent continental philosophy has been the resurgence of the question of the human. Traditionally, what was proper to the human as such was articulated through the identification of a specific trait or capacity. However, beginning with Nietzsche, the very shape of the question of the human has shifted from concern with the adequacy of possible predicates towards a genealogy of those traditional elements and operations through which the specificity of the

human is produced. This transformation of the question can also be seen in Heidegger's call to define the human in terms of its inherence in the truth of being rather than through the array of metaphysical predicates. However, this shift can be seen as relying upon the metaphysical figures of essence and belonging. Moreover, many of those who, often as a response to Heidegger, have attempted to define the human in terms of its exposure to more radical figures of alterity have frequently continued to preserve many traditional anthropological privileges *vis-à-vis* non-human life, nature and technology.

The recent revival of interest in the question of the human can be seen as the expression of a pressing need to resist concepts and terminologies still colored by traditional presuppositions of human centrality and to confront the challenge of developing more richly relational vocabularies for posing the question of the human. Unquestionably, one of the most important aspects of this task is a critical examination of the history and continued relevance of the concept of anthropocentrism. Rob Boddice's *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* is a collection of essays which in inspiration and scope takes up this challenge and seeks to examine the presuppositions behind the concept of anthropocentrism from the perspective of the more fundamental question of the meaning of the human as such. Rather than focussing on the easily problematised trope of the center, this volume confronts the more radical question of what sense of the human is presupposed in the concept of anthropocentrism, and profoundly asks: "How is the human defined through or against animal and objectified Others, abstract environments and ecologies, and constructed cosmologies?" (1) The volume is structured in four parts representing four different approaches to the question of anthropocentrism.

The first section, "Epistemological and Ontological Investigations," opens with an essay by Boria Sax, which offers an historical and etymological genealogy of the meaning of the human and concludes with the important reminder that the most original hermeneutic sources of our determinations of the human are based on the experience of closeness to the earth, transience and vulnerability. The second article by Kevin DeLapp examines the often overlooked status of anthropocentrism in the field of metaethics. Avoiding pernicious forms of past anthropocentrisms, DeLapp argues that perspectival realism, when combined with aspects of Daoism, offers a convincing metaethical position. In the next

essay by Richie Nimmo, the very discourse of modernity itself is diagnosed as structurally constituted by its relation to the non-human. Focusing on the production of the human in the social sciences, Nimmo argues that the very organising categories of our understanding of the human are constituted through the filtering out of a relation to a non-human other. In the final essay of this section, Gary Steiner takes issue with both ancient and modern forms of cosmopolitanism arguing that these are tainted by an implicit anthropocentrism which has arisen from the Western tradition's positing of language and reason as conditions of moral worth. Engaging in critiques of Heidegger, Nussbaum and Benhabib, this essay develops some of the necessary preconditions for the possibility of a non-anthropocentric cosmopolitanism.

The second section, "Religion, Society, Culture," begins with an essay by Eric Silverman in which he looks to medieval views on the use of language in description of the divine as a resource for contemporary attempts to think the radical difference between human and non-human life. In the next essay, Paula Young Lee defends the thesis according to which the traditional anthropomorphic body-paradigm that was the guiding model for architecture has now, in certain instances, been supplanted by orderings based on non-human life. In the next essay Ben Dawson offers a reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in which he interprets the multi-stable humanity of the monster as a symbolic articulation of the identity production of modern power discourses. The final essay in this section by Sabrina Tonutti takes issue with the problematic anthropocentrism that characterises much of contemporary anthropology and traces the way in which the concept of culture is employed to absolutely divide human and non-human phenomena. The result is that human cultural traits are looked at in their specificity while animal species are described in reductive generalities. Only when these anthropocentric presuppositions are suspended does it become possible to approach animal life in its actual specificity. This possibility then calls for the development of animal ethnographies, which function beyond the traditional binary division of culture and nature.

The third section, "Speciesism and the Status of Animals," begins with an essay by Philip Tonner, which offers a critique of the anthropocentrism implicit in Heidegger's well known description of animals as poor in world. The second essay by Tony Milligan interprets speciesism as a form of anthropocentrism and offers an understanding of

our shared humanity as a key for better approaching the challenges of developing a more ethical relation to non-human life. In the third essay, Peter Soppelsa documents the use of horses in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris to demonstrate how these animals were fully instrumentalised to fit with human ends. The experience of these animals as mere natural resource to be used by human beings was made possible through a reductive language of technicisation that facilitated the violent merging of these animals into an elaborate technological network. In the final section of this chapter, Nik Taylor argues that anthropomorphism is unavoidable because human beings must interpret the world through their own embodied materiality. However, Taylor argues that this fact need not entail an assumption of human superiority, but rather, this difference can be more adequately approached through what she terms “anthropo-interpretivism.”

The fourth section, “Human and Non-Human Environments,” opens with an essay by Robin Attfield, which reexamines Lynn White’s seminal essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” Calling into question some of the historical claims and also confronting the question whether White’s arguments are firstly historical or theological, Attfield provides an interdisciplinary addition to the reception of this important work. The second essay by Eccy de Jonge looks to the resources of metaphysics and deep ecology to develop a critique of the way in which the charge of anthropocentrism is traditionally leveled. Pointing out the fact that not all humans are involved in the domination of animals and that structures of domination are also very present in the interrelations between humans, she calls for a philosophy of care, which would offer an alternative to the often dangerous narratives of superiority and separateness. In the final essay, André Krebber examines how responding to the environmental crisis leads beyond the human-animal relationship. Drawing on the social theory of the Frankfurt School he develops a challenge to anthropocentrism by attempting to think the difference between humans and nature in a way that would move beyond traditional scripts of human domination.

In quality and scope the essays collected in this volume are compelling additions to the current discussions in this field. Rob Boddice is to be applauded for this well-crafted compilation, which has brought together young scholars with more established writers into a balanced and wholly convincing collection. Its interdisciplinary approach is well matched to the particular demands of this challenging subject matter.



Moreover, one of the virtues of this collection is the sustained attention given to the ethical importance of thinking different spheres of the non-human as constitutive of our humanity. Engaging and timely, this collection is a valuable contribution to an increasingly important field of scholarship.

**Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009; 420 pages. ISBN: 978-0253220639.**

*Review by Anna Carastathis, California State University, Los Angeles*

For those familiar with McWhorter's work, the publication of *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America* was long awaited.<sup>1</sup> I had encountered an early form of the argument McWhorter rehearses in this book in an article she published in 2004 in *Hypatia*.<sup>2</sup> At that time, it was one of very few published critical engagements with the intersectional model of oppression. It had come to seem to me that, as the model became "mainstreamed"—that is, appropriated from Black feminists, who had introduced and elaborated the concept—the representational purposes to which intersectionality was now harnessed had changed. McWhorter pondered whether the increasingly vague gesture to intersectionality in feminist circles had become little more than "just a strategy to avoid charges of racism or classism." (McWhorter, 2004, 38–39) What I found impressive about that article was its iconoclasm. McWhorter's project was to go beyond *postulating* that racial and sexual oppressions intersect—a claim rarely *theorised* in mainstream (that is, white-dominated) feminist theory. She argued that a genealogical investigation of the production of race and sex could illuminate their common investment with a form of power that, following Foucault, she termed "biopower."

At the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes the historical shift in the nature and exercise of power. If more ancient forms of power (sovereign power) were characterised by "the right to take life or *let live*," modern power (biopower) has as its "highest function" not killing, but fostering and regulating life.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, "it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave

power its access even to the body.” (Foucault, 143) A biopolitical society is a normalising, disciplinary society. As McWhorter explains, it produces both “normal” and “abnormal” or, “residual,” subjects. (50) The latter are the “external frontier” of disciplinary regimes: “individuals who are defined by the fact that the discipline cannot assimilate them.” (51) Yet normalising societies cannot “tolerate any residue,” anything “unassimilable.” Consequently, they produce new, supplementary disciplines to manage the unruly subjects whom the existing disciplines abject or discard. (50–51) A normalising society, then, “insists on normality, all the while generating new forms of abnormality.” (51)

In lectures he gave at the *Collège de France* in the late 1970s, Foucault mentions that the “introduction and activation” of racism are central to the emergence of biopower. It is in part this insight that leads McWhorter to pursue the genealogical project of the book: normalising disciplines, discourses and institutions in which biopower is exercised created “a new racism,” which Foucault calls “racism against the abnormal.” (32) Through a genealogy of modern racism in “Anglo-America” (her focus is mainly on the United States), McWhorter attempts to demonstrate two things: first, that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century racism is conceptualised and exercised biopolitically—that is, producing, distinguishing and regulating both the “normal” and the “abnormal” through various disciplines, institutions and discourses. Second, biopower in general takes the form of racism, even when the populations it targets are not understood as “racial” groups (for instance, “sexual minorities”). (37) McWhorter explores the question, “what could racism mean in the absence of race” as its ontological anchor? (42)

Having laid out a brief etymology of racism, which identifies slippery and often contradictory meanings imputed to the word “race” (Chapter One), McWhorter sketches the history of biopolitical racism—a 20<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon—offering a two-part “genealogy of modern racism” (Chapters Two and Three). She concludes that “by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...race was no longer merely a morphological category, a designation of physical appearance only loosely associated with heredity. Integrated into the science of biology...racial difference was, essentially, developmental difference,” which was seen to be sexually reproduced. (139) At this point, we might say that racial and sexual oppressions came to intersect. In Chapters Four and Five, McWhorter explores the fusing of scientific racism and sexual politics. If, after the Holocaust, scientific

racists in the US had to go “underground,” the biopolitical disciplines they had invented to control and regulate normalised and abnormal populations remained in place and even proliferated. (245) In Chapter Six, McWhorter shows how eugenicists tried to morally recuperate their project, largely by shifting their attention from “races” to “families”: “In the postwar years, *family* would become the semantic substitute for *race*.” (250) Pronatalist policies were directed toward white heterosexual families, consisting of two legally married white adults, one male and one female, who were seen fit to make a “eugenic contribution.” (254) At the same time, involuntary sterilisation was practiced on those people whom eugenicists (who, it should be emphasised, wielded state power) constructed as “unfit” to reproduce, that is, Black people, indigenous people, people with disabilities. Well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, involuntary sterilisation became a common practice in the US and its colonies. In Puerto Rico, 1 in 3 women were involuntarily sterilised in what became known simply as “*la operación*.” In the continental US, 40% of Native women and 10% of Native men were sterilised during the 1970s. By 1976, 25% of Native women had been sterilised without their consent—as many as 80% of women on some reservations.<sup>4</sup> As the pronatalist/genocidal sides of eugenicist biopolitics show, “family” and “race” functioned as euphemistic and dysphemistic counterparts. As such, threats to the family internal to the white “race”—white feminists and white homosexuals—were seen as race traitors. (264–66) Normalising power attempts to re-absorb them in order to exploit their reproductive potential, preventing, for instance, queer lives from being lived. (273) McWhorter wants to emphasise that by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, racism and sexual oppression are *nearly* inextricable manifestations of biopolitics. Taking the family as the site of state discipline, she argues that reproductive oppression of sexual minorities functions as “racism against the abnormal.” (291) In the final chapter, McWhorter returns to the normative argument of the book: the discussion she begins in the Introduction of the political relationship between the Civil Rights and Gay and Lesbian Movements. There, the broad question is, how should the inheritors of these movements—contemporary antiracist and anti-homophobia activists—act politically given the similarities *and* differences between racist and homophobic violence? What is the status of analogies between racial oppression and sexual oppression? By the Conclusion, it becomes clear that McWhorter intends the genealogy she performs in book as an inter-

vention to help heal the fractures she diagnoses between “African Americans” and “LGBT Americans.” These fractures, she argues, have been fostered in part by the Christian Right, in part by the white-dominated same-sex marriage movement. (299, 315) McWhorter sees the “conflicts” that have arisen between these groups as issuing from “a rush for the moral high ground,” in which each tries to “win the normality game” on the other’s back. (323) Of course, this strategy is bound to fail both parties, since the internalisation of the desire for normalcy on the part of those deemed “abnormal” is the ultimate achievement, and not the undoing, of regimes of disciplinary normalisation. If modern racism *is* racism against the abnormal, it implicates and targets even white queers, to the extent that heteronormativity functions like racism in constructing them as “abnormal.” The normative upshot is that each group deemed abnormal has a stake in the others’ struggles, which are directed toward the same biopolitical structures. Thus, McWhorter suggests that the “question we really should be asking” is “Who benefits when queer people and people of colour fail to stand up for each other’s dignity, worth, and civil rights, and when we all fail to stand up for the dignity, worth and rights of people who live with physical and mental disabilities or with the handicaps imposed by poverty?” (324) Contrasting “identity-based politics” with “genealogy-based politics,” McWhorter calls on us to “recognize and credit the subjugated knowledges that reveal our histories as subjugated peoples bound together across our differences through the past four hundred years.” (328)

