

COMPTES RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

Robin D. Rollinger, *Austrian Phenomenology: Brentano, Husserl, Meinong, and Others on Mind and Object*. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2008; 326 pages. ISBN: 978-3868380057.

Review by Kimberly Baltzer-Jaray, Independent Scholar.

Nietzsche was not alone in his skepticism and contempt for systematic philosophy, the stuff Hegel and Kant were made of; in fact on this point he could be called the voice of a generation and a timely man. Many academics in the mid to late 19th century felt a sort of ill will towards philosophy, especially given the leaps and bounds happening in science. Philosophy seemed less rigorous, impractical and out of touch with the modern era: who needed to contemplate God, freedom, and immortality when scientists were in their labs or in the field actively discovering laws of energy, plant cells, electromagnetism, radiation and evolution? Metaphysics and epistemology just couldn't compete with physics and biology. However, several philosophers in Austria thought they could make philosophy more scientific and definitively show the academic community that philosophy was not to be retired like a relic of the past, but rather could hold her own as a discipline. One of the most notable groups of philosophers to attempt such a defence of philosophy was the School of Brentano, named after its leader, Franz Brentano, and which included his pupils Carl Stumpf, Anton Marty, Edmund Husserl, Kasimir Twardowski and Christian von Ehrenfels. This is where Rollinger's book begins.

Rollinger's volume is a collection of revised, previously published papers. It is a comprehensive and insightful book, a necessity for anyone studying the Austrian philosophical tradition, or the early phenomenological movement under Husserl (Munich and Göttingen circles respectively). Topics key to Brentano's philosophy and that of his students are included and discussed in precise detail, such as judgments and statements, mind-functions, imagination, experience, intentionality and logic. There are also chapters that discuss or elaborate on ideas not

commonly found in other books on Brentano or his school: the philosophies of Husserl and Cornelius, Stumpf's phenomenological and epistemological work, and a thorough breakdown of the philosophical divergence between Brentano and Meinong. The ontological and logical work of Bernard Bolzano is also included in one chapter, a necessary accompaniment to any Austrian philosophy text since he influenced most members of the Brentano School. The introduction provides an excellent discussion of descriptive psychology and object theory, the two key elements that make up the complex unity of Austrian phenomenology: "On one side, we have mind, which consists of mind-functions (as perceiving, judging, imaginings, and feelings), while on the other side we have objects, which need not at all be real.... Austrian phenomenology swings back and forth between descriptive psychology and object theory.... In its description of mind-functions it cannot avoid mentioning objects to which these mind-functions intentionally refer." (8–10)

One of the major benefits to Rollinger's book is its accessibility: scholars new to the Brentano School will navigate the chapters with little trouble, and those of us who are more seasoned will enjoy the book as a great refresher or a stepping stone to further research. Rollinger's volume is refreshingly free of jargon, and when terms or concepts are mentioned, they are explained in a clear manner. I mention this point because excessive and often confusing jargon sadly became so typical of the philosophy/psychology cross-disciplinary work of the 19th century. Most of the chapters use a compare and contrast style of writing, allowing the reader to see the development of the ideas, and where and why a difference in viewpoint occurs. Each chapter's layout is methodical, allowing the reader to grasp each individual's unique contribution in its own right as well as the school as a whole, transitioning smoothly from idea to idea, figure to figure.

Of great benefit are also the chapters on Stumpf and Marty, two men rarely discussed in the English-speaking philosophical world and who are considered to be the most loyal to Brentano and his early thinking. Stumpf, while better known for his contributions to psychology than to philosophy, was an early and key figure. He had a profound impact on Husserl and on the founders of Gestalt psychology. He is credited with the introduction of state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*) as a technical term into logic; he is often considered one of the founders of phenomenology, and he assisted in the development of important work in ontology, judgment

and other speech acts. Marty, like Stumpf, remained loyal to Brentano's early teachings and sought to refine and expand his teacher's work. Marty was also integral to the development of speech act theory and the study of states of affairs and ontology. The influence of both Stumpf and Marty is easily detectable in the work of such Munich phenomenologists as Adolf Reinach, Johannes Daubert and Theodor Conrad.

Speaking of forgotten figures, there is also a chapter on Husserl and Cornelius, written in an informative dialogical style of critiques and replies between the two men. I have to admit that before reading this book my knowledge of Cornelius was limited to having seen his name a handful of times in footnotes or bibliographies of some of Husserl's works. In devoting a large portion of the chapter to Cornelius, Rollinger is opening up avenues of research that have been neglected for nearly a century. Briefly, Cornelius was a Neo-Kantian philosopher, mathematician and mentor to the founding members of the Frankfurt School. Cornelius felt a strong affinity with Husserl's work, in spite of what appears to be a mountain of differences. He perceived similarities between Husserl and himself because both advocated a "fundamental discipline that was 1) presuppositionless, 2) not causal-explanatory, and 3) prior to any distinction between mental and physical." (219) They both agreed that knowledge derived from experience can be universally valid (using imagining examples) and rejected Brentano's characterisation of all consciousness as intentional. However, as Rollinger points out, it is difficult to find significant points of agreement between Husserl and Cornelius besides what is mentioned here: any agreements are rather insubstantial when one cannot find overlapping results in their works. The chapter ends with Rollinger suggesting that Cornelius be included as a fringe member of Austrian phenomenology and be the object of some further investigating as such.

While this book is of great value for the breadth of information between its covers, it did disappoint me in its failure to include some key members of the Brentano School, specifically Christian von Ehrenfels, Kasimir Twardowski and even Alois Höfler. In the introduction, Rollinger does address the exclusion of Ehrenfels and Twardowski, saying that the volume should not be considered exhaustive and that he does not wish to "downplay the significance" of their contributions to Austrian phenomenology. Höfler's work *Logik* is noted in the bibliography and is briefly mentioned in the chapter on Brentano and Meinong. But I find

this unsatisfying. The book appears largely dominated by Husserl and Brentano, with a good dose of Meinong in between, and understandably so, since all have published much material. I will admit it is wonderful to see Meinong play a rather significant role in three and a half chapters, but none of this excuses the little amount of Höfler included in the book, or the absence of Ehrenfels and Twardowski. Höfler was a student and colleague of Meinong in Vienna and in Graz, and they co-authored *Logik* together, hence he deserves to be included in the discussion of Austrian phenomenology. Höfler is also rarely discussed in phenomenological literature, as is Twardowski. As for Ehrenfels, it is disappointing that connections between his work in Gestalt psychology and both the Austrian and Munich schools of phenomenology failed to be included. How did Ehrenfels go from being a student of Brentano and of Meinong, to being the founder of Gestalt psychology? What does Gestalt psychology take from Austrian phenomenology? A chapter on Ehrenfels and Husserl would have been a great addition to the book and would further have demonstrated the intertwined nature of philosophy and psychology in this school. Or, as mentioned, a chapter on the evolution of Ehrenfels' Gestalt psychology out of Brentano's teachings would have also been most beneficial. Early Gestalt psychology in the context of and in its connections with phenomenology is a topic not discussed in the available literature, and it would have opened up another avenue for future research.

Despite these shortcomings, Rollinger's volume is an asset and benefit to any scholar researching Austrian philosophy and/or the phenomenological movement. It is also helpful to anyone seeking to understand the mutually influential relationships between 19th-century philosophy and psychology. This book is also valuable in its compact size: the papers it holds come from several different journals and volumes spanning many years. Rollinger's attempt to discuss the School of Brentano within the phenomenological tradition in a meaningful way, and with great clarity, is commendable and admirable.

Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum, 2010; xi + 211 pages. ISBN: 978-1847064615.

Review by Steven Sych, McGill University.

Clare Carlisle's *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: A Reader's Guide* is part of the recent series of guides by Continuum. According to the front matter, the series aims to provide "clear, concise, and accessible introductions" to major works of philosophy. This particular book does not verge far from this description: the bulk of the guide, around three-quarters, is dedicated to its expository second chapter, which leads the reader through Kierkegaard's text step by step. The two chapters that bookend this exegesis are dedicated to a thematic and historical overview and a brief survey of some of the commentaries on the primary text respectively. Despite Carlisle's baffling claim in the foreword that "[r]eaders who would like a shorter overall discussion...might miss out the lengthy section 'Reading the Text'" (x), it is this excellent second chapter that comprises the great majority of both the content and potential interest in the guide.

Before taking up this exposition, let us begin with the opening chapter, "Overview of Themes and Context." Carlisle briefly touches upon the main themes that will be her focus in later chapters: the Eckhartian brand of receptive faith (8); the relation between ethical universality and the particular (5); the so-called "spheres of existence" (15); the critique of enlightenment humanism and human self-sufficiency (21); the courageous expectation of Abraham. (3) She also delves into biographical matters but manages to avoid voyeuristic excess. In fact, her interest in Kierkegaard's personal life remains quite poignant: touching upon his broken engagement to Regine Olsen ultimately allows Carlisle to better transfer the themes of *Fear and Trembling* (*FT*) from a narrowly religious, into a wider secularised and interpersonal, context. There is evidence throughout that Carlisle is pushing for such a recontextualisation; indeed, the final words of the guide ask whether we can regard the receptive expectation of faith as a purely human possibility.

From this latter point, however, one should not assume that Carlisle provides us with a secularised reading of *FT*. The exegetical chapter, sectioned neatly by *FT*'s own divisions as well as Carlisle's own thematic subheadings, certainly takes the religiosity of the text into ac-

count; that is, it draws on not only pseudonymous but also “theological” writings by Kierkegaard (199), fills in the historico-religious context of post-reformation Europe (3), analyses Luther’s highly fideistic reading of the march to Mount Moriah (131), and so on. Though the reading provided here does not diverge in any radical way from what one may call a “standard” interpretation of the text (the themes mentioned in the “Overview” attest to this fact), the guide’s strength is its breadth. Weaving all the aforementioned themes in a succinct and flowing manner is no small task, yet Carlisle succeeds—even when she seems to presume that the reader has little or no background in the issues at hand. Carlisle’s overview of Luther and the reformation, for instance, or her explanation of Cartesian doubt, presuppose very little familiarity with the issues at stake; nevertheless, she generally avoids the danger of paying mere compulsory lip-service to a topic for the sake of ease or brevity. Furthermore, her prose remains, aside from a handful of exceedingly lengthy parenthetical asides, remarkably lucid.

If anything appears lacking in this second chapter it is further space devoted to the idealist background, especially Hegel. While Carlisle takes up the debate about whether the “ethical” in *FT* is to be viewed in more Kantian or Hegelian terms (Carlisle herself favours a Hegelian, *Sittlichkeit*-oriented reading (175–76)), one cannot help but feel as though the handful of pages devoted to *Aufhebung*, universality, particularity, *Sittlichkeit* and teleology appear rushed. Given the complexity of such concepts and, further, the thoroughly polemical tone of *FT* (whether it be against the Danish Hegelians or Hegel himself), more time devoted to such issues surely would have proven useful, as would an exploration of Hegel’s own engagement with the story of the *akeda* in his earlier theological writings. Nevertheless, in a guide designed to clearly and concisely aid the reader through the primary text, some such economising is inevitable, and overall Carlisle’s exposition is solid.

Yet, despite this chapter’s obvious merits, there remains here always a lingering uneasiness. If we consider that *FT* addresses themes (particularity, decision, passion, etc.) that render the desire to be authoritatively ‘guided’ problematic, then we must wonder why this book was written. Furthermore, there already exist a number of guides for *FT*. Carlisle herself raises this question in the foreword. She goes so far as to list other similar texts (Lippitt’s *Routledge Guidebook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling* (2003) and Mooney’s *Knights of Faith and Res-*

ignation (1991)), but beyond these specific works there are a plethora of more general guides to the works of Kierkegaard—including Carlisle’s own recent *Guide for the Perplexed* (2007). Such texts will surely overlap in some respects with this Continuum guide.

Why, then, write this text? Carlisle answers such worries by stating that it gave her the excuse to reread this infinitely engaging work, but also provided the opportunity to read it with a specific theme in mind, namely courage. She means to imply not the finite courage of the knight of resignation to *dispossess* actuality, but rather the “paradoxical” (66) Eckhartian courage of Abraham that regains for him the world; in short, the courage of receptivity in the face of finitude. However, to claim that “courage” provides the *raison d’être* of the entire book would be somewhat disingenuous: Carlisle mentions courage in the Foreword, but for the next one-hundred and fifty pages tends to focus on the more well-worn Kierkegaardian territories that are freedom, particularity, decision, and so on.

More space devoted to this theme is found in the third chapter, “Reception and Influence.” Here, Carlisle surveys a “small selection” of the secondary literature (175) and expands upon her own exploration of courage. She discusses Levinas, Derrida, Mulhall, Sharon Krishek (author of the recent *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love* (2009)), as well as rather idiosyncratic deployments of Kierkegaard to be found in more recent texts, such as Jonathan Lear’s *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (which maps receptive courage in the face of finitude onto the cultural destruction of aboriginal groups in the United States (195)). While this chapter is useful for those seeking to enter into more detailed scholarly debates, even Carlisle herself admits that it is more of a starting point intended to “convey a sense of the variety of interpretive directions that have been taken by scholars” (175); it is surely not, then, strong enough to stand on its own if the reader were to take Carlisle’s advice about bypassing her exposition.

Still, if we shift the question from “why a guide?” to “why *this* guide and not another?,” then Carlisle’s text has much to offer. For its lucid and thorough exegetical component as well as its engagement with recent scholarship, Clare Carlisle’s *Kierkegaard’s Fear & Trembling* should be the guide of choice for readers seeking assistance with this ever re-readable text.

Richard A. Cohen, *Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010; 379 pages. ISBN: 978-0820704333.

Reviewed by Jordan Glass, University of Alberta.

Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion is a collection of essays by Levinasian translator and scholar Richard Cohen intended to defend and elevate the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas on various topics. A revised collection of essays written over roughly the last decade, the book is divided into two parts. The first portion of the book discusses the relation of Levinas to several (mostly 20th-century) philosophers and the second details Levinas' relation to some Jewish and religious thinkers, as well as his relation to various branches and facets of Judaism.

Part One, "Ethics as First Philosophy," through several short essays, broadly outlines Levinas' philosophy and the significance of developing an ethics as first philosophy instead of an ontology, epistemology or aesthetics. Amongst those Levinas is pitted against are Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber; Bergson and Husserl are often present as well. Cohen makes the case that Levinas' superior phenomenological investigations have revealed the primacy of ethics, while the former philosophers incorrectly put aesthetics or epistemology prior.

Several theses are encompassed in this defense. For example, one chapter offers a short history of philosophical conceptions of time. The *only* two contemporary, original and distinctive theories of time, says Cohen, are those of Bergson and Levinas. (44) Bergson's *duration* (and Heidegger's subsequent "appropriation and revision" (46) of this idea) leads to an aesthetic approach to philosophy. The significance of this conception itself ultimately derives, however, from a prior transcendence made possible by an immemorial past (52), a *diachrony*, that is, by Levinas' own conception of time—hence the decisiveness of the latter's analysis.

Another chapter discusses Buber's criticism of Heidegger, according to which Heidegger's fundamental ontology abstracts from interpersonal (as well as human-God) relations, and therefore is inadequate as an ontology. However, Buber is still committed to an ontology. He does not exhibit a proper commitment to *interpersonal* relations, does not

sufficiently escape a totality, does not properly recognise transcendence, and therefore does an injustice to the ethical dimension of human being—inadequacies Levinas' philosophy does not share.

Other essays in the first part of the book are less critical of philosophers besides Levinas. One chapter draws an analogy between the writings of Plato and Levinas regarding their methodological approach and epistemological sensibility. Truth, for Levinas, comes about in “the proximity of two speakers who remain separate yet conjoined” (102); and Plato assumes a similar attitude in his dialogues in which a final, absolute word is not had, but a dialogue is maintained. Another essay on Levinas and Shakespeare discusses the significance of art and literature to philosophy and the non-analytic approach to truth that literature is able to take.

The final chapter of the first part, an interview of Cohen with Chung-Hsiung Lai rather than an essay, offers defenses of Levinas' philosophy against several criticisms—for example those from a feminist perspective and others concerning animal ethics. The interview is a pleasant change of pace in the midst of the collection of essays, and it also serves to elaborate Levinas' philosophy on many vital areas in a concise way. The second part of the book addresses the relation of Levinas' philosophy to Judaism and to other Jewish writers. The general aim of this section is to defend religion (in particular monotheism, and Judaism especially) as being not contrary to philosophy but rather inextricable from it.

The particular theses here, too, are quite diverse. Cohen devotes a chapter to Levinas and Rosenzweig in which, after outlining their similarities, Cohen criticises Rosenzweig for his implicit commitment to a Procrustean systematicity, his lack of clarity of thought, and an arbitrary privileging of Judaism and Christianity (283)—contrary to the pluralistic concrete universalism proper to Judaism. (271) Rosenzweig's account is overly sentimental and concerned with love as opposed to philosophical investigation and justice. (284)

Another chapter considers evil and the possibility (or rather, impossibility) of a theodicy after the Shoah. Cohen defends Levinas' claim that the only meaning to suffering can be one's suffering for the suffering of others. After the Shoah, the meaning or significance we are left with is an imperative to be effectively better than God—to love justice more than God does, to make up with our own sense of ethical responsibility

where God seems to have failed. (325–27) This notion is somewhat paradoxical, a fact that Cohen is surely aware of but does not adequately discuss.

One of the most novel and interesting chapters of the book is “Virtue Embodied,” an analysis of the ethical, moral and philosophical implications and assumptions of the Jewish practice of circumcision and its representation of a responsibility prior to choice characteristic of ethics. The physical wound pushes one beyond mere “pious rhetoric” (294) and shows the prevalence and importance of ethics and morality even in animalistic and sexual dimensions of humanity. (292)

Cohen exhibits a profound knowledge of Levinas’ philosophy, as well as of its implications and relevance to other areas of philosophy, religion and ethics. To his credit, Cohen unabashedly and unflinchingly defends the philosophy of Levinas—with full recognition of this proclivity. Nowhere in his three-hundred-plus-page collection of essays does Cohen criticise Levinas. Cohen admits that, since his time as a graduate student, for him, “Levinas was already *the* philosopher, the one whose philosophy was *truth*.” (172) Cohen believes that Levinas grasps the truth, and Cohen writes to ensure its recognition as such by a wider audience. To this end, Cohen’s book is an extremely well-researched and articulated defense of Levinas on a multitude of topics. However, the unadulterated praise of Levinas sometimes becomes specious and unconvincing. The book is permeated with generalisations about the superiority of Levinas’ philosophy over that of others (though many or most of these claims do exhibit extensive attempted defenses). Passages like this one are standard throughout: “Indeed, each of [Levinas’] phenomenological analyses—of death, enjoyment, work, time, language, and worldliness—correct and displace the earlier and now inadequate analyses of Heidegger.” (283) Cohen repeats this claim with regard to Heidegger (62) and has similarly broad claims throughout regarding Levinas and the various other philosophers and religious writers he discusses.

Cohen displays an extreme reverence for philosophical rigour; insofar as his essays engage with challenges to Levinas from various sources in a concrete way, Cohen exhibits this philosophical rigour himself. However, although he seeks to apply Levinas’ philosophy to several areas of inquiry—either more explicitly or to a greater extent than Levinas perhaps did himself—Cohen is still convinced, as he says, of the fundamental truth of Levinas’ philosophy. Cohen does not propose to

take Levinas' philosophy a step further, or even to make minor revisions, corrections, or criticisms. This is mildly ironic given the description of philosophy conveyed by Cohen on behalf of Levinas. Philosophy is a dialogical, inter-personal discussion, modeled on a Talmudic pedagogy of group-oriented study. One might expect the continual exegesis, and "exegesis of exegesis" (271), demanded of philosophy, ethics and Talmudic study to imply more than just a broadening of the application of accepted truths. Rather, one might expect a philosopher, as a matter of integrity, to harbour the implicit assumption—for ethical-cum-philosophical reasons—that there are no absolute truths, and therefore that all philosophy and ethics demand a more critical attitude than Cohen is exhibiting.

Cohen's book constitutes a compelling defense of Levinas against a variety of criticisms and opposing views. It is a thorough and often cogent explication of the grandiosity of Levinas' philosophical accomplishments—but *Levinasian Meditations* does not go beyond this.

Jean-Luc Nancy, *God, Justice, Love, Beauty: Four Little Dialogues*. Translated by Sarah Clift. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011; viii + 126 pages. ISBN: 978-0823234264.

Review by Jason Harman, York University.

French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's recent work is *little* more than the translation of a series of talks he gave to school children in 2002. It is a *little* book that contains four *little* chapters. According to the sales pitch below the obligatory endorsements on the back cover, the author is said to move "seamlessly...from Schwarzenegger to Plato...to Caillou, Harry Potter, and the pages of *Gala* magazine. Nancy's wide-ranging references bear witness to his commitment to think of 'culture' in its broadest sense." By all appearances, this is Nancy's concession to popular philosophy. Expecting this, the reader will likely be sorely disappointed.

For one, the dialogues are hardly little. Nancy himself remarks that "the idea of *little dialogues* seems poorly chosen; they are, rather, *dialogues for little ones* [pour les petits]. But what does *little ones* mean?" (65) Further on, while taking questions from the children, he proceeds to remind the facilitator, Gilberte Tsai, that "a child's question

could also be posed by an adult who doesn't know he or she is posing a child's question." (120) In fact, there is nothing childish or *little* about Nancy's dialogues—nor do they make concessions to popular culture. Instead, the text is modern philosophy reduced to its pure essentiality. What Nancy reveals in these four interweaving chats is a sense of the mystery and profound depth that modern philosophy is capable of offering the human mind—irrespective of age.

To accomplish this, Nancy avoids excessive references to either contemporary scholars or the canon, although the text bears witness to his immersion in the works of Descartes, Pascal, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Levinas and, most recently, Derrida. By leaving this vast and intimidating store of philosophical treasures outside the room, Nancy is able to focus on what truly matters: *thinking itself*. He is successful in this highly risky enterprise by dealing practically and concretely with matters of universal concern: god, justice, love, beauty. It is because these objects are always on our mind that Nancy is able to connect them easily with the world of popular culture. Yet, Nancy never idles there, moving instead to whisk the audience to a (non)place that stands behind or beyond these common, yet truly human, experiences.