If the above exposition does any justice to summarising what is a voluminous and scrupulously detailed work, let me now voice a couple of concerns about its arguments. My first criticism is that while the book positions itself as “going beyond” intersectionality, it is unclear to me how it does so. In the Introduction, McWhorter distances herself from the “metaphor of intersection,” which, she claims, “does not begin to capture the complexity of the power relations” that she aims to reveal in the book. (15) Power is too complex for intersectionality to capture, she suggests, because “[i]ntersectional analyses tend to focus analytic attention primarily on identities rather than on institutions, discourses, and disciplinary regimes.”<sup>5</sup> (15) What is more, despite their insistence on the convergence of multiple oppressions, McWhorter claims that intersectional analyses “still implicitly assume that racism, sexism, and heterosexism *could* and *do* operate sometimes in isolation from one an-

other.” (15, emphasis added) Yet the same can be observed of her own genealogy. McWhorter offers ample concrete illustration of how race, sexuality and biopower *become* inextricable. Her own treatment of the historical record suggests that race and sexuality *were* at one point seen as distinct, and only converge in the biopolitical—that is, the modern—era. Thus, she too seems to assume that the categories of race and sexuality are conceptually and historically isolable—her charge against intersectional analyses. And while she focusses on discourses (as opposed to identities), it is not clear to me that this level of analysis is incompatible with intersectionality. No further arguments are presented against intersectionality, and it remains unclear to me how McWhorter’s genealogy of modern racism is not intersectional. While this Foucaultian genealogy is offered as an alternative (even as a corrective) to intersectionality (conflated with “identity politics”), substantive engagement with intersectionality—in a sense, the conceptual condition of possibility of her account—is virtually non-existent.<sup>6</sup>

My second cluster of criticisms of the book concerns its thesis that modern racism takes biopolitical form. As we have seen, McWhorter’s view is that modern subjects are shaped in profound ways by normalising power. Yet missing in this account of power—to rehearse a critique that Spivak makes of Foucault<sup>7</sup>—is a theory of interests. The claim that everyone in US society is subjected to normalising power risks eliding the variable operations of very different forms of power with starkly different aims vis-à-vis diametrically opposed social groups, economic classes, genders, internal colonies and the settler society. McWhorter’s conception of biopower seems to account much more than Foucault’s for systemic violence. Yet subsuming violence under biopower is not unproblematic. In some cases, McWhorter discusses “biopolitical terrorism”—US white supremacist terrorism against Black people and Indigenous people. Yet this violence is repurposed as “disciplinary power” (for instance, in her discussion of lynching on page 159).<sup>8</sup> While Foucault gives a nod to wars, massacres, atomic power, the death penalty and genocide, these forms of violence are vaguely conceptualised as the “underside” of a normalising power aimed at “optimizing life.” (Foucault, 136–138, 141) “If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers,” Foucault muses, “this is not because of the return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large scale phenomena of population.”

(Foucault, 137) Foucault's aim is to convince us that biopolitics has supplanted sovereign and juridical power. Yet this claim is not borne out if we focus, as McWhorter wants to, on racist and gendered violence, in which power *does seem* to figure as the "right to take life or let live," and the threat of death (in which I would include social death) is *central* to its operations. McWhorter's primary aim is to defend the thesis that race and sexuality are produced through normalising power. The Foucaultian disdain for juridical and sovereign power—which "is concerned with law and obedience, not norm and conformity" (49)—is expressed in McWhorter's analysis, sometimes to its detriment. The problem is that to be a "good Foucaultian," it seems one must insist on the primacy of one form of power, even in the presence of evidence of plural—and even contradictory—forms of power in operation. It seems to me that McWhorter devotes too little space to conceptualising the overtly violent and often deadly practices of appropriation and exploitation that constitute the ongoing process of accumulation in racial capitalist patriarchy.

McWhorter's book is perhaps most important for Foucaultians who wish to expand their understanding of their categories of analysis—specifically, biopower—beyond the scope these are given by Foucault himself. It is an ambitious project, to which philosophers of race, feminist philosophers and philosophers engaged in queer and transgender studies will want to devote attention. Having read and reread McWhorter's book with interest, I am left with the following questions. Has sovereign power really ceded to biopower in the production of gendered racism in the US? Are not the internal colonies of the US, indigenous nations and the nations that the US occupies abroad subject to sovereign power in the violent denial of their self-determination? Where exactly do the deadly violence of settler colonialism and the prison-industrial and military-industrial complexes fit in the account of normalisation? Might an integrative examination of racial and sexual oppressions require us to *revise* the concepts Foucault develops and to *depart* from his axiomatic assumptions? Why does no philosopher seem to worry that fidelity to their figure will lead them astray?

---

1. Upon hearing of the publication of Ladelle McWhorter's genealogical investigation of the relationship between racial and sexual oppressions, I organised a reading group of faculty and graduate students. It was through our discussions that many of the ideas in

this review were first articulated. I am grateful to Ann Garry, Linda Greenberg, Anthony Ristow, Kai Kaululaau, Casey Keith, Molly Talcott and Ben Bateman for their insights.

2. Ladelle McWhorter, "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy," in *Hypatia*, vol. 19, n. 3 (2004), 38–62.

3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, (tr.) Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 135–47.

4. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005).

5. McWhorter offers no references to substantiate this claim. In fact, many people who avow intersectionality as a method take themselves to be performing analyses of macro-level phenomena such as institutions and/or of meso-level phenomena such as social groups. Patricia Hill Collins, "Some Group Matters: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought," in *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, (ed.) Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 205–29. Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," in *Signs* vo. 30, no. 3 (2005), 1771–800.

6. A trivial point: "intersectionality" does not even appear in the book's index.

7. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretations of Culture*, (ed.) Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

8. McWhorter invites us to view the US institution of lynching and its justifying ideology of "the black rapist" "not so much in the context of more-or-less institutionalized ritual murder, but in the context of other discourses of sexual predation that arose and gained force in the late nineteenth century." (161)

**Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Derrida Dictionary*. London: Continuum, 2010; 264 pages. ISBN: 978-1847065261.**

*Review by Steven Sych, McGill University*

There is, as Simon Wortham points out in his introduction to *The Derrida Dictionary*, a danger inherent in his project. The dictionary form is, after all, an attempt to present language in a systematic manner by means of a master text; yet the work of Jacques Derrida is, at least in part, characterised by the rigorous thinking of the limits and conditions of systematicity *as such*. This, then, is a manifestly dangerous marriage: if a dictionary aims to present the indexed meanings of the *termes d'art* of deconstructive discourse (ideal, non-contextual, and systematically related), does it not run up against the very resistance of this discourse to

systematicity? Is not “Derridean vocabulary” only to be found within that unmasterable series of non-identical terms that occupy various texts? Do we not risk collapsing an unmasterable series into a small number of differently expressed bywords?

Wortham is under no illusions here. He states as much his introduction, noting that his dictionary can do no more than “actively assume its own limits and limitations,” that is, be forthright about its lack of “wholeness.” (2) With such a qualification in play, one can begin also to recognise the advantages of the dictionary form for the task at hand—the advantages, that is, of manifest and accessible *cross-referencing*. Each entry is packed with connections to other entries as well as primary texts—paths to follow, then, a way of stretching towards the whole that falls faithfully short of an encyclopedic overview. See, for instance, Wortham’s entry on “performativity” (134) that begins with Derrida’s engagement with speech-act theory before going to touch upon singularity, decision, forgiveness and hospitality, finally ending with references to logocentrism, otherness, and deconstruction in general. Each entry, then, acts as a jumping off point from within, like the smallest of a set of Russian dolls looking out onto the others.

At times, however, the referential aspect of the text proves overbearing. A surprisingly large number of entries consist *solely* in references, such as the entry on “mark” (96), which directs the reader to “see also re-mark”—yet the latter entry reads only as follows: “re-mark... See mark” (160)! Despite there perhaps being a performative interest in such entries, it is not clear how useful they are (especially for the newcomer looking for help entering into Derrida’s work). Still, if we look beyond this oddity (and similar instances), the thorough interwovenness of the *Dictionary* both performs a kind of faithfulness to the spirit of Derrida’s work, and presents a useful avenue of approach for the neophyte.

Looking beyond this faithfulness, we must still ask whether the *Dictionary* sends us on our way better equipped to read primary sources. Is the *Dictionary* a success? To answer this question, we must take a closer look at Wortham’s explicit goal. He tells us in the introduction that his text aims to “provide a grounding” for newcomers to Derrida’s corpus (1), and that it will do so by means of *breadth*, that is, the provision of “detailed and substantial accounts of the majority of [Derrida’s] publications over a period of six decades.” (1) With respect to breadth, the *Dictionary* is a remarkable achievement. In less than 300 pages,



Wortham's entries touch upon an enormous number of Derridean terms, engagements with other thinkers, and texts ranging from the more "canonical" of books (such as a full seven pages devoted to *Margins of Philosophy*) to those works which are perhaps less well-known ('*A Silkworm of One's Own*'). To my knowledge, there is no secondary source on Derrida's work that succeeds so well in this regard.

Beyond the wide swath of entries and the canny use of the dictionary form, Wortham's style of writing is economical and clear. See, for instance, Wortham's lengthy exploration of *Of Grammatology*, where he tells us that this interpretation of language as being "never fully systematic, objectifiable, conceptualizable, idealizable...moves us from dreams and desires of 'science' to questions of the institution and historicity of the field, in its always partial and violent imposition." (114) With the beginning student in mind, the *Dictionary* is full not only of such useful glosses, but of short explications which one would not be incorrect to call "short essays."

*The Derrida Dictionary* nevertheless has certain drawbacks. As part of a series of philosophical dictionaries by Continuum, Wortham's text assumes the task of explicating Derrida's work without directly quoting *or* citing the former. At times this proves frustrating indeed. The entry on Freud, for instance, cites eight of Derrida's texts—including collections such as *Writing and Difference*—yet leaves the reader wondering where exactly *within* each text she is to look. (59) Further, although Wortham's writing style is concise and rigorous, there are times when he may elude the student not already familiar with the issues at hand. In his "artificiality" entry (19), Wortham writes the following: "the singular is much less an authentic essence, a unique 'real' or true origin which 'information' is unable to appropriate. It is far better described as a resistant after-effect found at the constituting limits of an artificial synthetic that is itself produced by effects of *différance*." (20) To put it mildly, this seems beyond the ken of the neophyte. Luckily, such instances of obscurity on Wortham's part are sparse, given the subject matter and stated "introductory" goal. For these reasons, Wortham's *Dictionary* stands as one of the best guides available for those looking to enter into Derrida's work.

**Stefan Kristensen, *Parole et Subjectivité. Merleau-Ponty et la phénoménologie de l'expression*. Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 2010; 230 pages. ISBN 978-3487144344.**

*Compte rendu d'Elodie Boubilil, McGill University*

Dans une note de travail du *Visible et l'invisible*, datant de février 1959, Merleau-Ponty consignait la remarque suivante : « Reste le problème du passage du sens perceptif au sens langagier, du comportement à la thématization » (VI, 227). Si les ouvrages et les articles consacrés aux notions de sens et d'expression ainsi qu'à la question du langage dans l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty sont nombreux, rares sont les investigations reprenant la tâche même proposée par le philosophe dans cette note, laquelle vise une élucidation tant épistémologique qu'ontologique – voire même anthropologique – de l'articulation des sens perceptif et langagier. Tel est néanmoins le but que poursuit Stefan Kristensen dans un livre qui nomme et repense le problème fondamental décliné, d'une manière ou d'une autre, par toute phénoménologie : comment dire le phénomène ? Comment constituer ou exprimer le sens d'une perception ?

L'auteur retrace ainsi la genèse de ce questionnement, de Husserl à Patočka, en insistant plus longuement sur l'apport mais aussi sur les apories de la pensée de Merleau-Ponty. En cela réside l'originalité de cet ouvrage qui ne se limite pas à un commentaire pourtant déjà approfondi des phénoménologies du langage ici rassemblées (Husserl, Gurwitsch, Merleau-Ponty). En effet, l'auteur n'hésite pas à interroger philosophiquement les fondations de ces dernières et à proposer à son tour des pistes d'interprétation en vue d'une compréhension renouvelée du « passage du sens perceptif au sens langagier », des rapports entre parole et subjectivité, c'est-à-dire en vue d'une redéfinition phénoménologique de la vérité qui échapperait autant au paradigme de l'adéquation qu'à sa réduction au pur régime propositionnel, afin d'être, avant toutes choses, la vérité d'une subjectivité déchirée et travaillée par le mouvement même de son existence.

Cette nouvelle exploration des concepts de sens et d'expression débute par un examen minutieux de la phénoménologie de Husserl et de la manière dont le problème de l'intentionnalité peut être ressaisi au niveau de l'articulation des vécus expressifs et non expressifs. Dans ce premier chapitre, l'auteur revient sur le concept husserlien de noème et y

voit l'emblème d'une tension entre l'expressivité fondamentale des vécus et les significations stabilisées du langage. Le deuxième chapitre met en exergue la tentative husserlienne pour penser une certaine autonomie du sens perceptif – notamment au travers de l'élaboration des synthèses passives. Selon l'auteur, la phénoménologie génétique échoue cependant à saisir l'irréductibilité du vécu à la sphère linguistique puisque la préséance accordée à la logique et aux structures prédicatives du jugement garantirait toujours le primat du sens langagier sur le sens perceptif et dénoterait la persistance d'une caractérisation substantialiste de la subjectivité. En somme, chez Husserl, « le problème du passage de la perception au langage ne se pose pas, pour la raison très simple que cette conscience est déjà une conscience parlante » (46).

Le troisième chapitre, intitulé « Vers une herméneutique de la chair », examine alors la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty afin de voir dans quelle mesure ce dernier propose un modèle de synthèse perceptive qui permettrait de penser l'expressivité de la perception indépendamment des jugements prédicatifs et ce afin de pouvoir, par la suite, penser les rapports de la perception au langage. Une brève étude des thèses de Gurwitsch aura permis de montrer l'importance et l'influence du modèle Gestaltiste pour reformuler le noème perceptif et pour penser sa structure et sa signification en termes de cohérence et non plus en termes d'adéquation. Déterminé également par l'influence de la *Gestalt*, le rôle de Merleau-Ponty dans cette redéfinition intervient à double titre : il s'agit, premièrement, dans la *Phénoménologie de la perception*, d'échapper au « positivisme phénoménologique » et de sortir de l'attitude catégoriale qui manque la dimension corporelle, c'est-à-dire charnelle, de l'unité du sens perceptif. Se référant au cours de 1953 sur « le monde sensible et le monde de l'expression », Kristensen montre ainsi que le schéma corporel s'accomplit dans un schéma praxique au même titre que la parole, l'expression venant animer et individuer des structures linguistiques socialement et historiquement déterminées : « il s'agit dans les deux cas de systèmes de signes diacritiques sur un fond impossible à thématiser mais qui est condition de toute thématisations » (94). Puis, dans un deuxième temps, il convient de penser la subjectivité comme « inhérence au monde » (*PhP*, 464), afin de penser l'expressivité intrinsèque des vécus indépendamment des idéalités logiques et de caractériser phénoménologiquement la manière dont elle rejaillit dans le monde commun des significations.

Cette seconde voie est approfondie et questionnée dans les chapitres 4 et 5 du livre au sein desquels l'auteur se penche sur la caractérisation merleau-pontienne des rapports entre parole et subjectivité, au moyen d'une analyse portant sur les notions de « parole parlante » et de « sublimation ». Les réflexions de Merleau-Ponty sur la littérature, et notamment sur l'œuvre de Paul Valéry, décrivent la façon dont la parole peut être créatrice et ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités, de nouveaux horizons au sein de la langue. L'institution du sens s'opère donc au creux même du mouvement expressif et refonde sans cesse les significations personnelles et collectives associées à une parole donnée. Cette mutation, cette métamorphose incessante du sens, est rendue possible grâce à la souplesse du corps signifiant qu'est la parole. Cette plasticité repose sur un processus de sublimation, « mouvement par lequel apparaît la structure essentielle du sensible » (155). Ce mouvement traduit la réponse merleau-pontienne à cette question du passage du sens perceptif au sens conceptuel, de la transition possible entre le domaine de l'expression et le champ de l'institution. Kristensen met ainsi en exergue la dimension ontologique de cette description phénoménologique en montrant bien en quoi elle instaure un rapport de *Fundierung* entre la sphère des choses muettes et le langage des sociétés et des histoires humaines. Cette relation repose elle-même sur l'idée d'une réversibilité entre l'intentionnalité qui meut la chair et l'intentionnalité d'acte du geste linguistique. Néanmoins, selon l'auteur, la conception merleau-pontienne atteindrait ses limites dans une forme d'indifférenciation ontologique qui ferait disparaître une subjectivité que des impératifs historiques, politiques et esthétiques nous incombent de situer.

Le dernier chapitre du livre de Kristensen confronte alors cette phénoménologie de l'expression aux théories de Patočka, Foucault et Deleuze, notamment, portant sur la dimension dynamique qui unit la subjectivité à son expression. Ce chapitre réussit brillamment à contester l'opposition radicale souvent dépeinte entre les résultats de la phénoménologie et les conclusions du postmodernisme. La notion de mouvement et la réhabilitation d'un champ anthropologique au cœur même de la phénoménologie, à travers l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty, permettraient en effet de repenser les problématiques de la subjectivité et de la vérité à l'aune d'une conception unifiée de la vie du sujet et de son expression.

Cet ouvrage constitue donc un apport majeur à la compréhension des travaux de Merleau-Ponty sur le langage. Il témoigne aussi, de ma-

nière ambitieuse, d'une phénoménologie de l'expression qui n'aurait pas peur de s'enraciner dans une formulation ontologique et anthropologique pour décrire son mouvement. On pourrait cependant regretter l'absence d'un dialogue plus approfondi avec l'herméneutique de Ricoeur – uniquement mentionnée dans le contexte d'une réflexion sur la sublimation – dont les travaux sur la construction narrative de la subjectivité et de l'identité et sur les modalités doxiques font un interlocuteur privilégié de cette phénoménologie renaissante. En second lieu, il eut été intéressant de s'interroger plus vivement sur les répercussions d'une telle conception de la parole dans les champs de la philosophie politique et sociale contemporaine, d'autant plus que l'ouvrage se dit motivé par une forme d'urgence relative à l'impuissance de la parole et du silence face à la violence et à l'expérience traumatique. Enfin, il nous semble que la disqualification de la conception merleau-pontienne du passage du perceptif au linguistique reste partiellement justifiée puisqu'elle ne va pas jusqu'à interroger la présence d'une pensée de la subjectivité désirante au sein même de l'œuvre du philosophe français. Il ne nous paraît en effet pas exclu d'envisager l'existence « d'une théorie de la vérité basée sur la structure de [la] vie du désir » comme arrière-plan, comme fond d'une écriture philosophique dont la « parole parlante » serait encore à découvrir derrière les sédimentations des commentaires institués.

**Mauro Carbone, *An Unprecedented Deformation: Marcel Proust and the Sensible Ideas*. Translated by Niall Keane. Albany: SUNY Press, 2010; 113 pages. ISBN: 978-1438430218.**

*Review by Joe Balay, The Pennsylvania State University*

In his new book, *An Unprecedented Deformation: Marcel Proust and the Sensible Ideas*, Mauro Carbone proposes to follow “to the letter” Proust’s famous passage on involuntary memory in the first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The manner in which he takes up this pursuit, however, is philosophical. Carbone suggests that the question that is posed by the problem of involuntary memory here is a repetition of the double question found in Plato’s *Meno* at the outset of Western philosophy: How is it possible to inquire into what one does not know? And if one finds what one does not know, how is it possible to recognise it?

While Plato's response, that is, his appeal to the anamnesis of intelligible ideas, determines much of the course of Western thought, Carbone argues that Proust's solution is fundamentally un-Platonic because it invokes a different kind of idea: the sensible idea. Indeed, the notion of the sensible idea has a different origin. It developed out of modern philosophy's consideration of "sensible cognition," and was explored most recently by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze. Focussing on these last two thinkers in particular, Carbone investigates how Proustian involuntary memory re-opens the more general philosophical question about the genesis of ideas.

Readers of Proust are well acquainted with the strange phenomenon of involuntary memory, famously developed in the madeleine passage, but oft repeated throughout the *Recherche*. The spectral taste of the little cake and warm tea suddenly transports the narrator to a time and place at once familiar and yet previously unknown to him, a formula that Carbone emphasises in Merleau-Ponty's onto-psychoanalysis in the following way: "I never knew it, and yet I have always known it." This temporality and *topos* is described as both the locale of the narrator's childhood and yet nothing encountered in the lived time of that childhood. Not simply given, but created, it presents the carnal essence (*Wesensschau*) or sensible idea of what Deleuze calls the "in-itself of Combray."

The import of this phenomenon on Carbone's reading is a complex iconoclasm of the image of thought stretching from Plato to Husserl. Following Heidegger, however, he argues that one must avoid making the sensible idea derivative of the more traditional intellectual idea or simply reversing the hierarchy. Here Carbone follows Deleuze in locating the Proustian contribution in the way in which it confronts the dominant model of sameness with a model of difference, the two possible ways of thinking resemblance laid out in *Logique du sens*. In proposing to follow Proust in making difference originary, Deleuze argues that one does not merely invert the binary. Rather, as Carbone explains: "it seems more fruitful to recognise that succession is *overlapped* by simultaneity and to make the assumption, then, that resemblance and identity are produced simultaneously with the *repetition* of our encounter with the differences which constitute such resemblance and identity." (37)

If one considers these two models in relation to the passage in Proust that Carbone analyses, one observes that, approached from the

model of sameness, the description of the narrator's experience is marked by a series of failures. Thus the narrator *fails* to intentionally perform the act of memory; the narrator *fails* to achieve the memory through an appeal to his good-natured intellectual faculties; the narrator *fails* to abstract the memory from the sensuous experience that occasions it. In response to this "failure" Carbone asks how one might reinterpret this phenomenon from the vantage of difference, a question that effectively asks: How can there be recognition without resemblance? In order to answer this question, Carbone traces largely three considerations in Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze about the nature of sensible ideas: 1) the mode of presentation, 2) the mode of recognition, and 3) the mode of temporality.

Carbone argues that if one can no longer appeal to the preliminary model of sameness, the presentation of ideas and their recognition must grow out of the differential experience of the sensible world itself, what one might call, "the empirical genesis of the transcendental." (21) This means that the presentation of sense itself will be sensible, not abstract, developed in the presentation of differences across time. Such a claim requires a parallel rethinking of temporality, however. Thus Carbone invokes Deleuze's juxtaposition of a mythical time, the time of *aiôn*, with mundane time, with *chronos*. For Deleuze the time of *aiôn* marks an absolute past, a time of the ancient gods, which is not an abstract eternity or creationism, but a continuously creative time before causality. In order to conjure such a time, however, one must free oneself from the bonds of lived time, a process that leads Deleuze to argue for an original unity between Lethe and Mnemosyne, between forgetting and memory.

Carbone traces a similar structure in Merleau-Ponty's late work. Like Deleuze's material understanding of difference, Carbone emphasises Merleau-Ponty's notion of Being understood as sensuous mutation or "Flesh." While Merleau-Ponty pulls from an array of sources, Carbone thematises his ontological reinterpretation of psychoanalysis, which thinks the conscious and unconscious, activity and passivity, as a unified phenomenon operating at a more originary level than subjectivity. The result is a notion of trans-subjective desire born out of the differential "lacks" in Flesh itself. This dispersal of desire inaugurates the play of introjections and retrojections that opens up fields or levels in Being where "identities" are formed and dimensions of meaning come to oscil-

late in a “primordial symbolism.” Like Deleuze, then, Merleau-Ponty argues that this process unfolds in an “operative temporality” irreducible to chronological time, a temporality that pulls the past into the future and spreads the future across the past and present in a chiasm of existing and essencing, or what Heidegger calls *Wesen* in the verbal sense.

It is a strength of both Deleuze’s and Merleau-Ponty’s analyses and of Carbone’s reading of both philosophers that these claims are cashed out in a variety of examples. Thus, for instance, both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze appeal to Jakob Von Uexküll’s notion of *Um-ring* to help present the sensible ideas of animals. The *Um-ring* is comprised of the set of variations between the physico-phenomenological make-up of a given creature and its environment, which collaboratively inaugurates its unique mode of existence. On this view there is no preceding causality or finalism, nor any abstract notion of, say, a tick or a whale. There is only the emergence of “tickness” or “whaleness” from this set of sensible variations. Carbone highlights the musical metaphor of melody to which both Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty appeal in order to further this point. For one might say that the animal existence comes to sing a kind of melody from out of these initial sensible differences, a theme that neither pre-exists those differences, nor can be separated from their sensuous presentation. Similarly, Swann’s love for Odette in Proust is rooted in the melody of the Vinteuil sonata that haunts him, an example that simultaneously shows how sensible ideas not only initiate meaning but also the identities that we tend to see as experiencing this meaning. As Carbone emphasises, the sensible idea of Combray for Proust’s narrator “was not in [him], it *was* [him].” (3)

Carbone concludes that the philosophical explication of Proustian involuntary memory results in an important response to the dominant philosophical model of the genesis of ideas. Following Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, he argues that the discovery of sensible ideas allows philosophy to take art seriously again, or for the first time, and exposes the ontological overlapping of difference and sense, identity and dispossession, previously impossible on the model of sameness. The five chapters and appendix that this brief study comprises are an insightful exploration not simply of Proust, but of the under-examined and mysterious notion of the sensible idea. From this point of view, Carbone’s work is a fascinating corrective. On the other hand, at 113 pages the book leaves room for more work to be done. Carbone’s study is perhaps most interesting for



the way in which it reads Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty together on the theme of sensible ideas, two figures that are often situated antagonistically in light of Deleuze's strong criticisms of phenomenology. Yet, beyond the originality of this cooperative reading, Carbone seems hesitant to move beyond Merleau-Ponty or Deleuze, at least in the scope of the present project. *An Unprecedented Deformation* is an excellent integration of a series of essays that Carbone has dedicated to the theme of sensible ideas in recent years, leaving one with the hope for a fuller work to come.

**François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010; 341 pages. ISBN: 978-0253221735.**

*Review by Yasemin Sari, University of Alberta*

Raffoul's work is the culmination of a kind of questioning that poses as philosophy's task the task of rethinking the ethicality of ethics itself. Formulated in this way, the work falls far from the tradition that understands ethics in terms of the freedom of the will and the problematic of subjectivity itself. As the title of his work suggests, Raffoul attempts to lay out the "origins" of responsibility, setting out his question in opposition to finding "the origin" of responsibility in the *idea* of "the accountability of a free autonomous subject." (1) While these terms have informed the tradition of thinking about "responsibility," understood either, as in the Aristotelian account, in terms of the agent's responsibility for her voluntary acts or, as in the Kantian account, in terms of the autonomy of the subject, Raffoul suggests that from Nietzsche onwards, the "continental" tradition has posed the question of responsibility differently, that is, apart from the accountability of a subject that is enclosed upon itself. Accordingly, Raffoul's investigation aims at uncovering the phenomenological origins of responsibility upon which the accounts of Nietzsche, Sartre, Levinas, Heidegger, and Derrida rest. Raffoul lays out his project as a response to the following four "fundamental concepts" (8–9) that are central to the traditional account of responsibility: 1) the belief that the human being is an agent or a subject, 2) the notion that the subject is a voluntary agent, 3) the reliance on causality, 4) the assumption that the responsible being is a rational subject.