All told, the text *is* difficult. While, on the one hand, it is remarkably free of the dense, intimidating prose that characterises the genre, the simple free-flowing sentences hit upon grand ideas that make the mind shudder with the labour of turning against its own petrified conventions. Instead of incomprehension as a result of the inaccessible nature of the writing, the mind must deal here with a-comprehension: the inability to grasp that which is "no place," "nowhere" and "nothing." (8–9) Indeed, what Nancy proposes escapes the logic of presence and non-presence, those "two symmetrical and connected postulations... based in the same metaphysical presuppositions with regard to being" (2), that have eclipsed the place of *thought* in Western metaphysics.

Despite the text's commitment to thought without presuppositions, the student of philosophy will no doubt notice a trail of bread crumbs leading back both to Nancy's former texts, as well as the works of the canon, including those of philosopher-theologian Blaise Pascal. Pascal's evocation of the mystery of the Redeemer anticipates Immanuel Kant's distinctions between noumenal and phenomenal, moral and natural, creation and production, thought and cognition, which serve as a guiding thread for the discussion in the four dialogues. Nancy clearly at-

tributes this essential philosophical distinction to the nature of thinking itself and thus links the latter to Christian revelation, and Abrahamic monotheism considered more broadly. It is no surprise then that each dialogue feels at home in a philosophy of religion, a sentiment most readily apparent in the first chapter on God but which is replicated in the following chapters. Nancy reminds us, after all, that the concepts of God in the three monotheistic traditions are Justice (Judaism), Love (Christianity), and Mercy (Islam). (14)

In seeking to challenge his audience (and us) to rethink our concept of the divine, Nancy casually dismisses both atheism and theism as a sort of tempest in a teapot, articulating instead a vision of God owing more to Kabbalah than positivism. Responding to a question, he explains that God is neither a known being *nor* an unknown one but the “void that is opening up.” (29) While Nancy’s flirtation with the irrational may irritate those of a more analytic mindset, the implications of his train of thought stretch far beyond belief or disbelief in god. In “Justice,” Nancy immediately differentiates between the perspective of nature, i.e. the “right of the stronger,” and that which emerges from the monotheistic tradition: absolute or infinite worth of every singular individual. Here, as elsewhere, the text evokes Kant’s notion of *dignity* and Hegel’s *mutual recognition*. As Nancy proceeds, he demonstrates the contradiction of grounding a moral “law” on natural strength and demarcates the quantitative idea of justice long associated with paganism (the calculative “to render each its due”) from the infinitely qualitative (and Biblical) imperative that “*being just*, is giving to each person that which you don’t even know he or she is owed.” (49)

The idea that the other (or the neighbour) possesses an infinite right, or that *I* owe the other an infinite debt because he or she cannot be measured, approximated or replaced, grounds the movement from the hierarchical structure of natural in/equality to a horizontal stratum of truly singular individuals who exist nonetheless (and necessarily) in relationship with each other. At this point, the transition to love offers no difficulty. The beloved is, like God or the neighbour, the embodiment of “absolute value,” which is also his or her “absolute mystery.” (96)

The text, in truth, peaks with this third chapter, which concludes the triangulation of the *unio mystica* begun by the former two. Nancy remarkably equates the book’s guiding imperative, *thought* or “reason,” with “love” (93), replicating Kant’s marriage of reason and moral prac-

tice in the *Groundwork*. This philosophical rendition of Leviticus 19:18's "love thy neighbour as thy self" equally echoes Hegel's ascription of "love" as the contradiction-resolving unity of the highest stage of human socio-political existence: ethical life. As "real *relation*" (76), the relation of love is opposed to preference (liking *or* lusting) and characterised by *fidelity*—a word that bears a relationship to both *confidence* and *fiancé*. (79)

Having linked faith and love through the figure of the *fiancé*, Nancy may again play upon the themes of promise, obligation and trust that characterise his understanding of monotheism and justice. In each case, including the closing chapter on beauty, the individual in his or her trembling singularity enters into a relationship of risk with the unknown beyond. The only 'thing' mitigating this risk is the absolute worth of that which stands at a remove from the revealed as its source and power. Simultaneously, the *confidence* one has in this absolute value is equally what terrorises, its sublimity inspiring both awe and disquiet. "Beauty," he writes, "is terrible; it is unsettling because it cannot be limited to suitability or harmony." (121) Like the former categories, beauty is an irruptive force that breaks the hard and fast logic of causation and natural necessity that serves as the common sense rule of our epoch.

Nancy's *Four Little Dialogues* manages to encapsulate artfully and originally the essence of modern Continental philosophy from Descartes to Derrida. This is never more apparent than in the final chapter where Nancy cites the poet Arthur Rimbaud, declaring that in order "to awaken a sense of beauty...destruction is necessary." (122) What seems here to be a remark belonging exclusively to the aesthetic domain is actually the slogan of the whole mode of thinking that Nancy expertly deploys throughout the text, from Descartes' methodology of doubt and Pascal's wager to Kant's use of critique and Hegel's *Aufhebung*, and of course Derrida's and Nancy's de(con)struction. More than that, however, it is the Abrahamic movement against the self that makes room for, and embraces, the other. Nancy thus shows us that *to think* is, properly speaking, to enter into dialogue with God, Justice, Love and Beauty.

Nancy manages to condense all this into a brief one hundred and twenty-six pages, whose significance lies, paradoxically, in a desire *not* to go beyond the great thinkers the text silently calls upon. In this way, the text's modest aims and hospitable writing appeal to the fact that great ideas can be illuminated in a straightforward manner and indeed even

(and especially) to those least initiated in the arcana of Continental philosophy. For the reminder that such philosophy can be accessible without being “popular,” and as an introduction to Jean-Luc Nancy’s appropriation of the canon, *God, Justice, Love, Beauty* commends itself to our attention. The text, as dialogue, leads us into the enigmatic heart of what it means to be truly *modern/thoughtful* in an age where that very fact has lost all mystery and hence all meaning.

Devin Zane Shaw, *Freedom and Nature in Schelling’s Philosophy of Art*. New York: Continuum, 2010; 175 pages. ISBN: 978-1441156242.

Review by Jeremy Proulx, Eastern Michigan University.

Perhaps the most enigmatic feature of the deeply enigmatic philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling is his celebration of art. It is clear that art and the aesthetic dimensions of human experience are important for Schelling. It is also clear that the way Schelling understands the significance of art changes several times during his career. Because of this, commentators have consistently found Schelling’s ideas about art to be full of insight and lasting relevance, but none has ever attempted to make art a unifying theme in a study of Schelling’s development in general. For this reason, Devin Zane Shaw’s recent book is a novel contribution to Schelling studies. The text is presented as an account of the development of Schelling’s thinking from 1795 until about 1807, a bold undertaking given the many influences shaping Schelling’s unique career. Marked by careful textual exegesis and an original thesis, Shaw’s book proposes to take Schelling’s changing views about art and use them to gain insight into Schelling’s thinking as a whole.

The book begins with an analysis of one of Schelling’s earliest philosophical efforts, and the place where aesthetics first makes its appearance as an important theme in his work. The complex historical context of the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* make it a difficult text, but Shaw uses its complexity to argue that Schelling’s conflicting commitments combine to create an ambiguity about the very topic of consideration, the absolute. According to Shaw, Schelling’s allegiance to Fichte compels an idea of the absolute as an object of practical striving, and his intoxication with Spinoza inspires a conception of the

absolute as beyond both subject and object. Yet I wonder whether it is fair to suggest that this amounts to an ambiguity on Schelling's part. Given that the immediate context for the *Letters* is Schelling's concern to dismiss the pseudo-Kantianism of the Tübingen theologians, it seems wrong to claim that these two perspectives on the absolute are inconsistent. After all, on Schelling's thinking, a necessary condition for the absolute's functioning as an object of practical striving is that it be beyond subject and object, that it never be fully achieved. The Tübingen theologians take the absolute to have theoretical existence and only propose the 'Kantian' practical solution because they take reason to be ill-equipped for such theoretical knowledge. The error of this approach is to ignore the creative function of postulation as a demand for action. Accordingly, the positive component of Schelling's alternative consists in the idea that a truly practical solution places the absolute beyond subject and object by making its existence contingent upon infinite practical action.

Focused on the development of Schelling's notorious nature philosophy, the crux of the second chapter is its concluding section on Schelling's remarks about art and aesthetics in the period before 1800. Shaw's strategy is to read Schelling's *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* together with the periodically published *Survey*, and this enables him to do a couple of important things. First, he is able to provide a coherent picture of the relationship between Schelling's appropriation of the work of Spinoza and Leibniz, and his reliance on Kant's teleology. But much more significant from the perspective of the book is that this permits Shaw to show that even at this early stage Schelling uses art as a way to unify nature philosophy and the philosophy of history in a single system. Shaw will even remark in the third chapter that since Schelling's idealism includes the claim that the higher begets the lower, even the philosophy of nature rests on aesthetic intuition (76), a strange thing to say given that productivity in nature is *without consciousness*, and this, according to Shaw's own oft-stated conditions of Schelling's philosophy of art (3, 87, 145), would exclude nature philosophy. Aside from such ambiguous remarks, the important point is that the philosophy of art, specifically mythology and poetry, can embrace the perspectives of nature and history, theory and practice to catch a glimpse of the whole.

This brings us to the famous *System of Transcendental Idealism*, whose interpretation forms a kind of conceptual heart for the book. Shaw reads the text as "a transcendental reconstruction of the conditions neces-

sary for the self to recognize itself as producing objectively” (66), and he interprets this process of transcendental reconstruction as a creative one. One of the crucial theses of Shaw’s book as a whole is that for Schelling art is not something about which philosophers develop a “philosophy of art,” like, as Shaw puts it, “a philosophy of vehicles or a philosophy of agriculture.” (99) On the contrary, art is significant for philosophy itself; that is, art is a mode of access to the absolute, and as such it is part of any complete system of philosophy. This point becomes increasingly important as Shaw’s analysis progresses. But applied to the 1800 *System* the thing to note is that this reading provides a corrective to the all-too-common interpretation that art is somehow external to the system, beyond philosophy—at one point Shaw even refers to Schelling’s aesthetics as “art-philosophy.” (63) Shaw rightly points out that for Schelling the activity of imagination is a kind of thread that unifies theory, practice and aesthetics across a single trajectory. On this fresh reading, aesthetics pervades the entire system. For Schelling, the philosophy of art opens up a whole new realm for philosophy; it makes good, as Shaw argues, on the promise of the *System-Programme* to return “philosophy to its origins in poetry and mythology.” (83)

The focus on the imagination as that which holds the parts of the *System* together in a unified whole is finally what enables Shaw to trace a continuity between the role of art in the *System*, the later lectures on the *Philosophy of Art* and the so-called *Münchener Rede*. Instead of the common story about Schelling abandoning the transcendental idealism of the 1800 *System* for the standpoint of absolute reason, Shaw argues that despite the change in metaphysics the imagination maintains its role as the activity through which the ideal, or the infinite, is made manifest as real in the finite world. There are of course several important differences that characterise Schelling’s various treatments of art during this period, differences to which Shaw is particularly sensitive. But the real novelty of Shaw’s book is that he detects continuity in all of Schelling’s efforts to incorporate art into a system. Whether from the standpoint of transcendental idealism and nature philosophy, the standpoint of the absolute in Schelling’s identity philosophy, or the historical perspective of Schelling’s later *Münchener Rede*, art invariably serves a revelatory function in disclosing the most complete picture of the whole.