The first two chapters consist of an explication of the accounts of responsibility in Aristotle and Kant. For the former, the notion of the “will” does not play a central role in responsibility because freedom is a matter of the public realm where one can manifest oneself, and not a private matter of one’s individual solitary self. Yet, Aristotle’s account utilises the distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions in order to understand the agent’s responsibility: the agent is responsible for her voluntary acts, the ones based on a deliberation that results in a choice. Raffoul explains how this decision comes about because of a principle that belongs to the agent. For Kant, however, responsibility is grounded in the free will of a subjectivity who governs and is governed by a priori rules of both cognition and morality. The Kantian categorical imperative in this sense becomes the centre of an “autonomous” individual. Whereas in ancient Greece *nomos* was conceived to be the result of societal customs and practices, Kant is trying to show the significance of thinking for oneself and determining oneself in a rational and reflective manner. Kantian subjectivity, Raffoul points out, is about self-governance and self-ownership. However, as Raffoul suggests, this account of subjectivity is not without problems, because it renders the freedom of the will a matter of subjection to duty. This autonomous self-determination entails a subject that can be understood in and of itself, that is, a subject that is a transcendental ground. Although the subject can act, or begin from itself, that is, spontaneously, this subjectivity operates within the calculability of actions and their outcomes. This is true even if responsibility is linked to the motives behind, rather than the consequences of, actions. As such, autonomy is connected to moral responsibility and to the praise- or blameworthiness that can only be attached to an action that we could have done for different reasons.

In order to deconstruct the articulation of an autonomous and freely willing subject, Raffoul moves on to Nietzsche’s account of the self in Chapter 3, where the “rational autonomous self” is shown to be only a construction of the human being itself. Nietzsche suggests that this freely willing self is itself a creation that accompanies the creation of values. Raffoul lays out Nietzsche’s revaluation of values and the significance of his critique in offering a genealogy of values. Although Nietzsche is a pivotal figure in Raffoul’s work, his analysis of the philosopher is not meant to be a comprehensive introduction to Nietzsche since many of the discontinuousness/differences in his own account are

omitted. The reason is probably that Raffoul's project is not only to lay out the post-Nietzschean tradition in detail, but to follow a certain route in rethinking of responsibility. This is why in a sense the central figure in Raffoul's work is not Nietzsche but Heidegger and the work unfolds from Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" to Derrida's "possibility of impossibility as an aporia." (293)

In Chapter 4, Raffoul explicates Sartre's account of freedom and responsibility, which rests on the groundlessness of existence that leads to a boundlessness of responsibility in which activism and hope are found. Raffoul's explication is quite plausible as it reveals the "subjectivist bias" found in Sartre's absolute responsibility. This responsibility is understood in action, and in this sense, as Raffoul says, "existentialism is a philosophy of action, and to that extent, of hope." (128) Still, Raffoul finds Sartre's account deficient in explaining what is at stake in this activism and hope and how one can achieve these states. In this regard, Raffoul's usage of the notion of "praxis"—which he does not sufficiently distinguish from "practice" when he asserts, for example, that "ethics thus becomes the praxis of one's very freedom, and its justification ultimately lies in such a praxis" (124)—becomes problematic. Ultimately, Raffoul suggests that Sartre promotes a freedom for responsibility through his emphasis on the (subjective) making or invention of ethics.

Next, Raffoul turns to Levinas, and the focus shifts away from a responsibility that stems from individual freedom to a responsibility that comes "before one's freedom" and before oneself. Here, Raffoul explains Levinas' attempt to "overcome the very horizon of egology" (163) by founding responsibility in the self becoming a "respondent" to the other, that is, responsible-for-the-other. As Raffoul states clearly, Levinas not only turns away from a Sartrean ontology of the subject, but he also offers a "break with ontology" that becomes a "break with Heidegger." (166) Raffoul explains how responsibility "is not the consequence of the faculty of free will, and is not even based on a pre-given self," for "responsibility does not suppose a self-given identity" (196) insofar as it rests on the encounter with the other's face in the Levinasian sense.

At this point, we understand that the key figure of Raffoul's project is Heidegger, whose "fundamental ontology" is discussed in Chapter Five. And this chapter becomes a turning point in Raffoul's own project since it is here that he tries to integrate a Heideggerian "originary ethics" with a Derridean understanding of impossibility as possibility. For Hei-

degger, ethics is originary, as Raffoul suggests, insofar as it is connected with factual existence—or, related to the thinking of being that becomes a call for a responsible engagement. (222) This human existence, understood as Dasein’s unsurpassable factual existence, brings about an understanding of ethics that is necessarily worldly and that belongs to the human being’s resoluteness. This paves the way for an ethics that is essentially linked to the singularity of existence itself. From here, Raffoul can move on to the Derridian understanding of singularity not as belonging to existence alone, but to the “event” of the inappropriability of calculation. In this sense, “responsibility is an openness to the incalculable through the aporia of its lack of foundation.” (295) In the end, this is how we should understand the origins of responsibility, the origination of which belongs to the impossible, that is the impossibility of rules and calculation: only such an impossibility can bring about a truly inventive ethics of the event that is always unpredictable and futural.

Raffoul’s attempt to explain the origins of responsibility divorced from a metaphysical account of “subjectivity” is an important task. However, condensing the discussion into eight chapters and some three hundred pages proves to be challenging. It is not just a question of the number of figures to be discussed. Each of these figures utilises certain distinctions that are significant for Raffoul’s project and that need to be carefully laid out if the project is going to be successful. For example, the terms “praxis” or “being” are frequently used by Raffoul, but their meanings are more often taken for granted than explicitly worked out in the book, especially with regard to their respective distinction from “practice” or “becoming.” Moreover, the distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* that springs forth from Aristotelian philosophy becomes crucial in the tradition of continental thought on freedom, but Raffoul—although he mentions both notions in passing—does not attempt to clarify it. Lastly, Raffoul’s book relies on description rather than argumentation. The descriptive style is suitable for a work titled *The Origins of Responsibility*, insofar as it points to a plurality of accounts. At the same time, it is a limited approach, presenting controversial parts of the account straightforwardly rather than being supported by arguments and defended against challenges.

Throughout his work, Raffoul explains the prominent views of the continental tradition on responsibility in accordance with his own project. However, it should be noted that this book would best serve an

audience with prior knowledge of this tradition. Raffoul's unreserved attitude and his use of continental terminology may be a setback for the reader who is not already acquainted with the tradition, although readers seeking a coherent account of the ethicality of ethics will find in this work a wonderful resource.

**Félix Guattari, *Soft Subversions: Texts and Interviews 1977-1985* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009; 341 pages. ISBN: 978-1584350736.**

*Review by Maxwell Kennel, University of Waterloo*

The release of a second edition of Félix Guattari's *Soft Subversions* might serve to indicate a rising interest in the work of the French psychoanalyst and philosopher. To confirm this indication we need only look to Talyor Adkins' excellent translation of Guattari's *The Machinic Unconscious* published by Semiotext(e) last year. Late in the coming year we can also expect a translation of his 1989 work, *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques (Schizoanalytic Cartographies)* from Continuum Press. The publication of *The Guattari Effect*, an anthology edited by Andrew Goffey and Éric Alliez, further confirms that there is a considerable increase in curiosity about Guattari's work.

The new edition of *Soft Subversions* joins the new Semiotext(e) edition of *Chaosophy* (both edited by Sylvère Lotringer), as a reorganisation, systematisation, and supplement to the original editions of the two works. Whereas the new edition of *Chaosophy* contains texts from 1972 to 1977, the new edition of *Soft Subversions* contains texts from the years that follow, 1977 to 1985 (years which are described by Guattari as *les années d'hiver*). Seen in the light of other works like *The Machinic Unconscious* or *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, *Soft Subversions* stands out as a more suitable entry point for those coming to Guattari for the first time (if one can even speak of a Guattari without Deleuze). *Soft Subversions* has all of the qualities of a good introduction: accessibility relative to his other works, short installments covering a period of several years, broad thematic content and a helpful introduction (courtesy of Charles J. Stivale).

The first chapter broaches what is an extremely important question not only for Guattari, but also for readers of Guattari: abstract vocabulary wrought with neologisms and textual gestures that are easily mistaken for elitism. Importantly, Stivale points out that Guattari's technical arsenal of terms takes the form of a "minor language" (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*) or "word-tools" that can be reformed and reshaped according to the needs of one's theory. Instead of being intimidated by the use of new terms, the reader is assured within the first few pages of *Soft Subversions* that Guattari's language is inventive and that this invention is no reason to turn tail and run for the supposed high ground of universal terminologies. Guattari writes that he does "not believe in universal literature or philosophy but rather in the virtues of minor languages." (21)

Chapter 1, an interview with Robert Maggiore titled "I Am an Idea-Thief," is a well-situated beginning to Section One, "Guattari by Himself." By being introduced to Guattari's thoughts on La Borde and Jean Oury in Chapter 2, "Institutional Intervention," his childhood and upbringing in Chapter 3, "So What," and Deleuze in Chapter 4, "Everywhere at Once," the reader is given a broad idea of Guattari's discursive situation. Section Two continues on this note with a collection of several of Guattari's writings and interviews on Italy, the most important of which is an open letter on Antonio Negri and his supposed association with the Red Brigades.

The three chapters that build Section Three gather writings on the concept of the micro-revolution. Chapter 10, "The Adolescent Revolution", deals, as the title indicates, with micro-revolution in adolescence; Chapter 11, "A Liberation of Desire", with the court case concerning the issue of *Recherches* on homosexuality; and Chapter 12, "Machinic Junkies," with doping. The fourth section on "Psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis" addresses Guattari's relationship with psychoanalysis. While Chapter 13, "Lacan was an Event in my Life," focusses on the relationship to Lacan, Chapter 14, "Psychoanalysis should get a grip on Life," is a formulation of Guattari's critique of psychoanalysis after the writing of *Anti-Oedipus* with Gilles Deleuze. Chapter 15, an interview titled "The Unconscious is turned toward the Future," deals with themes developed in Guattari's *The Machinic Unconscious*, most notably the work of Marcel Proust and the place of the unconscious in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Strangely, Chapter 16, "The Refrain of Being and Meaning,"

finds Guattari examining a dream of his own through the use of several diagrams.

The fifth and final section of the work is called “Integrated World Capitalism,” and begins with Chapter 19, “Plan for the Planet,” which asks a series of questions about class and the division of labour after the following criteria have been actualised: “an increase in world population...the gradual cutting-off of the flows of energy and raw materials...[and] the speeding-up of the concentration of machines and information systems.” (231) The section continues, further enriching and developing the effects of globalising capitalism on labour and the market. Following essays on Foucault and Lyotard, the volume concludes with Chapter 25, “Utopia Today.” This page-long response to a survey by *La Quinzaine littéraire* elucidates in a snippet view the Guattari who affirms the reality and necessity of revolution, stating that “Utopia, today, is to believe that current societies will be able to continue along on their merry little way without major upheavals. Social modes of organization that prevail today on earth *are not holding up*, literally and figuratively.” (307) This prophetic voice makes obvious Guattari’s relevance in our present day of Occupy Wall Street, student riots, and the Arab Spring.

More specifically, the new version of *Soft Subversions* finds its place as an entry point into Guattari’s oeuvre, as it continues to be translated into English. One can only hope that works such as *Psychanalyse et transversalité* follow in English translation as Guattari’s contribution to the fields of philosophy and psychoanalysis begins to be truly appreciated.

**Marc Crépon and Bernard Stiegler, *De la démocratie participative: Fondements et limites*. Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2007; 118 pages. ISBN: 978-2755500332.**

*Review by Travis Holloway, SUNY Stony Brook/NYU*

This year’s presidential elections in France, Russia, the United States, Yemen and elsewhere will happen at a time when protests in these countries and around the world show few signs of abating. Meanwhile, readers of contemporary French philosophy will find a hauntingly timely

work in Marc Crépon and Bernard Stiegler's still untranslated *De la démocratie participative: Fondements et limites*. "The project of participatory democracy," Crépon suggests, "is indistinguishable from listening [*une écoute*] prior to [democracy's] eruptions," coming eruptions which the authors describe as "protests" and "demonstrations." (48–49) The work—written in 2006 and 2007 out of a deep disappointment with the primary campaigns for the French presidency—is the attempt of Crépon and Stiegler "to reinstate participation at the core of a new political project" by considering new technological modes of political participation in contemporary democracy. (11) It is also in some ways a continuation, a carrying on, of the "last texts" of Jacques Derrida. (27)

*De la démocratie participative* is foremost a critique of the two most obvious options available to citizens for participating in their democracies today: political representation and television. As Marc Crépon writes in "Democracy in Default," at the basis of our politics lies a "crisis of political representation," a fact that can be measured by the increasing number of voter abstentions registered in the last French election. (25) The dominant technological intermediary between representatives and the people, the television, has brought with it a kind of immunity from the concerns of the people: the absence of real debate, the censoring of free speech, the repetition of talking points, an inattention to protests, prepared questions, filters, and representatives that repeat what they are hearing on... television. (49–54)

This crisis in representation and its dominant technology, the television, leads Crépon and Stiegler to a more fundamental problem: the loss of participation in democracy. (88) There is a desire, they claim, unrecognised by the political and media elite, for citizens to engage in something shared with the collective. There is an urgency to participate in democracy. (27) Still, Crépon and Stiegler always consider this insight in conjunction with a reflection on contemporary technologies. If television offers a closed and edited discourse, new technologies have opened new possibilities for participation and thus new models of democracy altogether. It is not that the internet is a cure or salvation from our dire politics—far from it, says Stiegler—but rather that new technological means reconfigure the modes of discussion and open new, less biased and largely uncensored political forums. (84) In contrast to the necessary individualism or what Stiegler calls the "symbolic misery" of the televi-



sion, the internet “opens the possibility for...a reconstitution of the participatory condition without which there is no democracy.” (80)

Unlike the spectator of both the television and representative democracy, the internet user is capable of intervening in the political through participating in a shared, open forum. Such a forum far more resembles the mode of discussions in the ancient Greek *polis* than the liberal and representative theories of democracy that surfaced in the modern era, Stiegler argues. (9–17) This modern era was characterised by a loss of political participation and what Stiegler calls one’s general disconnection [*déliation*] from society. (79) Crépon targets and responds to one of liberal democracy’s major 20<sup>th</sup>-century works, Macpherson’s *Principles and Limits of Liberal Democracy*, while Stiegler offers a compelling review of his recent, prolific work, including his arsenal of concepts and his related work with the collective *Ars Industrialis*.