Also significant is that Shaw isolates a political significance of art that, beginning with the *System-Programme*, seems to animate

Schelling's thinking. Given that Schelling never produced a political theory, it might seem strange to suggest that such concerns animate some of his most significant philosophical efforts. But Shaw makes a compelling case. Indeed, it is perhaps a testament to the effectiveness of Shaw's thesis that the reader is left wanting more; left, that is, wondering what a more rigorous study of Schelling's political commitments would reveal about Schelling's work in general. In the end, Shaw argues that the role of art is always political, always providing a way for people to participate in the moral legitimisation of the State.

It is undeniable that this fresh reading of Schelling's philosophical development flies in the face of the still-pervasive Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel interpretive key. And there are probably several scholars who will want to resist Shaw's focus on art as a defining feature of Schelling's work as a whole. There is good reason to think, for instance, that Shaw's interpretation of Schelling's nature philosophy unwisely ignores the scientific research and practice that forms the rich historical context of Schelling's thinking at this time. To propose an account of Schelling's philosophical development and to ignore these formative influences is arguably to have abandoned the development project in which Shaw claims to be engaged. This does not mean the book is misleading. But it does mean that one must take its claims to have provided an account of the development of Schelling's thought with a grain of salt. In the end, Shaw's careful analysis of the various ways in which art is significant for Schelling provides a sorely needed guide for readers of Schelling's difficult work.

Hervé Le Baut, *Présence de Merleau-Ponty*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010; 390 pages. ISBN 978-2296129191.

Compte rendu de Jérôme Melançon, Université de l'Alberta, campus Augustana.

L'ouvrage d'Hervé Le Baut, *Présence de Merleau-Ponty*, est extrait du second tome d'une thèse soutenue en 2007, mais dont l'écriture remonte à 1970. Dans ce livre, Le Baut se donne pour tâche d'établir la biographie de l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty en interrogeant les autres œuvres qui l'ont reprise, critiquée, ou qui lui ont donné écho. Tout travail biographi-

que sur Merleau-Ponty est aujourd'hui difficile : puisqu'il n'a pas été entamé lorsque ses contemporains étaient en vie, il ne reste aujourd'hui que de rares témoignages écrits. Prenant Merleau-Ponty au mot et suivant l'idée que toute approche de l'Être ne peut être qu'indirecte et latérale, Le Baut brosse un portrait de Merleau-Ponty par le biais du travail des philosophes contemporains et des interprètes plus récents et s'interroge sur sa présence dans la philosophie française.

La première partie du livre s'attache à retracer les relations et contacts entre Merleau-Ponty et ses contemporains. Le Baut offre nombre de citations retrouvées dans ce qui semble être l'ensemble des textes où figure Merleau-Ponty, ne serait-ce qu'au passage ou dans les notes. Il montre ainsi que Merleau-Ponty partageait une même recherche avec Jean Hyppolite et Jean Beaufret. En mettant l'accent sur leur amitié et leur appréciation mutuelle, il replace Merleau-Ponty dans le contexte philosophique de l'époque. Il dévoile aussi que Merleau-Ponty et Hyppolite partageaient le projet de rédiger ensemble un ouvrage intitulé « Existence et vérité » (25).

Passant à la génération suivante des philosophes français, Le Baut dépeint un Louis Althusser ambivalent par rapport à Merleau-Ponty, hésitant entre l'admiration et la dénonciation. Le chapitre est tout aussi hésitant, tournant davantage autour de la question du rapport de la philosophie et de la psychanalyse (domaine de spécialisation de Le Baut) que de celle du marxisme, qui fut pourtant centrale à la pensée des deux philosophes. Il tente ensuite d'effacer l'angle mort que constitue le rapport de Michel Foucault à Merleau-Ponty, bien que les traces de sa présence au-delà des critiques répétées soient difficiles à retrouver. De telles traces sont plus visibles chez Jean-Toussaint Desanti, qui a connu Merleau-Ponty et fut proche de lui et en a ainsi parlé plus ouvertement et fréquemment, ou encore chez Jean-François Lyotard, dans l'œuvre duquel se révèle une inspiration merleau-pontyenne. Nous trouvons dans ces chapitres les deux approches qu'adopte Le Baut : ou bien le chapitre se concentre sur la relation personnelle d'un philosophe à Merleau-Ponty, ou bien il se concentre sur les livres de l'autre philosophe tout en établissant des parallèles allusifs à l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty.

Il est cependant frappant que, dans ces quatre chapitres consacrés à des philosophes s'étant occupés sans cesse de politique, la philosophie politique de Merleau-Ponty soit à peine mentionnée. En fait, et c'est là

une de ses faiblesses centrales, tout l'ouvrage escamote la politique, qui fut pourtant un souci et un thème constant pour Merleau-Ponty.

Parlant de Gilles Deleuze, *Le Baut* est au plus près des textes, montrant connivences et proximités. Nous voyons au mieux dans ce chapitre les questions et ouvertures que Merleau-Ponty a léguées aux philosophes de la génération suivante, ainsi que l'ampleur de leurs critiques. De même, le chapitre sur Jacques Derrida, mesurant son rapport à Merleau-Ponty, à Jean-Luc Nancy, ainsi que celui de Nancy à Merleau-Ponty, montre *Le Baut* à son meilleur, offrant une fine synthèse des textes, dévoilant tout ce qui se joue dans le concept de chair ainsi que les enjeux des lectures de Merleau-Ponty et les nombreux rapports médiatisés au sein de la philosophie française. De là, nous comprenons mieux l'attitude exemplifiée par Michel Henry, qui feint de balayer l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty du revers de la main tout en lui reconnaissant une dette majeure.

Au fil de cette première partie de son livre, portant sur « Merleau-Ponty et ses pairs », *Le Baut* soulève un problème important dans l'histoire de la philosophie : pourquoi les philosophes qui furent ses contemporains rejettent-ils ou critiquent-ils Merleau-Ponty de manière si véhémente, alors même qu'ils lui doivent tant? Autrement dit, pourquoi déforment-ils la pensée qui a rendu possible la leur? La réponse se trouve peut-être dans les chapitres qui terminent cette première partie et reviennent à la génération de Merleau-Ponty : entre lui et Levinas, simple incompréhension due à la différence de leurs projets et menant à une importante confrontation; entre lui et Ricœur, travail en parallèle, tous deux entretenant un rapport direct à Husserl, mais prolongeant sa pensée dans des directions différentes.

La seconde partie du livre porte sur les interprètes de Merleau-Ponty, la plupart étant toujours vivants au moment de l'écriture du livre. Une place importante est donnée à Claude Lefort, décédé depuis, et présenté comme le gardien des œuvres et de la pensée de Merleau-Ponty. Ce chapitre est le seul à aborder la politique, bien que ce ne soit que par le biais d'une énumération des thèses de Lefort sur Merleau-Ponty. Les chapitres suivants, portant sur Henri Maldiney et Jean-Claude Garelli, montrent comment une œuvre peut se nourrir d'une autre et d'un contexte partagé, *Le Baut* établissant par exemple un rapport entre Garelli et Artaud, et Garelli et Merleau-Ponty, lui-même en rapport avec Artaud. Nous aurions d'ailleurs souhaité en savoir plus sur ce dernier rapport : Le

Baut note qu'il n'a pas été suffisamment élaboré, sans pour autant se mettre à la tâche.

Le reste des interprètes (Françoise Dastur, François Heidsieck, Renaud Barbaras, François George – publiant plus récemment sous le nom de François-George Maugarlonne –, Michel Lefeuvre, Bernard Sichère, Vincent Peillon, Jean-Marie Tréguier et Emmanuel de Saint-Aubert) sont présentés en tant qu'ils offrent diverses manières de donner une cohérence à l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty. Cependant, Le Baut les refuse toutes, et nous voyons ici ce qui est peut-être le résultat de l'exercice scolastique obligé de la revue et réfutation de la littérature. Ces « bulletins », comme les appelle Le Baut (326), sont autant de réfutations des critiques soulevées par ces interprètes et autant de refus d'attribuer quelque idée de Merleau-Ponty que ce soit à d'autres penseurs. Le Baut désire rendre « Merleau-Ponty tel qu'en lui-même » (353), le séparant surtout de Sartre et Beauvoir, mais aussi de Husserl et de Heidegger.

Le chapitre consacré au travail pourtant innovateur et irremplaçable d'Emmanuel de Saint-Aubert présente une attaque particulièrement virulente et illustre le procédé par lequel Le Baut s'en prend à toute interprétation divergente à la sienne, passant de la rare réfutation à de fréquentes attaques *ad hominem*. Le Baut présente ainsi les énoncés des trois ouvrages de Saint-Aubert qu'il juge être problématiques, sans pour autant s'appliquer à les réfuter, préférant utiliser l'ironie et l'exclamation à leur encontre. Il reproche aussi à Saint-Aubert d'annoncer trop souvent les volumes encore à venir de son travail sur Merleau-Ponty, alors qu'il annonce lui-même sans cesse, dans l'ouvrage et en quatrième de couverture, la publication prochaine d'une biographie, ou vie, de Merleau-Ponty. Notons d'ailleurs que l'absence de ce livre des figures de Sartre, Beauvoir et Lévi-Strauss (et peut-être celle de Lacan, n'apparaissant qu'en filigrane), qui pourrait être critiquée, est due à leur inclusion dans la biographie à venir.

Surtout, eu égard à Saint-Aubert, Le Baut s'abstient de se confronter à la question la plus importante, qu'il soulève pourtant face au projet de revoir toute la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty à la lumière de ses inédits : « peut-on véritablement tout mettre sur le même plan et amalgamer les textes signés Merleau-Ponty, les *Notes de cours* ou de travail non revues et publiées, les refus ou les brouillons? » (356). Avec la parution du travail de Saint-Aubert sur des textes toujours inédits et avec la publication d'un grand nombre de textes posthumes, cette question se

pose désormais à tout interprète de Merleau-Ponty; ne pas y répondre, comme Le Baut, c'est aussi une manière injustifiée de ne pas se confronter aux manuscrits.

Ce chapitre démontre par ailleurs une autre faiblesse majeure de l'ouvrage de Le Baut : il présuppose une connaissance intime de l'œuvre de Merleau-Ponty, mais aussi de la pensée de ses « pairs » et « exégètes ». Le plus intéressant de la matière couverte dans *Présence de Merleau-Ponty* s'arrête souvent brusquement ou renvoie à la biographie non publiée, ce qui est sans doute un vestige de la composition de la thèse qui semble débiter par l'analyse de la philosophie du corps et de la chair de Merleau-Ponty. Le choix des auteurs relevés n'est pas non plus expliqué; notons par exemple l'absence de Tran Duc Thao ou de Franz Fanon, ou encore d'Yves Thierry, relégué à une mention au passage.

Ceci dit, *Présence de Merleau-Ponty* s'avère être un ouvrage important pour tout commentateur ou interprète de la philosophie merleau-pontyenne : chaque allusion à Merleau-Ponty dans les livres de ses contemporains y est relevée et analysée. Même en l'absence d'un index des thèmes de sa philosophie, qui permettrait de mieux voir sa présence dans la philosophie française, il demeure aisé de se reporter aux textes portant sur Merleau-Ponty. Le Baut présente aussi bon nombre d'hypothèses fécondes quant à l'influence de Merleau-Ponty et à ceux qui l'ont aussi influencé, hypothèses qui demeurent clairement non affirmatives : nous voyons les pistes comme telles, plutôt que comme des certitudes.

Nous pouvons maintenant attendre la parution de cette biographie promise par l'auteur, la première à porter sur Merleau-Ponty, pour compléter le tableau. La question de la présence dans la philosophie contemporaine du philosophe qui occupa une place centrale pendant une quinzaine d'années dans les institutions scolaires et universitaires et exerça une influence majeure sur le développement de la philosophie est en effet importante, et nous y trouvons bel et bien réponse dans cet ouvrage d'Hervé Le Baut.

Michael Mack, *Spinoza and the Specters of Modernity: The Hidden Enlightenment of Diversity from Spinoza to Freud*. New York: Continuum, 2010; vii + 222 pages. ISBN: 978-1441118721.

Review by Hasana Sharp, McGill University.

Michael Mack joins a number of thinkers—including Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze, Antonio Negri, and Jonathan Israel—in the effort to locate Spinoza within an alternative current of modernity. Akin especially to Israel’s portrait, Mack presents Spinoza as an enlightenment thinker who deepens and radicalises the major concepts associated with the modern age: equality, fraternity, and liberty. Distinguishing Mack’s study from either Israel’s sweeping history of ideas or the Marxist effort to produce an anomalous thread in the history of philosophy is his alliance of Spinoza with Herder’s philosophical anthropology, the literary productions of Goethe and Eliot, and the thought of Rosenzweig and Freud. Mack links these figures within a “spectral” constellation, not only because they together sketch an alternative to the dominant Kantian tradition, but also because they recognise and affirm the “undecidability” of the human condition. A spectre is between worlds, a disquieting figure of present absence, and thus blurs definitions, boundaries, and categories. Indebted significantly to feminist analyses of Spinoza (Gatens and Lloyd), Mack thematises Spinoza’s influence on these thinkers primarily as a confounder of binary oppositions between mind/body, reason/passion, nature/culture, private/public, and self/other. The undecidability of frontiers and concepts that characterises this alter-tradition, according to Mack, yields a profound suspicion of hierarchies of any kind and a keen interest in narrative as “the constitutive fabric of politics, identity, society, religion, and the larger sphere of culture.” (2)

The centrepiece of Mack’s analysis is a triptych on Herder’s Spinozism (Chapters 3–5). Mack seeks to challenge the view of Herder’s intellectual heritage as following primarily from Locke, Leibniz, and Rousseau. Mack demonstrates that Herder’s critique of Kant—for which he is best-known—owes a profound debt to Spinoza. Spinoza thereby appears as a fecund source of challenges to the mainstream enlightenment tradition, and Herder gains an important place, alongside the French materialists championed by Israel, as a radical enlightenment thinker committed to a more comprehensive

egalitarianism and universalism. Mack's outline of this influence is, in my view, an important addition to the now popular portrait of Spinoza as the progenitor of a radical democratic and materialist tradition, especially so given Herder's embrace of religious diversity as proper to a rational society. As illuminating as Israel's magisterial work is, it risks wholly identifying Spinozism with a secularism that is hostile to religion. Spinoza's writings are not unambiguously atheist, or dismissive of religion as a backward form of superstition, as many readers understand them today. Mack outlines a tendency of Spinozism that is rationalist and yet charitable toward the diversity of beliefs and narratives that comprise cultural life. Mack keenly appreciates Spinoza, not just as a critic of the destructive features of religion, but as a philosopher who acknowledges the limits of reason, and the inability in each and every one of us, by virtue of our finitude, to transcend our prejudices. (106) Hostility toward prejudice *tout court* amounts to cruelty directed at oneself, as well as others, since we cannot but picture the world via an imaginative *Gestalt*. Moreover, such hostility easily yields a hierarchy between the enlightened few and the ignorant masses.

Mack's primary aim is to show how the Spinozism inherited by his spectral constellation serves to disrupt hierarchies that often follow from binary oppositions. He finds that the pervasive suspicion of hierarchies in Spinoza's metaphysics opens possibilities for a truly inclusive universalism. From "Spinoza's notion of the mind as a plural, sustainable and ever-changing unity," Mack suggests a template for "an inclusive universalism that would be truly beneficial for the nonviolent solving of problems that global societies are facing at the dawn of the 21st century." (47) It would be worth considering, however, Spinoza's own resistance to certain forms of inclusiveness. Even if many thinkers (including Marxists, feminists, radical democrats, and deep ecologists) have found in Spinoza's metaphysics a great deal of inspiration for a less exclusionary political or moral programme, Spinoza himself objected, for example, to including women in government (*Political Treatise*, Ch. 11, pars. 3–4), and to considering the interests of nonhuman animals when they come into conflict with our own (*Ethics*, part IV, proposition 37, scholium 1). While championing Spinoza's unprecedented radicalism, we might also seek to understand the reasons he offers for his exclusions, without excusing or ignoring them. Moreover, as compelling and fruitful as Spinoza's horizontal ontology is, it is far from sufficient to guard

against the formation of oppressive power relations. Indeed, even if Spinoza accords no metaphysical priority to thought over extension, and even if his conception of Nature is a diverse but unified totality that “connects rather than divides” (39), he is wary of how we are often “enemies” to one another (e.g., *Political Treatise*, Ch. 8, par. 12), and of our ineradicable vulnerability to more powerful forces (*Ethics*, part IV, axiom 1). Although Mack’s aim is primarily to highlight how Spinozism guides later thinkers’ efforts to develop a notion of universalism that accommodates diversity and opposes hierarchy, it is at least worth acknowledging Spinoza’s inability to embrace these values for women, among others.

As a Spinoza scholar, I was most interested in Mack’s interpretation of Spinoza’s principle of *conatus*, the striving by which each being aims to preserve and enhance its life. He suggests that the *conatus* gets taken up by later thinkers not only as a doctrine of self-preservation, or as the ultimate source of all human (and nonhuman) motivation, but also as a critique of how self-preservation can be narrowly construed so as to yield self-destruction (and, in his concluding discussion of Freud, a “loss of reality”). Mack reads Spinoza’s *conatus* as a principle of self-sustainability that can only be actualised by virtue of a contribution to the well-being of the other forces with which one is intertwined (Chapter 2). Self-preservation, properly understood, opens the self to those (infinitely many) others without which one cannot be. He suggests that “One could in fact read Spinoza’s central notion of *conatus*...as being congruent with the basic ethical teachings of rabbinical Judaism.” He compares “Spinoza’s idiosyncratic take on the *conatus*” to the provocations of Hillel the Elder “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And when I am for myself, what am ‘I’?” (94) Unfortunately, he does not develop his interpretation in greater detail, and the intriguing link he provides to rabbinical teachings is simply asserted. I hope that he will develop his analysis of *conatus* and its affinity with rabbinical teachings in future work.

Finally, *Spinoza and the Specters of Modernity* highlights a number of fertile connections to Spinoza and adumbrates modern thought and culture in new ways. It suggests several avenues for future research and goes some way toward correcting the false portrait of Spinoza as an uncompromising rationalist who has little appreciation of the imaginative fabric of cultural life.

Finn Fordham, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010; 281 pages. ISBN: 978-0199569403.

Review by Anna Mudde, York University.

Drawing for methodological inspiration on genetic criticism, a form of post-structuralist literary theory that aims to study writers' processes for purposes "other than establishing an authorized or edited 'version'" (16), in *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, Finn Fordham points to the importance of reading texts as sites of simultaneous self-expression and self-formation. Eschewing any neat correspondence between author and text, in Fordham's analysis partial drafts, manuscripts and finished texts become dazzlingly rich constellations of personal and social history, technological context and, most importantly, processes of selfhood. Fordham suggests that modernist conceptions of self and subjectivity, both in literature and in philosophy, are the products of the "intense experiences of producing texts." (59)

This book is divided into two parts, the chapters in the first providing a methodological framework for the chapters in the second, in which Fordham exemplifies both the fertile ground of modern English literature (from the late 1880s to 1939) for thinking about subjectivity and the power of his proposed methodology. His general hypothesis, that "formation shapes content" (26), applies equally to literary works as to their authors, and is reflected in his thoroughly teleological approach. While many modernist theories of subjectivity resist the study of drafts—their variability and lack of finality are often taken to "indicate an author in a split condition of undecidability and incompleteness" (25)—Fordham proposes to take up unfinished works as opportunities for insight into self-formation. Bridging the gap between genetic criticism, which privileges almost exclusively the consideration of drafts ("*avant-textes*"), and book history, which looks almost exclusively at the history of the finished work, Fordham insists that "the book is often the teleological object of a process, just as it is also produced by the demands and expectations of a social network." (27) If overlooking drafts is unacceptable in the study of literary subjectivity, then so too is excluding the final work from analysis.

Fordham argues that by reading-together biographical details of an author and the works he or she finally produces, alongside the drafts marked by acts of writing, one can see not only that lived realities find their way into manuscripts but, more importantly, that the process(es) of writing itself becomes an important context—the “closest context of all” (27)—of the author’s creative life. The practices of composition so shape the life of an author that “the line between text and context is blurred: the direction of flow between life and text becomes two-way.” (27) For this reason, Fordham’s argument makes a significant and convincing ontological claim: that the biographical subject is not simply the cause of a text (understood both as an object, its form and its content), nor simply the effect of a text, but is marked by the experiences of writing, themselves shaped by the experiences of a life. The created object is inscribed by such experiences. As Fordham describes this, “processes are encoded in the product” (28), which I take to be the conjunction of author and finished work, subject and object.

The book’s title, inspired by Louise Bourgeois’ 2000 installation at the Tate Modern, suggests Fordham’s focus on the self and on subjectivity. But it is impossible to miss a developing theory of objects, particularly of artifacts (books), which implies the importance of objects in technologies of self-formation and rests on an inseparability not only of objects from the selves that produce and shape them, but of selves from the objects they produce.

The case study chapters that comprise the second part of the book illustrate Fordham’s methodology. I am unable to do any justice to these chapters here, but will endeavour to give a small indication of what they have to offer. Each chapter is devoted to a particular author and, usually, is focused on a particular work, revealing both an overarching “modernism,” an interest in the self and its revision, as well as resistance to generalisation. While Woolf and Joyce are able—for reasons peculiar to their respective situations—to embrace a modernist possibility of self-multiplicity in the very structures of their writing (in *The Waves* and *Ulysses*, respectively), Forster cannot, finding the idea that multiple characters might project parts of the same view to be violent, a kind of forced self-splitting. And yet, Forster’s *A Passage to India* is deeply affected by the radically modern “blurring” (180) and hollowing out of character found in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness.” In Fordham’s hands, Conrad’s Marlow reveals a range of partial, incomplete selfhoods experi-

enced as part of writing processes: at one end, the difficult self-consciousness and sense of futility that can come with writer's block and, at the other, the forgotten self and sense of purpose that can come with full absorption in the work of writing.

Both Hopkins and Yeats are profoundly affected by the audience who is always, inescapably, sometimes painfully, implicated in the acts of writing. Yeats' attempt to deal with the experience of split public and private selfhoods, arising out of early publication and public acclaim, is revealed in his juvenile works (Fordham reads the poem "Pan") through the idea of the "select self" (113), the self selected by itself or others. But unlike Yeats' experience with his audience(s), Hopkins' few readers were often critical, and Fordham argues, quite convincingly, if heart-breakingly, that he seems to find the compression of self into writing—particularly into short lines of poetry—oppressive. The inability to be sure that what an audience reads is the intention of its author renders Hopkins almost unutterably self-conscious, unable to let his work go (out for publication).