The work itself is divided into three essays by Stiegler, Crépon, and Stiegler respectively. In the Introduction (8–21), Stiegler begins by describing the context in which the work was written—the electoral campaign of the *Parti Socialiste* in France in 2006. He then offers reasons for considering the theme of “participation” in democracy more broadly and philosophically. Stiegler contrasts television and French populism with forums or spaces of participation, namely the Greek *polis* as the creation of a space of participation and those contemporary technologies that have created forums for participation once again. The current text, he says, will attempt to reinstate “participation” at the core of a new political project. (11) He explains that the present essays are the result of a special meeting of the collective *Ars Industrialis* and offers some of the core tenets of their manifesto.

In the second essay, “Democracy in Default” (24–57), Marc Crépon identifies our contemporary political problem as both “a default of power and a default of listening” to its citizens. (48) He also outlines the technological and institutional reasons why democracy is in a state of failure, namely the irrelevance of both television and representation for true, participatory democracy. Citing recent voting trends in France, Crépon notes that citizens do not feel heard by their representatives. (25) Their viewpoints are not even represented in the dominant media of the day, the television, which Crépon describes as a rigorously orchestrated space of repetition that is made for “citizen-telespectators” rather than participants in a democracy. (54) He targets liberalism in particular for

equating democracy with the principles of modern capitalism and individualism. In the end, he tries to recover the Greek sense of democratic citizenship as one's co-participation or taking part in the political.

In the third and final essay by Stiegler, titled "Français, encore une effort" (60–116), Stiegler composes an essay that places the theme of "participation" within the context of his work, resulting in a condensed, lucid survey of Stiegler's philosophy in his own words. Major concepts like "telecracy" and "symbolic misery" are explained alongside Stiegler's critique of oligarchic media and liberal individualism or what he calls "disconnections" or "short-circuits." Stiegler summarises his thesis that new, collaborative technologies offer unedited spaces of individual and collective participation. He also begins a debate with Jacques Rancière, claiming that these new milieus of participation—what Stiegler calls symbolic circuits or configurations—cannot be accounted for in the famous work of Rancière, which defines democracy as an aesthetic manifestation, but not a symbolic one (90–91). Stiegler concludes with one of his major concerns about technology and contemporary democracy: that we are actually ruled by a telecracy. (100)

The three essays in this book are much more than two philosophers' reflections on "participation." They articulate the contemporary "desire" for a new kind of politics altogether—a desire for "something else." (27) In writing this work ahead of the recent surge of protests and revolutions around the world, it indicates at the very least that these philosophers were indeed listening. Ultimately, their unique question is whether this desire for a different politics becomes a possibility through the technologies of our time.

But Crépon and Stiegler are equally clear that technology alone will not save us. And this is a final point that one wishes were underlined and developed further. For instance, in their compilation of Twitter messages from participants in Egypt's revolution, Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns note that "the most compelling coverage [of the revolution] was on Twitter, coming directly from the people in the square." (Idle and Nunns, *Tweets from Tahrir*, 13) But while the "internet provided a tool that helped shape the form of the uprising," they continue, what "has been described as a 'Twitter Revolution'...was not." The revolution was a tangible manifestation of people who "literally placed their bodies between tyranny and freedom." (*Tweets from Tahrir*, 22) To characterise it as an internet revolution ignores "the role of the working class which had

been striking since 2006,” the activists who had been “mobilizing, forming groups, and holding small protests in the face of police brutality since at least the year 2000.” (*Tweets from Tahrir*, 22) If one must disagree then with Crépon and Stiegler, if one must in fact continue to protest, it would be only because the internet technologies they describe still have to be performed with our bodies. And thus despite the richness of this text—its timeliness, its originality, and its awareness of the contemporary debate over democracy in French philosophy—there are moments when even these extraordinarily tuned-in philosophers are still too distant from the material struggles, embodied suffering, and daily anxieties that make today’s citizens shout in the streets.

**Hauke Brunkhorst, *Habermas*. Leipzig: Reclam, 2006. ISBN: 978-3379203098. Gordon James Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0192840950. Mattias Iser and David Strecker, *Jürgen Habermas: zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2010. ISBN: 978-3885066682.**

*Review by Kevin W. Gray, American University of Sharjah*

The sense among academics that Habermas’ writings have now become part of the canon, not only in philosophy and in political science but in the social sciences and in law as well, has led to the recent publication of a spate of introductions to his work. The publication of so many such works provides not only an opportunity to evaluate their comparative strengths and weaknesses, but also to comment on the various possible interpretations of Habermas’ philosophical project and its reception in different countries.

The first work considered here is Finlayson’s *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. By virtue of the author’s straightforward approach, the language of publication, and the fact that it was one of the first such guides available, it has sold in the order of 17,000 copies. Beginning with a very short biography of Habermas, Finlayson attempts, in a little over 150 pages, to trace the evolution of Habermas’ thought and to explain the key points to an audience previously unfamiliar to his work. There is much to recommend in this work: the writing style, and the author’s excellent grasp of Habermas’ work on universal pragmatics,

discourse ethics, the philosophy of law, his theory of democracy (all of which enjoy extended, detailed treatment). Finlayson also includes a strong summary of Habermas' *Habilitationsschrift*, *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, which builds on an informed discussion of Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (and their analysis of the culture industry). After developing Habermas' philosophical concerns, Finlayson concludes the book with a discussion of Habermas' oft-ignored interventions on Europe and constitutional patriotism. There is little that is incorrect in the book—Habermas' thought is faithfully rendered. This is no small feat when trying to summarise the work of a major thinker.

However, this does not mean that there is nothing to disagree with in Finlayson's book. For example, in his preface, Finlayson describes what he sees as Habermas' research program: a steady progression from a pragmatic theory of meaning to a theory of communicative rationality to the internally related political, social and discourse-ethic theories for which he has become well-known in the West. This is a curious method of classification on the part of Finlayson, since its plausibility rests on the fact that he dismisses a number of Habermas' early works, including the critique of Marcuse's Marxism; the debate with Gadamer over the universality of hermeneutics; the dialogue with psychoanalysis (including the engagement with Mitscherlich and Lorenzer over the possibility that psychoanalysis could provide the framework for a theory of ideological critique); the Positivist Debate with Popper and the critique of the dominant paradigms in the philosophy of the social sciences; his involvement with the student movement; and *Legitimation Crisis*—a work which was important not only for Habermas' attempt to develop a theory of social pathology later in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, but also influential on other German political theorists such as Claus Offe. Moreover, by ignoring these works, Finlayson is forced to treat Habermas' *Habilitationsschrift* as something of an outlier and to present Habermas' middle period as a period of philosophical journeying (16) and of better acquainting himself with contemporary debates in Anglo-American philosophy of language (17–18), rather than as a period of intense philosophical productivity (which is closer to the truth). Put simply, the twenty years between the two works are substantially under-theorised in Finlayson's guide: the reception of American pragmatism is quite simply not the only thing that went on.

(16) Similarly, the discussion of Habermas' influences when writing his *magnum opus* is strange: Lawrence Kohlberg's work on moral development merits a very long discussion, but Jean Piaget's equally important work (for Habermas) is ignored. Parsons' systems theory comes in for no great discussion at all and the debate with Luhmann over the nature of systems theory is ignored. (Luhmann deserves, in fact, not a single mention in the index!)

While Finlayson is discussing Habermas from the perspective of an Anglo-Saxon philosopher, the other two books that I will discuss here are written by German academics, albeit from different generations. The first, titled simply *Habermas*, is written by Hauke Brunkhorst, professor of sociology at the University of Flensburg who previously studied under Habermas in Frankfurt.

Brunkhorst and Finlayson share (superficially at least) a similar methodological approach to Habermas' writings: both works begin with the question of the role of communication in late capitalist society. Brunkhorst's book begins as does Finlayson's—with a brief treatment of Habermas' biography, then a discussion of the role of communication in Habermas' social theory. However, Brunkhorst differs from Finlayson in two important respects. First, his work on communication focusses on the integrative capacity of communication. Put simply, Brunkhorst focusses on communication's capacity to integrate late capitalist society. Thus, the role accorded to communication in Habermas' theory differs markedly in the two works. Brunkhorst includes a discussion, missing from Finlayson's work, of the treatment of communication in Weber, Mead, Durkheim and Parsons in order to show in what ways Habermas' theory of communicative rationality differs from its discussion in his sociological predecessors. This approach has its advantages: it ties Habermas' work closer to the debates in sociology in the 1960s than Finlayson could do, due to the latter's emphasis on the philosophy of language. Brunkhorst is able to give a sustained treatment of the idea of the self-generation of society through communication in the work of Luhmann and relate it to Habermas' thought in a way that Finlayson is unable to do. (27) Similarly, although Brunkhorst treats the role of reason in the creation of the good society in a way not wholly unlike Finlayson (though with much less detail about the nuts and bolts of Habermas' universal pragmatics or discourse ethics), Brunkhorst stresses Habermas' argument according to which the regulative function of rea-

son in Kant must be tempered by our best insights from sociology. (33) Second, Brunkhorst's style of presentation tries to compare Habermas' work to that of other thinkers with whom he entered into debate. Brunkhorst includes discussion missing from Finlayson's book, most notably his engagement with psychoanalysis and the theory of cognitive interests (which we find in *Knowledge and Human Interests*).

The subsequent sections of Brunkhorst's book show how Habermas' discussion of communicative rationality changes the paradigm adopted by the first generation of critical theorists. Brunkhorst traces the evolution of Hegel's critique of Kant from Marx to Adorno and Horkheimer and then shows how Habermas, in *Zur Rekonstruktion des historischen Materialismus*, recasts rationality as a learning process adopted by late capitalist society as a way of self-regulating. Here again Brunkhorst is at his strongest, for he is able to compare Habermas' evolution to the work of Mead, Piaget and Kohlberg. He then closes the chapter with an original summary of the debate between Foucault, Butler and Habermas over the role of reason in the creation of social domination.

In the final section of the book, Brunkhorst returns to the role of the theory of communicative action, this time recasting it in terms of the much-discussed paradigm shift between the philosophy of consciousness and the philosophy of communication. Here, his goal is to show that the shift in Habermas' work has important consequences for postwar sociology, not only in Germany but worldwide (92), and for the theory of the capitalist state. Here again, Brunkhorst adopts a different approach from Finlayson, assuming that the reader already has some knowledge of Habermas' work, preferring to focus on the debates between Habermas, Luhmann, Schelsky, Parsons and others. Ultimately, Brunkhorst is strongest where Finlayson is weakest: the strength of the work lies in its explication of the sociological debates that informed Habermas' evolution. Conversely, Finlayson lays bare, in a way Brunkhorst does not, Habermas' philosophical development and the content of Habermas' work in the philosophy of language.

The final work to be examined is Mattias Iser and David Strecker's *Jürgen Habermas: zur Einführung*. Iser and Strecker are part of a younger generation of German scholars who, while intimately familiar with Habermas' work, have had less direct contact with Habermas

himself and who have also been exposed to Habermas' thought through the reception of his work both in Germany and abroad.

Iser and Strecker adopt a different approach than Finlayson and Brunkhorst. Rather than stressing the regulative function of communication, the authors stress Habermas' critique of modernity. Of course, modernity is not completely distinct from communication in Habermas' work; after all, communication is the key to Habermas' model of legitimation in society divorced from traditional worldviews. Nonetheless, the approach does offer its advantages. The authors begin with a summary of Habermas' biography that is richer and more detailed than that offered by Finlayson or Brunkhorst. Their goal here is not merely to present biographical details, but to show Habermas' involvement with major events in German political history since World War II. Thus, they offer a better discussion of Habermas' involvement with the German SDS and they also address the debate with conservative historians in the 1980s (wholly absent from the other works) and the debate with Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict, over the role of religion in Europe (which is so recent as to be absent from both Finlayson's and Brunkhorst's books).

In the second section, Iser and Strecker deviate from the standard understanding of Habermas' thought along the line of a pre- and post-communicative turn, preferring to identify three critiques of modernity offered by Habermas' version of critical theory: the critique of ideology, the approach grounded in the cognitive theory of knowledge and the communicative model. (57) This approach, it seems to me, offers a much more useful way of categorising Habermas' oeuvre than the standard narrative, which differentiates the philosophy of consciousness from the philosophy of communicative action. In the first instance, it allows the authors to better classify all of Habermas' works without straining the theoretical framework. After all, it is difficult to see the relationship between the critique of Marcuse and the work on the public sphere, on the one hand, and the book *Knowledge and Human Interests*, on the other—yet the approach adopted by Finlayson and Brunkhorst would seem to require it.