Each chapter in the second half of *I Do, I Undo, I Redo* includes not only historical contextualisations and literary analyses, biographical details of an author and a piece of his or her work, but also some reproduced drafts (either in the text or as copied images). In these reproductions, editorial changes are left visible, and handwriting is cramped-in or neat and legible. Tying drafts to completed manuscripts, Fordham describes which changes appear in final versions, or which versions editors have commonly used. Seeing the drafts, interpreted by Fordham, lends an overwhelming sense of incredulity at the idea that human beings ever do the work of writing; there is, palpably, a self, right *there* on the page, that is yet ineffable enough to make it obvious why writing, expressing the self, can be so intensely difficult. Fordham accords the unknown self a genuine respect; in each chapter of this book, writing is "the paradigm of something proximally mysterious" (74), an analogy for and technology of the self-expressed and to-be-expressed. This book, then, is not only a contribution to theories of selfhood, but to philosophies of technology, broadly—richly—construed.

Félix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*. Translated by Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair. With a Preface by Catherine Malabou. London: Continuum, 2008; xx +139 pages ISBN: 978-1847061973.

Review by Kristin Anne Rodier, University of Alberta.

This volume is punctiliously designed by the most apt scholars. An incisive preface by Catherine Malabou locates Félix Ravaisson's work within his sphere of influence and suggests thematic ways into his text. This introduction allows the reader to have a first glance at the threads holding Ravaisson's ideas together in a way that makes the dense and often obscure essay easier to parse. The volume pairs the English page-by-page with the original French, a practice that is refreshing for the reader and diligent of the editors, and that allows bilinguals (and hopefuls) to work with the volume's bilingual nature so as to reveal the ways in which translations are inherently (if some more than others) limited. Of the volume's 139 pages, 54 are Ravaisson's, making the English only a modest 27 pages. Of six sections, 24 pages make up the first three sections. The editors' commentary that follows is a section-by-section elucidation of Ravaisson's terms, arguments, and aims that is both dextrous and methodical in its exegesis, even if at times as dense as Ravaisson's work itself.

Ravaisson studied philosophy in Paris at the Collège Rollin where he wrote his dissertation on philosophical method under Hector Poret. In 1834 he wrote a prized two-volume work on Aristotle's metaphysics. In 1837 he gained first place in the *agrégation* and together with a secondary study on Speusippus in Latin, he submitted *De l'habitude* as his doctoral thesis. (3) Ravaisson went on to a career in the civil service where he held many important positions in policy that directly influenced the style and manner in which philosophy in France is still undertaken today. (3) Influencing such philosophers as Henri Bergson, Paul Ricœur, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and many others because of this volume, Ravaisson's work on habit is now able to make a more significant impact in Anglo-philosophical circles.

Ravaisson's first section is a metaphysical meditation on living and non-living beings, time, change, unity, and the emergence of habit. In it Ravaisson ventures his first definition of habit as "a disposition relative to change, which is engendered in a being by the continuity or the

repetition of this very same change.” (25) In the case of living beings, “if the change does not destroy it, it is always less and less altered by that change.” (31) Likewise, if the change is brought about by the organism, then the change becomes its own and the organism’s receptivity to the natural world is decreased, demonstrating that the living being is able to be more spontaneous with respect to the natural world. This is how living beings come to have habits. Habits develop along with nature and in concert with the instincts of a living being. He writes: “If, therefore, the characteristic of nature, which constitutes life, is the predominance of spontaneity over receptivity, then habit does not simply presuppose nature, but develops in the very direction of nature, and concurs with it.” (31) Because living beings are both able to undergo and initiate change, there inheres in them a “double law of habit”: since the more an impression is used to navigate the world, the more frequently it is produced and since the frequency at which an impression is produced renders us less receptive to the world around us, movement becomes initiated more and more spontaneously from within the living being and less and less as a result of any impression. In her preface, Malabou refers to this as the “*reversibility of energies*.” She continues: “Habit is at first an effect, a way of being that *results* from change, but it gradually becomes a *cause* of change itself, as it initiates and maintains repetition.” (ix) Because the connection between action and reaction is then being weakened, there is a need to posit an organizing “center with the capacity to measure and dispense force.” (37) This “center” is the capacity for judgement, the soul, and the “first light of freedom.” (37)

In the second section, the parallels between Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “pre-objective realm” and Ravaisson are extraordinary: “The subject experiencing sensation barely distinguished himself from it. It is wholly concentrated in him, as if within the obscure heart of his being.” (43) But from this, subjects increasingly become perceivers, so we experience a gain in “movement, activity and freedom in the world of diversity and opposition.” (47) Ravaisson then centres the perceiving individual in her experience of time, as consciousness is the constant experience of duration and change. (49) We can either passively or actively undertake the repetition of sensations. When we actively undertake repeated sensation the feeling reduces and we develop the ability to know and judge what we are sensing. If this is measured, then we become a connoisseur who can discern different gradations and qualities of sensations,

but if the sensation is repeatedly sought and passively experienced, then our powers of discernment are rendered dull.

When the effort expended to navigate the world fades, and the movements we are capable of are better and more agile, our ability to perform the activity becomes a tendency in us that “no longer awaits the commandments of the will but rather anticipates them.” (51) Likewise when we have become accustomed to a certain sensation, it becomes a need in us—the need is felt as an activity that “calls for [the sensation], invokes it; in a certain sense it implores [it].” (51) This begins to look like a theory of desire, in that desiring can feel like longing, a lack, or a need in the body. Ravaisson underscores just how prevalent repetition is in our bodily experience with the example of rocking a baby to sleep. The rocking is what induces the sleep, transforming into a dulled, unnoticed sensation and thereby the baby’s sleep becomes dependent upon the rocking. This is why Ravaisson can say that the rocking and other sensations like it “[destroy] sensation, but at the same time [create] a need for [them].” (53) Desire, then, is awakened in the person for whom the sensation settles within consciousness. Ravaisson insists that this cannot be explained through a modification of the organs of sensation, nor through an intensification of the powers of our will or intelligence. Dulled sensation frees up the will and consciousness for other endeavours, and the consequent activity undertaken becomes more agile, even if it may at first seem contradictory that when the precision of movement increases, the reliance on will decreases.

In the third section, Ravaisson explains how Will and Nature relate in the phenomenon of habit. The transfer of actions from will to habit (and often from habit back to will) is in direct contrast with the idea that habits have no intellectual activity, or that habits are blind mechanism. (57) This is because habitual action retains the form of the intelligence that instructs it. In one of many Thomistic turns, he claims that our movements become fused with the willed activity that brought them about and this particular fusion creates a necessity or “*law of the limbs*,” which is also at the same time a “*law of grace*.” (57) How is this different from instinct? Ravaisson’s answer is that it is a matter of degree. Instinct is more reliable and more bound by necessity, while habit is the dividing line, the “infinitesimal *differential*, or, the dynamic *fluxion* from Will to Nature.” (59) He then goes on to explain how a Will can arise if nature dominates the instincts by way of necessity.

In the final sections, Ravaisson offers a brief summary of the work as a whole and then broadens his analysis into an onto-theology. Continuity and repetition weakens sensation and feeling and thereby extinguishes pleasure and pain. (69) Echoing Aristotle, the mechanism of habit, the very same thing that turns a continued activity into a need, is that which assures us of solid moral character after continued action. (69) As good actions are repeated, and the feelings weaken and turn into tendency and need, the tendency to perform good actions takes over and we are increasingly able to enjoy the good actions that we perform. Just as the end of movement can inhere in our being by becoming a habit, the idea of the good “descends into these depths, engendering love [in the powers of the soul] and raising that love up to [the good].” (71) But, what could guarantee this notion of the good in us? And what could guarantee that it is the good provokes love in us? In a spiritual turn, Ravaisson suggests that “It is God within us, God hidden solely by being so far within us in this intimate source of ourselves, to whose depths we do not descend.” (71)

Interesting for phenomenologists working on the habit body, deconstructionists working on auto-affection, Foucauldians interested in the uptake of processes of subjectivation and interpellation, Aristotelians hoping to unpack virtuous character for an embodied subject, and even critical and psychoanalytical theorists looking for connections between unconscious and conscious processes, Ravaisson’s ideas and their influence are just beginning to be understood, and this thoughtful volume is a welcome news for the curious philosopher of habit. Ravaisson’s *Of Habit* is a brief but remarkable gem sure to find meaningful impact on the philosophy of habit.

John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009; xvii + 241 pages. ISBN: 978-0816665105.

Review by Janet M. Phillips, University of Alberta.

The autonomy of the political subject is a much-debated concept within philosophy. On the one hand, many schools of thought presuppose a rational cognitive subject—that is, the individual who collects information,

processes it, and locates him- or herself within it to make a premeditated decision. (3) On the other hand, “leftist” schools of thought understand the subject to be limited by the social context within which he or she exists. (3) The social forces constantly surrounding us shape our behaviour. In his *Political Affect*, John Protevi enters this debate by offering an alternative to both the rational cognitive and socially constructed models of the subject. His central argument is that subjectivity is at times circumvented entirely with a direct connection between the somatic and the social. (xi) Merging cognitive science with social theory and philosophy in a unique and fascinating approach, he is successful at demonstrating the connection between the social and the somatic in what he labels “political physiology” (xi) at every stage of the text.

Political Affect begins with an exploration of key concepts from social theory and cognitive science that Protevi then relies upon throughout the rest of the book. Such concepts include “complexity theory,” a postulate of nonlinear dynamics centred upon the formation of simple structures out of the complex web of a system’s features. (5) Equally intriguing is the notion of “emergence,” or the longer-term coming into being of short-term systemic constraints upon the behaviour of the system’s components. (8) We also learn about “development systems theory” (DST), which suggests that systems comprise both a genetic component, or “blueprint” preceding them, as well as an epigenetic component, or “background” within which that blueprint is shaped into an actual system. (19) Protevi employs this theoretical backdrop to suggest that subjects are at the same time embodied in the somatic and embedded in the social. (28–29)

Protevi proceeds by identifying three concepts central to his own work. The first term, “bodies politic,” locates humans within embodied and embedded processes on two different scales, the compositional and the temporal. (37) In terms of composition, bodies politic range from the first-order, or personal body politic to the second-order, or group and civic bodies politic. (37) Time-scales upon which these bodies politic manifest are short-term, mid-term, and long-term. However, Protevi stresses that these compositional and temporal scales be employed for analytic, not definitional practices, as existing bodies politic overlap between all of these scales. The second key term, “political cognition,” refers to how these bodies politic employ political categories to understand events. (33) The third term, “political affect,” after which the book is ti-

tled, denotes the way in which the social acts directly upon the body politic in that body's making sense of its social environment. As Protevi summarises, "we make our worlds in making sense of situations, but we do so only on the basis of the world in which we find ourselves." (35) Political affect polarises an objective political physiology from subjective political feeling. (45)

After advancing these three terms the author explores the tradition of "the organism as the judgment of God" within Western philosophy. (61) This tradition, two examples of which are identified by Protevi in Aristotle and Kant, takes the organism as a "hierarchically ordered body politic" situated within "a divine natural order." (61) Adopting a materialist Deleuzian ontology, Protevi follows in the footsteps of Deleuze and Guattari to depart from this tradition, advancing a model of the organism understood as the patterning of the biological by the social. (61, 89) Hence, the organism is stratified as "a centralized, hierarchical, and strongly patterned body" (107) as opposed to the "theo-bio-political" model of traditional Western philosophy. (61)

With this understanding of the organism, Protevi proceeds with the most fascinating aspect of the work by examining three case studies through the lens of political affect. In the first case, an examination of Terri Schiavo's persistent vegetative state (PVS), he employs Deleuze and Guattari's work to suggest that after entering PVS, Schiavo was de-stratified—that is, she moved from a subjective to a strictly organic functioning. (129–30) Therefore, debate surrounding whether or not Schiavo had the right to die misses the point: a rights-based discourse relies upon there being a subject who can stake a claim to rights in the first place. For Protevi, that subject was divorced from her organic surroundings upon entering PVS. (131)

In his second case study, an examination of the Columbine high school tragedy, Protevi argues that discussions centred upon social factors that may have influenced the shooters overlook political affect entirely. (143) Employing the distinction between subjectivity and agency central to an understanding of political affect, Protevi suggests that shooters Klebold and Harris experienced a state of rage that bypassed their subjectivity in favour of the direct interaction of their somatic selves with their social environments. (149, 158) Ultimately, "the practical agent of the act of killing" at the high school was "the Columbine killing machine consisting of Klebold-Harris-bombs-guns-school." (158)

The subjectivities of Klebold and Harris were not involved in the actual carrying out of the event.

The third case study is an examination of race and fear in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. For Protevi, delayed government responses to the disaster reflected racialised fear. (177) Fear is an instance of affective cognition, prompting the somatic to respond immediately without interaction on the part of the subjective. (175–77) Employing the concept of emergence, Protevi suggests the components of this fear developed diachronically starting in colonial Louisiana, manifesting synchronically with the hurricane. (169, 181) This fear conflicted with the solidarity displayed by citizens of New Orleans in their coming together to aid each other directly following the event. (163) Ultimately, government should not stand in contrast to that solidarity but should be “the organized expression” of it. (183)

This book demonstrates a considerable number of strengths. More specifically, it is refreshing to read a work that transcends disciplinary boundaries to merge cognitive science with social theory and philosophy. By approaching the topic in this manner, Protevi provides an innovative take on the theme of the political subject within Western philosophy. Although the introduction of cognitive science to the topic is accompanied by complex cognitive theory and equally complex language, Protevi makes these concepts accessible to the reader, utilising the first chapter to take the reader through what are uncharted waters in political philosophy. He is successful in this endeavour. Furthermore, with his use of case studies, the first two parts of his book come together in his locating concrete examples of political affect in recent political events. The cases themselves are a real highlight of the work. Surrounded by controversy in the media, yet quite recent events, they serve as compelling points of analysis and a prime opportunity for the reader to witness Protevi’s theory of political affect in action.

Protevi’s work prompts questions for even further studies of political affect. From an ethical perspective, there is something troubling in the suggestion that subjectivity is sometimes bypassed in favour of the direct interaction of the somatic with the social. For, without subjectivity, how do we hold individuals accountable for their actions? Protevi observes that conditions required for political affect emerge diachronically but that events stemming from these conditions manifest synchronically. Yet, in examples such as the Columbine high school trag-

edy and the racialised fear following Hurricane Katrina, how can we affect factors that emerge diachronically to prevent equally horrific events? Admittedly, these questions are steeped in normativity and as Protevi's work is meant to examine what is rather than what should be, he should not be held to account for their remaining unanswered. Protevi's work challenges disciplinary borders, provides a fresh approach to an understanding of subjectivity, and is brimming with compelling case studies. For these reasons Protevi's text is well worth reading and will challenge what we thought we knew about the political subject.

Paul Redding. *Continental Idealism : Leibniz to Nietzsche*. New York: Routledge, 2009; 229 pages. ISBN : 978-0415443074.

Compte rendu de Morgan Gaulin, Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes, Université de Montréal.

Professeur de philosophie à l'Université de Sydney et « Fellow » de l'Académie australienne des humanités, Paul Redding a publié d'importants ouvrages d'histoire de la philosophie dont *Hegel's Hermeneutics* en 1996 et *The Logic of Affect* en 1999. Son dernier ouvrage, consacré à la philosophie idéaliste continentale, revêt à notre sens un intérêt considérable pour les historiens puisqu'il en établit une histoire peu commune. Au lieu de faire débiter l'idéalisme avec Kant comme cela est habituellement le cas, Redding le fait remonter jusqu'à Leibniz.

Dans un premier temps, Redding met à mal la vision, assez répandue il est vrai, d'une pensée kantienne voisine de l'immatérialisme de Berkeley, qui postule que la matière n'existe pas. Redding rappelle que Kant lui-même se fit le critique de la thèse de Berkeley sur la matière en s'appuyant sur une lettre du premier à Beck datée du 4 décembre 1792 dans laquelle il précise qu'il s'attache à l'idéalité de la forme de nos représentations (espace et temps) et non, à l'instar de Berkeley, à l'idéalité des objets eux-mêmes et de leur existence (1). Au lieu de privilégier l'axe Kant-Berkeley, Redding examine l'axe Kant-Leibniz. Pour comprendre l'idéalisme kantien, nous devons ainsi faire appel à un idéalisme de la forme des objets dont Kant est le légataire, idéalisme qui se situe en droite ligne avec la distinction platonico-aristotélicienne entre forme et matière. Cette distinction, réactivée par Leibniz dans la *Monadologie*, in-

siste sur l'idéalité de la forme comme produit de l'espace et du temps. Le second chapitre (20-35) examine donc en détail la *Monadologie* pour ensuite, dans les chapitres 3 à 6, s'intéresser à ce que Kant en tira. Les chapitres 7 à 10 traitent à leur tour de la manière dont des penseurs tels que Reinhold et Fichte, Schlegel et Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer et Nietzsche, ont réagi à cet idéalisme.

Le second geste de Redding consiste à préciser ce qu'il entend par « idéalisme continental ». Pour lui, l'idéalisme qui se développe chez Kant et qui connaît son apogée avec Hegel se caractérise avant tout par une thèse sur l'objet de la métaphysique. Cette thèse, nommée par Redding « Strong TI » (« idéalisme transcendantal fort »), s'intéresse à un monde construit par la pensée : « *the development of idealism in the post-Kantian period was to develop the program of strong TI, the investigation of a world that was not 'there anyway,' but which had been constructed by the human mind throughout its own developmental history* » (2). Entrepris par Leibniz, ce développement repose d'abord sur la monade qui est sans extension et qui possède sa propre appétition. Il s'agit d'une forme de spiritualisme qui est proche de ce que l'on retrouve chez Kant et les postkantien. À ce titre, il est intéressant de noter que Redding se range du côté de Justin Smith et Erik Halldór. Dans un article paru en 2004, ces auteurs défendent l'idée d'un Leibniz platonico-chrétien pour lequel il n'y a pas de matière sans forme (voir « Christian Platonism and the Metaphysics of Body in Leibniz », *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12, 2004). Cette position invalide alors les deux thèses adverses selon lesquelles 1) il n'y a que de l'esprit et 2) il n'y a que de la matière. Entre ces deux thèses, Leibniz postule que tout est vivant et possède une âme (pananimisme). Redding examine en détail le rapport de Kant à Leibniz, mais ce qui nous interpelle c'est avant tout la discussion de la *Critique de la faculté de juger*, dans laquelle Kant aborde un concept capital : l'hypotypose, manière dont la beauté est représentée par la moralité. Pour Kant, l'hypotypose est une représentation symbolique; le philosophe y voit une façon de donner un aspect sensible à nos idées. L'intérêt philosophique pour l'hypotypose repose sur le fait qu'elle présente un amalgame entre l'esprit et la matière qui fait fit des deux thèses que Kant dénonce : l'immatérialisme stricte à la Berkeley et l'empirisme radical.

C'est à partir des réflexions de Kant sur la faculté de juger que Redding nous enjoint à comprendre l'idéalisme comme une philosophie

pour laquelle il n'y a que des représentations et non pas comme si l'esprit était capable de modeler la matière à sa guise. Cet idéalisme ne postule pas de causalité Esprit-Monde ou Esprit-Matière. La discussion autour de la critique hégélienne de l'idée kantienne de Dieu trouve alors toute sa pertinence (138f.). Selon Hegel, Kant aurait transposé la vieille idée chrétienne d'un Dieu inconnaissable dans le domaine de la connaissance en formulant l'idée correspondante d'une chose-en-soi tout aussi inconnaissable que le Dieu de la théologie chrétienne. Il s'agirait, selon Hegel, d'une nouvelle forme de croyance que l'on retrouve non seulement chez Kant mais aussi chez Fichte et Jacobi. Redding exploite bien la démarche de la *Phénoménologie de l'esprit* en rappelant, entre autres choses, que Hegel refuse l'hypothèse d'une division entre l'esprit connaissant et le monde. Pour Hegel, une telle division est illusoire. Ce qu'il nomme la certitude de soi-même (au chapitre 4 de la *Phénoménologie*) se pose, tel que Redding le rappelle, comme ce qu'il y a de plus fondamental dans l'ordre du connaître (147). Chez Hegel, la chose-en-soi est ainsi éliminée au seul profit de la conscience de soi qui se sait toute puissante car elle sait que toute chose ne se comprend qu'à partir d'elle. Seulement, cette doctrine de la conscience qui ne conçoit rien qui ne lui soit séparé est habitée, tel que le note Redding, d'une contradiction. Tout ce qu'elle désire, elle le réalise, si bien qu'à la fin elle ne fait qu'épuiser progressivement son désir, se menant ainsi à l'extinction. La seule chose qui puisse la garder en vie et satisfaire son désir de manière durable est une autre conscience-de-soi, un *alter ego*. Redding remarque que cette conscience hégélienne ne se confronte pas à une énigmatique chose-en-soi qui lui résiste mais à elle-même. C'est ce que Hegel nomme *Esprit*, dans lequel, selon Redding, culmine l'hypothèse d'un idéalisme transcendantal fort.

Les postures de Schopenhauer et de Nietzsche sont ensuite examinées et caractérisées comme des philosophies ambivalentes quant à cet idéalisme fort. Parfois en accord, parfois en désaccord avec l'idéalisme des formes hérité de Kant, Schopenhauer et Nietzsche ont, chacun à leur manière, critiqué l'idéalisme. En effet, si Schopenhauer peut sembler se rapprocher de Fichte en ce qu'il postule que la connaissance résulte d'une volonté toute puissante, Redding précise qu'il s'en écarte de manière significative parce que Fichte présente son absolu selon des caractères impersonnels alors que Schopenhauer le conçoit au contraire comme une instance arbitraire, psychotique, voire même irrationnelle. Redding montre ensuite que sur la question de l'esthétique Schopenhauer se

rapproche de Kant en ce qu'il pense que l'art et la morale sont liés. Le beau nous permet de dépasser la volonté parce que dans notre attirance et notre contemplation de la beauté nous nous détachons de nos pulsions. Ce qui, selon Schopenhauer, permet ce détachement c'est non la matière de l'objet d'art mais sa forme (159). Les arts ont donc en ce sens une puissance ascétique, nous transportant du monde des affects et de l'arbitraire dans celui des pures formes.