It is disappointing, therefore, that the authors do not put this framework to better use since it would aid in the explication of Habermas' entire corpus. Instead, they jump more or less straight to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, which they approach in a way similar to Finlayson. After developing the groundwork for the theory, they show

how Habermas uses it to construct both a theory of the pathological development of late-capitalist society (the so-called thesis of the colonisation of the lifeworld) and a theory of the democratic state. The authors conclude the book by examining the relationship between Habermas' theory of democracy and theories of the nation-state, as well as his involvement in public debates over the future of Europe, the role of religion and the possibility for transnational governance.

Ultimately, each of the books under consideration has its strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend one to the reader would wholly depend on what the reader hoped to take from it. Finlayson's is undoubtedly the strongest account of Habermas' philosophical development; Brunkhorst better situates Habermas' thought in the context of sociological debates in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century; Iser and Strecker provide an excellent summary of the relationship between the critique of late-capitalist society and Habermas' political theory.

However, a review should not be content to merely rank books in the field. It should also try to account for the methodological approach of the author. Here, a remarkable division shows itself. Beyond the disciplinary divides between sociology (Brunkhorst), political theory (Iser and Strecker) and philosophy (Finlayson), Finlayson's treatment of Habermas' work mirrors Habermas' reception in the Anglo-Saxon world (and to a great extent which translations of Habermas are widely available). Finlayson, unlike Brunkhorst or Iser and Strecker, ignores Habermas' early work in the philosophy of the social sciences and his engagements with German politics. This is unfortunate, because for all the strengths of Finlayson's work on Habermas' philosophy, this focus has the effect of divorcing Habermas' work from the tradition of critical theory of which it is so much a part. And yet, it is paradoxically for that reason that Finlayson's book may be the most useful for the English-speaking student of Habermas, in so far as Finlayson does a good job of summarising those areas of Habermas' thought most discussed in the English-speaking world.



**Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Trans. Daniel Ross. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010. 154 pages. ISBN: 978-0745648040.**

*Review by Devin Zane Shaw, University of Ottawa*

Bernard Stiegler has developed, over the last decade, an analysis of the ways in which technology transforms human consciousness. Drawing on the work of Heidegger and Derrida, Stiegler has argued that technologies of memory work to produce a loss of lived memory. The mnemotechnic devices of “tertiary retention”—from writing to more recent audiovisual and digital technologies—mediate conscious time as we live it. These technologies of memory are themselves subjected to techniques of grammatisation that allow for their distinction and reproduction as discrete units of information or *grammes*. Through this process the discrete grains of information produced by grammatisation function as a *pharmakon* (poison and remedy) that can either produce isolated individuals within a society dominated by the culture industry or offer the capacity for a new kind of transindividual economies of desire.

While his work has largely been oriented by, and read within, the post-phenomenological currents of French theory, *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (published in French in 2010 and translated into English with another recent essay, “Pharmacology of Capital and Economy of Contribution”) is Stiegler’s intervention in debates over the financial crisis of 2008 and contemporary political economy. He attempts a *new critique*—a “pharmacology”—that encompasses problems ranging from production, consumption and industrialisation to analyses of contemporary processes of proletarianisation. He argues that this new critique is necessary because Marx could not foresee the intensification of technological transformation, especially over the last several decades. Nevertheless, it is unclear how these technological changes invalidate the bases of Marx’s analyses. Despite his claim of commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Marx’s *Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Stiegler does little more than replace Marx’s class analysis and revolutionary critique of capitalism with an analysis of how technology leads to short-term thinking.

Stiegler situates his intervention as a corrective to the tendency of recent French philosophy to sidestep or dismiss problems of political

economy. As he correctly notes, the post-1968 generation of French philosophy, from Derrida and Foucault to Badiou and Rancière, rejects the economism (the reduction of superstructural features of social relations to their economic forms) of Althusser as well as the French Communist Party, its intellectuals, and its fellow-travelers. Nevertheless, Stiegler's critique of his predecessors and contemporaries remains inconsistent. At the outset, he argues that French philosophy has "nothing whatsoever to say about the contemporary economy, as if nothing new had appeared in this domain since the end of the Second World War" (a claim that is obviously challenged by the publication of Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the 1978–1979 lectures at the *Collège de France*). (17) These philosophers "speak of immigration, of Europe, or of democracy, but they do not speak of capital, nor labor, nor industry, nor marketing." (19) One would expect from these claims that Stiegler's "new" critique will extend beyond the limits of the previous accounts of libidinal economy or economies of difference as they were carried out by Bataille, Derrida, Lacan or Lyotard. Yet after chastising others for ignoring the key problems of political economy, he argues that "a new critique of political economy is necessary, and it must also constitute a pharmacological critique of libidinal economy" (40–41) because contemporary capitalism captures our desires and reroutes them through short-term protentions (what phenomenologists have called pro-jections or anticipations).

So after claiming that his predecessors have ignored the problems of political economy, Stiegler lays claim to their work on libidinal economy as political economy (he also neglects the debates and contributions of the Frankfurt School, the Situationists, and the Autonomia group, among others). Given this inconsistency, it seems that Stiegler's only clear objection is that they *speak* as if nothing *new* had happened in political economy since 1945. This would explain his tendency to utilise and incessantly repeat buzzwords that suggest analogies between economics and his pharmacology of desire—like "toxicity," "commerce," "credit," "investment" or "bearish tendencies"—though they obscure his analysis rather than clarify it.

Whatever his take on French philosophy, the value of his critique of political economy rises or falls on its treatment of Marx and Marxist categories. First, he argues that grammatisation is a "condition" of proletarianisation. On Stiegler's account, Plato is the first philosopher of proletarianisation, insofar as he shows (in the *Phaedrus*) that the "exterior-

ization of memory is a loss of memory and knowledge.” (29) Grammatization results from techniques of breaking down memory and knowledge into discrete “grains” that are isolated from the continuum of cognitive retention and protention. These techniques make possible the capture of desires and processes of individuation and transindividuation (collective subjectification) by the culture industry, which, Stiegler argues, turns these desires and processes toward short-term investment (libininal and economic) rather than long-term investment. Grammatization, he argues, proletarianises human activity because it “produces short-circuits in the transindividuation process,” by orienting our desires and activities around ever shorter and more discrete horizons. (35)

As we know from Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, proletarianisation cannot be equated simply with exteriorisation. Invoking *The German Ideology*, Stiegler argues that exteriorisation (as grammatisation) “is the root of the technical question, that is, the question of this production of self by self in which the human consists” (30), but he does not address Marx’s crucial distinction between *objectification* (*Vergegenständlichung*) and *alienation* or *externalisation* (*Entfremdung* or *Entäußerung*). For Marx, objectification is the result of human practices, which mediate human needs, social relations, and the social metabolism of natural environments, while alienation is the result of specific historical social relations determined within capitalism. Without this distinction, it is possible to jump from the techniques of externalisation of writing to digital techniques of memory storage as if these transformations were determined by an unbroken historical continuum. One can make epochal claims, for instance, about cellular phones—“The spread of industrial hypomnesic apparatuses causes our memories to pass into machines, in such a way that, for example, we no longer know the telephone numbers of those close to us”—as if before them nobody had ever used address books. (30; compare this to Agamben’s comments in *What is an Apparatus?*, Stanford University Press, 2009, 16)

More importantly, Marx’s distinction between objectification and alienation allows us to grasp what is specific about social relations within capitalism, as well as the role of class struggle within these relations. Class struggle is entirely absent in Stiegler’s discussion of proletarianisation and his theory of crises. Drawing on Marx’s analyses about the stultification and tediousness of industrial work, Stiegler argues, on the basis of the proliferation of techniques of grammatisation, that today

all aspects of social life are captured by processes of proletarianisation. (39) Certainly we can accept the claim that technological innovation transforms social relations and functions to immiserate workers rather than liberate them, but Stiegler explicitly empties his concept of “proletarianisation” of any class content; it becomes a problem of techniques of memory and knowledge, for producers, consumers, and all other sociological groups (he defines the proletariat as “those economic actors who are without knowledge because they are without memory: their memory has passed into the machine that reproduces gestures that the proletariat no longer needs to know”). (35) Stiegler never answers the question of how the critique of techniques of memory and knowledge tell us anything about proletarianisation as a process of expropriation of surplus-value and accumulation by dispossession. He does, however, wax nostalgic about the charms of the petty bourgeoisie, who—unlike the working class—could “emancipate itself from the pure necessity of reproducing its labor power, and can therefore liberate itself from pure *negotium*, that is, from completely calculable exchange.” (64–65) With such pleasures, who needs to speak of liberating the working class?

If Stiegler can manage to empty “proletarianisation” of its class content, we should not be surprised that his account of the recent crisis prioritises technological and moral solutions rather than political ones: “technics becomes the central stakes” of political economy, which in turn becomes a question of “sociotherapy.” (36) On his account, the financialisation of capital is the most recent of techniques, like “the *pharmakon* of writing,” that can “short-circuit living and anamnestic memory.” (79) Stiegler attempts to show, in one of those moments when his analogies obstruct a clear analysis, how the “struggle against the tendential fall in the rate of profit thus induces a tendential fall in libidinal energy, which reinforces the speculative tendency of capital, that is, its disinvestment.” (89) He argues that consumerism, the first sustained solution to the tendential fall in the rate of profit, produces the fall in libidinal energy, short-circuiting the long-term investments of desire. A widespread “dictatorship of short-termism” is the result. (57) The cause of the crisis, then, is “carelessness” (*incurie*), brought on by short-term thinking, when one “scoffs at the economic as well as social consequences of ‘profitable’ decisions.” (80) Given that he reduces structural crises to motivations such as carelessness (85), it should come as no surprise that Stiegler is a reformist in the last instance, calling for a “sociotherapy” to cultivate

long-term horizons in transindividual relations and for laws and regulations to prevent the more harmful aspects of capital accumulation. (99–101 and 108)

Stiegler is emblematic of a conservative French republicanism masquerading as radical theory: political questions, on his account, are subordinated to technological questions, and reformism replaces popular struggle. In sum, for Stiegler, the system carries risks, but these can be corrected if we just care enough, that is, if we create the proper institutions to handle our investments, libidinal and otherwise. When Stiegler argues that “new apparatuses of production of libidinal energy must be conceived and instituted” his examples are, embarrassingly enough, “the ecclesiastical institution and its care-ful [*curieux*] inhabitant, the curé [and] the school and its master, the teacher.” (108) If this is a new critique of political economy, then long live the ‘old’ critique! Combating capitalism today requires analysing how neoliberalism is a project of re-trenching capitalist class power, as well as conceptualising how the techniques of this project (expropriation, privatisation, financialisation, accumulation by dispossession, and the uneven deployment of production across the global north and south) serve to reinforce that goal. For this task, there are more tools in Marx’s contributions than in Stiegler’s.

**Vittorio Hösle, *Die Rangordnung der drei griechischen Tragiker. Ein Problem aus der Geschichte der Poetik als Lackmustest ästhetischer Theorien*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag (JB-Gespräche 24), 2009; 121 pages. ISBN 978-3796526190.**

*Review by Eva Buccioni, Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning.*

The slim volume appears to stem from a talk that Vittorio Hösle gave in April 2009 in the Seminar for Classic Philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Its title may be translated as “*The Ranking of the Three Greek Tragedians: A Problem from the History of Poetics as a Litmus Test for Aesthetic Theories*” (subsequently abbreviated as *Rangordnung*; all translations from this text are mine). In the introduction, Hösle points out that the title may seem strange as one may wonder how a concrete problem could illuminate the deeper structure (*Tiefenstruktur*)

of aesthetic theories. (7) It is more common to believe that aesthetic theory is grounded in general principles and that concrete aesthetic experience is to be judged by the standards of the theory. By contrast Hösle proposes to examine the question of the ranking of the three Greek tragedians as a test for the most viable aesthetic theory.

The book sets out to determine who is *first* among the three generally accepted great Greek tragedians (here in chronological order): Aeschylus (525/4–456/5 B.C.E.), Sophocles (ca. 497–406 B.C.E.), or Euripides (ca. 480–406 B.C.E.). Hösle discusses from various sources views on tragedy, tragedians, and aesthetics, as well as different rankings. After the introductory section (7–14), he examines some ancient sources, i.e., Aristophanes, especially his *Frogs* (14–33), Plato (33–39) and Aristotle (40–58), and *On the Sublime*, an anonymous writing usually attributed to Longinus. (59–68) This is followed by a section on Schiller's aesthetics that also mentions the Schlegels. (68–82) Finally, the aesthetic theories of Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer (82–95), and Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (95–114) are discussed. In the concluding section (115–21), Hösle briefly gives his own position that turns out, for the most part, to be a reaffirmation of what he apparently said already in his 1984 publication, *Die Vollendung der Tragödie im Spätwerk des Sophokles. Ästhetisch-historische Bemerkungen zur Struktur der attischen Tragödie*. He ranks Sophocles highest among the tragedians and follows Hegel's aesthetic, which he believes to be unsurpassed.

Well written in German academic style, Hösle's *Rangordnung* is intended for those already well familiar with Greek tragedy and the works of the writers discussed. For this specialist audience there is much of interest in the slim volume. But ultimately the reader may well ask whether the so-called ranking problem is not merely a pseudo-problem. One may also ask whether several of the writers discussed would actually have agreed to the ranking attributed to them. Moreover, the "litmus test result" that Hösle believes emerges from the discussion is questionable because "the experiment" itself seems somewhat rigged.

If, as the title would already suggest, the primary aim of the book is to determine the ranking of the three tragedians, then it would seem expedient to develop already at the outset clear criteria for such a ranking. No clear criteria are provided. Instead Hösle mentions in his introduction (13–14) that Aristophanes and Nietzsche, for example, rank Aeschylus first, while Aristotle is said to allot that rank to Euripides.

Specific ranking criteria will emerge only later from a discussion of Aristotle's *Poetics*. (As will be discussed below, Aristotle did not intend to rank tragedians but instead to develop, among other things, criteria by which to identify good tragedies.) Ultimately aesthetic judgment hinges on the primary divide among aesthetic approaches, that is, the divide between *Rezeptionsästhetik* (aesthetics that takes as its central focus the audience's reception of a work) and *Kunstwerkästhetik* (aesthetics that place the aesthetic value of the work of art at the centre). Höslé considers Aristotle's to be an aesthetic of reception that is completely *passé*. It is surpassed by the now predominant *Kunstwerkästhetik* that he believes has received its breakthrough with Schelling and Hegel. (82) Since the title suggests that the ranking problem is the litmus test for aesthetic theories, it seems crucial to have ranking criteria for the tragedians that are independent from the criteria by which we judge the aesthetic theories themselves. Only then does it make sense to judge the theories by the independent results of the litmus test. Even then, one would need two sets of criteria, one to judge the aesthetic quality of the tragedies, and another to judge the tragedians. The second could perhaps consist merely of a simple criterion: calculate the number of good tragedies minus the number of bad ones for each poet. This already seems rather absurd. But, given that only a fraction of the tragedies of the three prolific poets has come down to us, it is also an impossible task. Implied in this way of judging tragedians is already also a clear bias in favour of those ancient "judges" who still had access to the work of the poets. For, if one believes in the hierarchical ranking of poets in the first place, then one would need to consider the entire corpus of their creative production rather than attempt a ranking based on what we have today: a meagre seven of about 90 tragedies from Aeschylus, seven of over 120 from Sophocles, and seventeen of over 90 from Euripides. It would be hardly satisfying to assume that only the best tragedies were handed down to us. On these grounds, Euripides would be the best tragedians, since his tragedies have survived in highest proportion, and Sophocles the worst.

The most likely ancient source for a ranking of the tragedians is Aristophanes. His *Frogs*, as is well known, pitches Aeschylus against Euripides in a verbal wrestling match where resurrection is the prize for the winner. A somewhat bumbling Dionysus, accompanied by his shrewd slave Xanthias, is to judge the match and take the winner back with him from Hades to Athens to save the city from a tense political

situation towards the end of the Peloponnesian War. The play was first performed in winter of 405 B.C.E. Höfle is well aware that it is highly problematic to take comedy as evidence for any claims. Nevertheless he believes that the *Frogs*, together with other remarks made about Euripides in other of Aristophanes' comedies (15–16), warrant the conclusion that Aristophanes ranked Aeschylus first, Sophocles second, and Euripides last by a wide margin. Many of the details that Höfle discusses make for an interesting read. But his rendition of the Aristophanic depiction of the two tragedians seems somewhat skewed. According to Höfle, Euripides is characterized as democratic, talkative, fawning (*Anbiederei*), narcissistic, calculating and pompous, while Aeschylus is contrasted as aristocratic, reserved, severe, focussed on the subject-matter (*Sachbezogenheit*) and nobly passionate. (22) Although the first characteristic is clearly correct, the others seem biased in favour of Aeschylus. Readers may recall that it is Aeschylus who breaks out into rather base *ad hominem* invectives already at the outset of the *agon* with Euripides and continues his tirade despite Dionysus' attempt to calm him down (*Frogs*, 830–59). Ultimately Dionysus cannot decide whom to resurrect to save Athens so he asks them politically explosive questions, rather than poetic ones. He asks them what they think of Alcibiades (the political *enfant terrible* of Athens) and how to best serve the state (*Frogs*, 1414–59). As he still cannot decide, he follows his intuition and takes Aeschylus back. Aristophanes seems to make more of a political statement (which turned out to be rather risky in light of the oligarchic coup that overthrew democracy in 404 B.C.E.), rather than actually proposing a ranking of poets based on their poetic quality. Paul Roche provides a different explanation than Höfle for the absence of Sophocles as an active competitor: the poet was still alive when the *Frogs* were drafted so that Aristophanes only had time to insert some references to Sophocles after his death in 406 and prior to the first stage production in 405 (Aristophanes, *The Complete Plays*, trans. Paul Roche, p. 539). This may not be all that convincing, however, as Aristophanes would probably have written a play about the need to resurrect a poet while Sophocles was still alive. Be that as it may, if Aristophanes had intended to rank the three tragedians poetically, the political emphasis would have been merely a tangent. It does not look that way. If he had wanted to rank them based on audience reception, he could have simply had them brag about how often they actually scored



first place in the tragedy competitions. He presumably had access to the records.

Even if we were to agree with Höhle that Aristophanes is actually ranking the three tragedians in accordance with their poetic merits, the same cannot be said for Aristotle and the author of *On the Sublime*. (The section on Plato is framed in terms of a general condemnation of tragedy with Euripides as the loser.) *On the Sublime* is a teaching manual for the *technē* of rhetoric, and its author at times uses passages from tragedy as examples to illustrate a point. Similarly the *Poetics*, the primary Aristotelian source from which Höhle extracts a ranking is a *technē* manual that analyses the art of poetics and sets forth criteria to distinguish good poetic works from bad ones. Aristotle seems to have no intention of ranking poets but rather uses their work to illustrate his points. Nevertheless, Höhle believes that one can deduce that Aristotle is least impressed by Aeschylus, because he mentions him only four times in the *Poetics*. (42) Although both Sophocles and Euripides are mentioned more often, “quantitatively a preeminence (*Vorrang*) of Euripides is noticeable.” (43) Moreover, Aristotle regards Euripides to be “the most tragic of the poets (*der tragischste der Dichter*).” (46, *Poetics* 1453a26–30) Aristotle’s overall judgment emerges from his teleology and thus presupposes that tragedy develops over time. (43, *Poetics* 1449a10–30) Importantly, Höhle brings out some of the criteria offered by Aristotle. Aristotle regards plot and incidents (or events) as having the highest priority, rather than character, which comes second. (47, *Poetics* 1450a ff.) This means that for Aristotle, as Höhle reads him, protagonists may be neither thoroughly bad, nor perfectly virtuous. (*Poetics* 1452b27–1453a37) Höhle objects that “it is nothing short of absurd to believe that characters such as Antigone belong to the moral middle stratum (*sittlichen Mittellage*).” (57) Great tragedies are not possible without greatness of character, in Höhle’s opinion, no matter what (short-lived) popularity may be achieved by the tragic misfortune of protagonists that are as average as the average viewer. This seems then more a question of what one considers moral greatness. Aristotle explicitly uses Oedipus as one example of tragic character. (1454a11) As Höhle takes Sophocles to be the best of the tragedians, and as *Oedipus Rex* is usually considered among his best tragedies, one would expect Oedipus, if Höhle were right, to be a character of moral greatness. But recall how Oedipus actually gets himself into the trouble that brings about his downfall and that of

many others. We may refer to it in our terms as a case of ancient road rage. According to Sophocles' rendition of the myth, Oedipus is on foot when he encounters a chariot led by a herald. (*Oed.* 798–803) It remains unclear throughout how many people were actually accompanying King Laius. (Bulfinch's account of the myth itself has Oedipus riding in a chariot as well, but Laius is accompanied only by one attendant [*The Golden Age of Myth and Legend*, p. 151].) For tragic purposes there needs to be at least one in addition to the herald, namely the shepherd who survives to tell the tale. Sophocles has to include the shepherd for the sake of the plot and needs to leave open how many men were actually with the king. Jocasta speaks of five people. (*Oed.* 753–54) Instead of politely yielding, as would seem sensible for a young man encountering, at a narrow rural junction, a chariot with a man old enough to be his father, Oedipus lets himself become embroiled in a scuffle. When the elderly man hits him with a goad (a horsewhip) while passing, Oedipus gets so enraged that he not only knocks him off the carriage with his stick but rages on to "kill them all," as he admits to Jocasta later. (*Oed.* 810–13) In short, he is guilty of aggravated assault and multiple cases of second degree homicide motivated by petty road rage. Someone might object that the Ancients would not have seen it that way, but would have said that Oedipus did what honour demanded when pushed around and horsewhipped. The problem, they might say, was only that Laius unfortunately turned out to be Oedipus' father. But this objection would overlook the fact that the plague was brought on Thebes only because the King's death was left unpurified due to the murderer not having been brought to justice. Oedipus was impure and should have known it. Anyone who doubts that accidental killing through negligence, "even" if the victim is a day labourer, requires purification only has to read Plato's *Euthyphro*. After all, Euthyphro indicts his own father on similar grounds. Hence, Aristotle's judgment that the protagonist is neither a good man nor just, seems rather apt.

As is well known, for Aristotle, the task of tragedy is to bring about catharsis through pity and fear. (48) According to Hölsle, this shows that Aristotle's is an aesthetic of reception or effect (Hölsle uses both *Rezeptionsästhetik* and *Wirkungsästhetik*). (48–49 and *passim*) He also objects to Aristotle's postulate that the best tragedies should move from good fortune to ill fortune, on the grounds that some tragedies end in reconciliation (Hölsle refers to Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Aeschy-

lus' *Eumenides* and Sophocles' *Oedipus on Colonus*). (54) It is because of his aesthetic of reception that Aristotle cannot rank such dramas of reconciliation among the best. By contrast, artwork aestheticians (*Kunstwerkästhetiker*) do not care that dramas that end in reconciliation do not stir the audience as much as a tragedy without happy ending. (54) In short, Höhle believes Aristotle to be too concerned with the effect the tragedy is to have on the viewer, an approach that *Kunstwerkästhetiker* disdain and believe to be outdated.

A review such as this one is not the place to engage in an in-depth defence of Aristotle or evaluate different approaches to aesthetics. The very fact that Höhle's rendition of Aristotle tempts one to want to do so is a sign that it may engage scholars in further discussion. But one thing that ought to be taken into account is whether *Kunstwerkästhetik* does not tacitly include among its criteria an understanding that tragedy must affect someone in order to be tragic. Aristotle by no means assumes that performance is essential to tragedy. Performance is merely extraneous spectacle. Indeed, a tragedy's organic unity, together with the very fact that a tragedy may simply be read just like an epic, tips the scales in favour of tragedy and makes it the highest form of imitation. (*Poetics* 1462a6–b15) But the tragic has to be experienced, it has to affect someone, and whoever this is is a recipient. That tragedy must be tragic should be obvious and, although reconciliation satisfies our craving for happy endings and restores our hope that good can come out of the worst, it seems to me that Aristotle is right to hold that reconciliation is not a part of tragedy as such but remains extraneous to it. Happy, or conciliatory, endings also seem far more popular, if anything. Hence, if Aristotle were really concerned with audience ratings, so to speak, he ought to have opted for reconciliation dramas. Far from being merely concerned with reception, most of his criteria aim at the quality of the tragedy as such.

Höhle's entire analysis, however, seems to be guided by his preferences for Hegelian *Kunstwerkästhetik*. This also becomes evident in his section on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The discussion of Nietzsche seems to go to unnecessary length into the controversy with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. (96–106, about half of the section) Although the controversy is very intriguing, readers may like to see a deeper discussion of Nietzsche's aesthetic instead. Höhle rejects Nietzsche's degeneration aesthetics (*Verfallsästhetik*), which regards Aeschylus as the climax, Sopho-

cles as an intermediate stage, and Euripides as the degeneration of the tragic genre. (106) As Höfle considers Hegelian aesthetics to be unsurpassed, it may seem that Nietzsche's aesthetics itself degenerates from that aesthetic climax. Ultimately Höfle's *Rangordnung* does not seem so much to provide a litmus test for aesthetic theories; rather, the predetermined choice of aesthetic theory seems to guide the testing. One may well wonder whether the ranking is not a pseudo-problem and whether, *pace* Höfle, each of the three tragedians is not simply. Sure enough, if one regards superior morals (*Sittlichkeit*) as a prerequisite for becoming a protagonist in tragedy, then Euripides and his *Medea* do not stand a chance. But if one reads it as an attempt to make an ancient myth currently relevant, then its feministic undercurrent is astounding even now. (Although feminists should be loath to adopt a ruthless murdering sorceress such as Medea, there is much that amazes in how Euripides brings the mythical ideas and the conjugal drama down to earth and reflects on the exploitation of women.) Any ranking of tragedians, on the other hand, always brings up the questions: best for whom, in what era, and on what grounds? Answers will shift over time and always depend on aesthetic and moral presuppositions.

The final section looks back to Höfle's early work mentioned above, *Die Vollendung der Tragödie*, intentionally or coincidentally in a manner similar to Nietzsche's later preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* ("Versuch einer Selbstkritik"). The difference is that Höfle seems to speak far more affectionately and approvingly of his early self, the *Grünschnabel* (greenhorn) who composed that work in a mere three weeks. (115–16) Overall he seems quite satisfied with the position developed in his early twenties. He still advocates the main theses (*Hauptthesen*) and finds his textual interpretations in particular still convincing. (117) He reaffirms aesthetic progression (*ästhetischen Fortschritt*) in the Hegelian sense and still takes Sophocles as the climax of aesthetic development. (116) This might make one wonder if he does not tacitly agree with Nietzsche, then, that Euripides is the degeneration of the genre and so only disagrees as to where the height of tragic development should be located. One may also recall that belief in a progressive development (*Fortschrittsglaube*) was held against Aristotle, who sees tragedy as developing over time (43) and credits each tragic poet with introducing some novelties. This may seem to make Euripides the ultimate high point. Further, as I read him, Aristotle never claimed that

the development of tragedy had already come to an end. Be this as it may, unfortunately for the readers of his *Rangordnung*, Höhle seems to presuppose familiarity with his early 1984 work, because he gives few details regarding the reasoning behind his position, although he believes that he is explaining his view more clearly in the present text. Presumably, anyone really interested in further elucidation should try to locate Höhle's *Vollendung* book.

**Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010; xxi + 803 pages. ISBN 978-0307265562.**

*Review by Kristin Rodier, University of Alberta, and Emily Anne Parker, Santa Clara University*

A new translation of Simone de Beauvoir's landmark feminist philosophical work of 1949, *Le deuxième sexe*, appeared in April of 2010. The 1949 two-volume Gallimard edition unprecedentedly raised the question of woman: what is the ethical status of this name? This dynamic question, Beauvoir notes, endures after centuries of changing political preoccupations, economic situations, religions and scientific revolutions. Beauvoir asks why women do not pose this question for themselves—in terms of their own lived singularity, as each woman exists for herself—but rather always according to ill-fitting and contradictory myths.

Retranslations of this philosophical text are inevitably important. After H.M. Parshley's 1952 translation a series of errors came to light, but a lack of will on the part of Knopf and Random House publishing meant that they did not sign a deal to start a new translation until 2006. As translators Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier themselves point out, all translations become easily dated because of the inevitable traces of the translator's own voice. If that is true, the Parshley translation is about as out of date as a bowler hat. On the other hand, new translations based on improvements in scholarship are always necessary to reintroduce a classic to new generations of readers who cannot read the text in its original language.

It has been argued that in 1929, in a car near Luxembourg Gardens, Simone de Beauvoir became convinced that she was not a philoso-

pher. In what Toril Moi has argued constitutes a “primal scene” between Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Beauvoir’s life is understood to have undergone a turning point. Moi’s interpretation of that scene, in her 1994 *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*—a scene recorded by Beauvoir herself—has shaped the reception of Beauvoir’s work in both feminist and non-feminist circles. It is now clear that Moi overestimated the importance of that night’s philosophical encounter with Sartre, and it is important to revisit the question of influence and philosophical independence between Beauvoir and Sartre for interpretive and political reasons. The publication of this new translation speaks to that need. Beauvoir’s work continues to be haunted by a reception that overestimated the influence of Sartre on her thinking, a process identified by Clare Hemmings in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* as heterocitation. In heterocitation a female feminist thinker is citationally tied to her male intellectual precursor(s). For example, Judith Butler’s work might be cited as influenced by Michel Foucault rather than Monique Wittig, Simone de Beauvoir or Luce Irigaray. The relationship is represented as primary and exclusive, used as a way of marking a departure from feminism, and signifies the thinking in question as catalysed by male antecedents. Heterocitation has operated in Beauvoir studies through her over-association with Sartre, marking her work as passively moved by the thinking of others.

While there is still much interpretive dispute regarding *The Second Sex*, there are many reasons to affirm that no matter how shattering the conversation in the Luxembourg Gardens might have been, Beauvoir contributed an unmatched philosophical vocabulary to gender studies, existential phenomenology as well as literature. As Beauvoir puts it in her *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, finding out that one’s “opinions were based only on prejudice, dishonesty, or hastily formed concepts” (344) is the catalyst of most all philosophical thinking (one need only to think of Hume awakening Kant from his dogmatic slumber). The conversation in the gardens with Sartre shows the power of reflective conversation to awaken ideas and challenge preconceptions, a skill that Beauvoir surely possessed before that day. Margaret Simons has made clear that we no longer have reason to take this story as proof that Beauvoir deferred to Sartre. In part due to the persistence of Simons, but also due to Beauvoir’s consent and Sylvie le Bon’s willingness to carry out Beauvoir’s wishes, a series of books has been released this year that further attests to

her ingenuity as a thinker. Beauvoir's *Wartime Diary*, *Diary of a Philosophy Student*, *Literary Writings* and *Political Writings* are part of a series put out by the University of Illinois Press. They will complete, in English, the publication of Beauvoir's previously unpublished works. It is hard to say how the new translation will couple with these new volumes, but if the impact on Beauvoir scholarship is anything like the re-orientation that followed the release of *Philosophical Writings* in 2004, the new volumes promise re-evaluation in multiple disciplines.

Interpretations of *The Second Sex* took a sharp turn in 1985 when *Hypatia* held the Women's Studies International Forum—a special symposium to mark the release of the English translation of *The Second Sex* more than thirty years earlier. Before the symposium, a few pivotal works published on Beauvoir coloured the landscape of interpretation and mostly interpreted her as a student of Sartre or as having applied his ontology to the situation of women. As the philosophical insensitivities, inaccuracies and deletions of the Parshley translation were under discussion, and as scholars came to see the richness of *The Second Sex*, reception and commentary began to shift towards a more charitable and phenomenological reading of the work (rather than as a sociological or personal text on “women's issues”). Jo-Ann Pilardi's essay in *History and Theory*, “The Changing Critical Fortunes of the Second Sex” (vol. 32 no. 1), historically situates the critical reception of *The Second Sex*. There she remarks that subtler interpretations are increasing, and that it was the early onslaught of criticism that caused Beauvoir's ideas to lay dormant for so long. In fact, regarding the original English translation, Beauvoir said, in a 1985 interview with Margaret Simmons published in her *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism*:

When I put philosophy in my books it's because that's a way for me to view the world; and I can't allow [translators] to eliminate that way of viewing the world, that dimension of my approach to women, as Mr. Parshley has done. I'm altogether against the principle of gaps, omissions, condensations, which have the effect, among other things, of suppressing the whole philosophical aspect of the book.... (93–94)

Beauvoir goes on to say that she asked Parshley to include in the volume her protest against the abridgement (which was apparently demanded by Knopf, as Toril Moi points out in her 2002 important review of the Parshley translation), but Parshley did not honour this request or signal it in his translation.

The new translation by Borde and Malovany-Chevallier is similarly badly packaged. In the Introduction, biographer Judith Thurman makes a caricature of feminism by asserting that the modern feminist reception of the Parshley translation discredited him for reasons of lacking a second “X” chromosome. (xiii) It would seem that the important missing factor was instead an interest in feminism. But the introduction also distorts Beauvoir’s intellectual work by asserting that Beauvoir’s work traces the “objectification” of women “since time began.” (xiv) Using “objectification” here problematically aligns Beauvoir with the history of her Anglo-American reception in second-wave feminism, which serves to further distort her intellectual contributions to feminist theory. Beauvoir, it could be argued, is asking precisely that women’s bodies be understood as the ambiguous objects that they are. Furthermore, Thurman inaccurately attributes *Les Temps Modernes* to Sartre alone and concludes by calling *The Second Sex* a “personal meditation,” further downplaying the philosophical contributions found in the work by passing off careful research and existential-phenomenological methodology as irrelevantly limited experiences. For these reasons, the Introduction masks the scholarly legitimacy of the volume.

On the other hand, the translation itself makes numerous improvements. Important mistranslations by Parshley have been corrected. For example in the closing pages of the conclusion, “une sensibilité singulière” is now translated as “a singular sensitivity” rather than as “a sensitivity, of a special nature.” As Beauvoir had already explained in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, singularity is not Hegelian particularity; it is irreducible alterity. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that women’s experiences of becoming inessential are neither reducible to men’s own experiences of the existential gaze, nor are they reducible to those of other women. Of course we cannot reference the English translation of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in making this point because it, like Parshley’s translation, mistranslates this crucial intervention of the notion of “singularity” as “particularity,” the very thing that Beauvoir explains it is not. That the new translation renders this gesture of singularity visible is in-



dicative of many of the welcome changes that bring to the fore Beauvoir's contributions to existential-phenomenology.

Likewise, in the much beleaguered biology chapter, there are some improvements worth noting. Parshley's translation of "Le dépassement de l'individu vers l'espèce" as "the projection or transcendence of the individual toward the species" has been changed to "The surpassing of the individual toward the species" (23). Later in the chapter "le phénomène de la reproduction comme ontologiquement fondé", translated by Parshley as "the phenomenon of reproduction as founded in the very nature of being," is now more aptly put as "the phenomenon of reproduction can be considered as ontologically grounded." (24)

On the other hand, this translation is not the translation Beauvoir scholars had hoped for. Whereas Parshley's translation of "elle ne se maintient qu'en se dépassant, elle ne se dépasse qu'à condition de se maintenir" as "it can be maintained only through transcending itself, and it can transcend itself only on the condition that it is maintained" uses the philosophical force of the term "transcendence," Borde and Melovany-Chevalier opt for "surpassing." To insist that a literal translation is adequate misses the degree to which every translation is an interpretation of the original text. Translations can be better or worse, but, like the ever ambiguous intentionality of which Beauvoir herself writes, a translator cannot avoid the philosophical decision-making that interpretation requires.

In fact, Toril Moi has criticised the new translation in the *London Review of Books* for being so literal as to be unreadable (February 11, 2010). Two examples of such stark literalism come to mind. For example, the phrase "on vient de voir que dans son dépassement même il se sépare et se confirme en lui-même" is translated as "in his very surpassing, he separates himself and is confirmed in himself." (36) Here Parshley's translation is in fact preferable: "in his transcendence toward the next generation he keeps himself apart and maintains his individuality within himself." Additionally, the original French "elle coïncide avec elle-même" in the new translation reads, "she is consistent with herself." (43) Borde and Malovany-Chevallier have not taken the context of the discussion into account here. The context is that the post-menopausal woman no longer feels her body to be as uncontrollable as when she was regularly subject to the overwhelming experiences of menstruation and

hormones. The relief following menopause is then better described by Parshley who interprets the passage as “she and her body are one.”

The new translation is thus not the scholarly edition and retranslation that Beauvoir scholars had been anticipating. Certainly, it is the first unabridged English translation, but it repeats the misleading representation of genre as did the first. Furthermore, it does not convey the precision of Beauvoir’s weave of the philosophical with the personal. Despite the expressed aim “to transpose [Beauvoir’s] philosophical style and voice into English,” (xix) this book remains in English strictly the “deep and urgent personal meditation” to which Judith Thurman restricts it. (xvi) In other words, Thurman’s Introduction colludes in keeping the reader unaware of how the volume fits into Beauvoir’s larger philosophical body of work. Likewise, while Borde and Maloney-Chevallier insist on “bringing into English the closest version possible of Simone de Beauvoir’s voice, expression and mind” (xvii), they translate *The Second Sex* as if it were the only philosophical text Beauvoir wrote. But how can we understand the (dis)continuities of Beauvoir’s thought in *The Second Sex* without the years of study necessary to understand Beauvoir’s intellectual projects? Toril Moi has argued in detail, in the review of the book mentioned above for the *London Review of Books*, that this translation is in fact worse than Parshley’s because of its unthinking literalism. In our view, however, it is most problematically not a translation of Beauvoir. For example, the question of whether to translate “la femme” as “woman” or “the woman” (“Woman,” “wife,” “Wife,” “The Woman” etc.) and similarly of how to translate the famous opening line of the second part, are not questions of mere syntax but of “voice, expression and mind.” That is to say, questions such as these simply cannot be reduced to questions of syntax or isolated definition; they require interpretation within a philosophical topography that dates back to Beauvoir’s diaries and stretches through all of the important writings leading up to *The Second Sex*. Any translation must interpret a text; as Luise Von Flotow argues in her “Translation Effects: How Beauvoir Talks Sex in English” (published in Hawthorn’s *Contingent Loves: Simone de Beauvoir and Sexuality*), “no change is innocent, but is part of a (sometimes deliberate) ideological or cultural agenda on the part of the translation/translator.” (15) In our view, the translation itself as well as the annotation should reflect on the inherent interpretation involved in translation. For this one must be conversant with Beauvoir’s oeuvre and with what is at stake in

the feminist theoretical questions that occupied her. In retreating from the interpretative side of translating, we wonder if Borde and Malovany-Chevallier have overcorrected for Parshley's heavy-handedness. Is this a "defensive" translation—one which attempts to remain innocent of the sins of interpretation? In trying to remain faithful to the logic of her prose, we fear that the translators have lost sight of themselves as interpreters and of their responsibility to Beauvoir's philosophy, beyond *The Second Sex*.

Thus this new translation, while significant, cannot bear witness to the multifaceted appeal of Beauvoir's body of work. Borde and Maloney-Chevallier offer their own translation as the basis for a future annotated volume, but another translation by a scholar or scholars conversant with feminist, psychoanalytic, anthropological and philosophical discourses will have to be commissioned. It will take a scholar of Beauvoir's work to produce the English translation of *Le deuxième sexe* that continues to be missing. Drawing on these debates and the new development in Beauvoir's scholarship, a new translation could unearth the connections Beauvoir makes with other philosophers while remaining true to the rich ambiguities of Beauvoir's French.

Knopf and Random House seem to have no appreciation for the importance of the work whose copyright they own until 2056. *The Second Sex* is a work of intimate meditation and popular appeal—but it also an exceptional work of feminist philosophical expertise. Though the two are not mutually exclusive, the present translation's literalness is not scholarly enough for Beauvoir scholars and not subtle enough to allow nonacademic English readers to appreciate the complexity of her work. The ultimate error in judgment in our view is the failure on the part of the publisher to commission a proper scholarly translation. This remains lost on Knopf and Random House, though it is not lost on those who are acquainted with the original. The publishers have failed to consider the present and future students and scholars who unwittingly rely on them.