Nietzsche aussi est lié à l'idéalisme des formes de Kant. Redding s'attaque au problème de l'éternel retour, qui peut selon lui être compris de deux manières distinctes. Il peut être interprété comme une thèse cosmologique et scientifique ou encore, et c'est le pari de Redding, comme une interprétation idéaliste du temps (169). Pour défendre sa thèse, Redding fait appel au travail d'Alexander Nehemas dans son *Nietzsche : Life as Literature* (1985) car c'est ce dernier qui a rapproché la vision dionysienne de la nature telle que l'expose Nietzsche dans son *Zarathoustra* aux philosophies de Leibniz et de Kant. En particulier, lorsque Nietzsche fait dire aux animaux qui accompagnent Zarathoustra que *le centre est partout*, il s'agit d'une vieille doctrine d'origine néo-platonicienne reprise par Maître Eckhart puis perfectionnée par Nicolas de Cues et Leibniz. Ce qui fait dire à Redding que Nietzsche devait avoir une bonne connaissance des écrits du Rhénan, ce sur quoi nous émettons des doutes même s'il est vrai, comme le rapporte Redding, que Nietzsche cite longuement Eckhart au § 292 du *Gai savoir*. De cette doctrine d'un centre mobile, Leibniz a tiré l'idée que toutes choses sont liées et le postulat de la circularité du temps. C'est cette circularité que le Surhomme nietzschéen se doit d'affronter, et Redding rapproche alors la théodicée leibnizienne du meilleur des mondes possibles de la volonté du Surhomme de revivre éternellement sa propre vie comme si elle était la meilleure. Rapprochement discutable mais constructif; seulement, il aurait été encore plus profitable pour Redding de relire attentivement ce que Nietzsche dit à propos de Leibniz car cela lui aurait permis d'appuyer encore davantage sa comparaison entre Nietzsche et Leibniz. Il est rare, en effet, de voir Nietzsche si élogieux envers un philosophe allemand.

Une autre qualité indéniable de l'ouvrage de Redding, en plus de la précision avec laquelle il traite du rapport de Kant à Leibniz puis de celui de Hegel à Kant, est de prendre en compte les développements récents de la recherche sur les premiers romantiques (*Frühromantiker*),

trop souvent laissés de côté par les historiens de la philosophie. Redding se sert des travaux les plus récents et démontre que, loin de n'être que des figures littéraires, ces romantiques ont fait de réelles avancées dans le domaine philosophique. S'inspirant du travail de Beiser (surtout dans *The Romantic Imperative* (2003)), Redding explique que Schlegel refuse le fondationnalisme inhérent à la philosophie de Fichte (122-25) de même que l'intuition intellectuelle, qui ne serait selon lui qu'une rémanence du mysticisme (123). Schlegel est partisan non d'un sujet absolu comme chez Fichte mais d'un sujet habité d'une contradiction, à la fois fini et infini. Redding évoque à ce sujet le concept schlegélien de *Wechselgrundsatz*, jugé crucial par Manfred Frank (dans son *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, p. 181), et dénotant un « Je » pris entre deux alternatives, dans un va-et-vient entre deux principes premiers.

Ce que l'on nomme donc trop facilement « idéalisme continental » reçoit dans l'ouvrage de Redding une définition précise. Cette définition constitue un développement et un enrichissement significatifs de la thèse formulée en 2002 par Frederick Beiser dans son *German Idealism : the Struggle against Subjectivism* suivant laquelle la philosophie postkantienne poursuit la lutte amorcée par Kant contre le subjectivisme. L'hypothèse d'un idéalisme fort fondé sur l'idéalité des formes a ainsi l'avantage de remettre au second plan ce que Redding nomme un idéalisme faible, qui prend appui sur l'idée selon laquelle nous ne pouvons connaître que des apparences, les choses-en-soi nous demeurant cachées. Cette image d'un Kant sceptique en métaphysique, si juste soit-elle, demeure en effet peu utile lorsqu'on tente de comprendre la succession des philosophies postkantienne.

Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009; 93 pages. ISBN: 978-0804758697.

Review by Maxwell Kennel, University of Waterloo.

Arising after the deaths of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, Bernard Stiegler has become an important name in contemporary French philosophy. Situated between younger philosophers in France such as Quentin Meillassoux or Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, and the older group such as Fran-

çois Laruelle or Alain Badiou, Stiegler has quickly gained a large readership in Europe and North America. The book *Acting Out* may appear to be a footnote to Stiegler's three-part magnum opus *Technics and Time*, but the small anthology of only two essays provides the reader with incredible insight into not only Stiegler's philosophical project but also his biography.

The two essays that make up *Acting Out* are "How I Became a Philosopher" and "To Love, To Love Me, To Love Us." The first essay, which was delivered at the *Centre Georges-Pompidou* on April 23rd 2003, provides the reader with a look into the unusual beginnings of Stiegler's now prolific career. "How I Became a Philosopher" outlines several aspects of Stiegler's philosophy in the context of his personal experience during a five-year period of imprisonment for armed robbery. It is rare in philosophical discourse to witness a thinker who appears to have come forth out of a singular event, yet it seems that for Stiegler philosophy and biography are inextricably linked, and that his story properly began during his time in incarceration. We are witnesses to the prolific philosophical output of Stiegler since the first volume of *Technics and Time* in 1994, but we also learn that that Stiegler is the founder of the political group "Ars Industrialis" and has recently founded a school of philosophy in Épineuil-le-Fleuriel.

Whereas the first essay deals with the link between Stiegler's philosophy and his biography, the second puts the link between theory and appearances into practice, providing an analysis of Richard Durn's 2002 shooting in Nanterre. In "To Love, To Love Me, To Love Us" Stiegler examines the problem of the "loss of individuation" and the primordial narcissism of the perpetrator Richard Durn. (39) It was made evident in the publication of his journals that the shooter was struggling with what Stiegler calls an "immense nothing," or what Durn himself called a feeling of not existing, which could only be mitigated by an act of violence. (39) Stiegler proceeds to examine in detail the theme of individuation by way of "human time" which "articulates the *I* with the *we*." (43) For Stiegler our humanity is contingent upon our involvement in a social group which further constitutes human time or temporalisation. The articulation of the individual with the collective, by way of human time, is also pertinent to Stiegler's discussions of technology, which itself overdetermines individuation.

This relationship between technics and time is certainly the focus of Stiegler's greater oeuvre, where Stiegler concerns himself at certain points with the nature of technology as *pharmakon*, or that which poisons and heals simultaneously. In Volume One of *Technics and Time*, titled *The Fault of Epimetheus*, Stiegler explores question of the technical object alongside an attempt to "conjugate the question of technics with the question of time." In the comparison between Prometheus and Epimetheus, Stiegler finds that technology gives way to a thanatology (a point discussed at length in Marcel O'Gorman's interview with Stiegler forthcoming in *Configurations*). Volume Two of *Technics and Time*, titled *Disorientation*, provides a more pointed examination of technology (such as television), thanatology, and Roland Barthes' concept of mortification from his book *Camera Lucida*. The multi-volume *Technics and Time*, although referenced several times in *Acting Out*, should be treated as its theoretical correspondent, as Davin Heckman points out in his review of *Acting Out* in *Reconstruction* 9.1. Although the three volumes of *Technics and Time* may dwarf *Acting Out* I would argue that Stiegler's theoretical output is grounded in the formative five years of his life that are described in the first essay of *Acting Out*, and then contextualised in the critique of culture seen in the second essay.

In order to provide at least some closing context it should be mentioned that the title, *Acting Out*, is a translation of the French phrase "*passer à l'acte*," which refers to a fairly complex psychoanalytic understanding of the move from repression to action. (8) Early in the work Stiegler describes the way in which he made an exception of himself and devoted his life to "being something rare." (2) After some discussion of individuation Stiegler professes that his *passer à l'acte* resulted in a five-year period of not only incarceration, as mentioned above, but of *transformation* into his vocation as a philosopher. (11) Stiegler spent the majority of his time in prison studying philosophy, literature, and poetry, in part under the tutelage of Gérard Granel, who witnessed Stiegler being transformed by a "singular experience." (22)

While Stiegler's overall project is difficult to capture because of the scope of his philosophical engagements and his political activities, his philosophical pursuits addressed in *Acting Out* and developed in *Technics and Time* can be said to be centered on the question of the process of individuation defined by the interaction between the "I" and the "We" and the temporal conditioning of this relationship by technics.

On the whole, *Acting Out* provides a good introduction to the work of Bernard Stiegler because of its accessibility, length, and the richness of its insight as it leads into the larger questions of *Technics and Time*.

Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009; xxi + 174 pages. ISBN 978-0810125988.

Review by Bryan Smyth, University of Memphis.

Among the numerous books dealing with Merleau-Ponty that have appeared in recent years, this is one of the few that are genuinely important. This is because in approaching Merleau-Ponty's project in terms of the philosophy of nature, and doing so with singular expertise, this book forcefully rehabilitates one of the abiding philosophical concerns that lie at the very heart of that project, but which has not received due attention within Merleau-Ponty scholarship: what exactly do (or should) we mean by 'nature,' and just what is our relationship to it? For if, as is empirically undeniable, humanity exists immanently within nature, then how can our understanding of it possibly respect its transcendence, i.e., its brute inhumanity?

Coming to terms with this ambiguous duality was a central concern for Merleau-Ponty, and as Toadvine makes clear, it is also a concern for contemporary environmental philosophy—or rather, it *should* be a concern. For in his view, inasmuch as its conception of nature is grounded uncritically in scientific positivism, contemporary environmental philosophy remains hopelessly torn between opposed approaches based respectively in empirical realism and constructivist idealism. Each of these approaches is reductively geared to one side of the duality of immanence and transcendence—each thus fails to capture and embrace the dynamic tension between them, and hence cannot but reiterate a bad ambiguity. As a result, both approaches ultimately yield sceptical conclusions concerning nature, for neither is able to affirm that it could have a meaning that is at once autochthonous yet also intelligible.

It is for this task that Toadvine wants to revive the philosophy of nature as “a richer, multifaceted philosophical investigation of nature” (6), and to pursue this on a phenomenological—and specifically a Merleau-

Pontian—basis. For the task envisioned here implies tracing a new metaphysical path between realism and idealism in order to descriptively disclose the “ontological foundation” (10) of the ambivalence concerning nature and humanity’s relation to it that characterises contemporary environmental philosophy. Toadvine contends that this disclosure is “the phenomenological task par excellence” (16)—suggesting that in methodological terms phenomenology is most fully and truly realised as ‘ecophenomenology,’ i.e., as prioritizing the question of nature—and that Merleau-Ponty’s work “is foundational for [this] style of investigation.” (8) This is ultimately because Merleau-Ponty, in pushing phenomenology toward its methodological limits, made of it a sort of “meta-phenomenology” (8) based on a philosophy of *expression*. The idea of expressive mediation is the key to the new metaphysics of nature that Toadvine wants to draw out from Merleau-Ponty—the idea that nature “is precisely what discloses itself *through* our expressive acts, and as requiring such expression for its disclosure.” (15, original italics)

The book unfolds across five chapters which roughly follow the chronological development of Merleau-Ponty’s work. Chapter 1, “Nature as Gestalt and Melody,” thus begins with the *Gestalt*-theoretic ontology of nature that Merleau-Ponty elaborated in *The Structure of Behaviour*. Although this text, written in 1938, preceded Merleau-Ponty’s definitive turn to phenomenology, its ambitious attempt to navigate between realism and idealism on the basis of the perceptual apprehension of material and vital *Gestalten* nonetheless effectively laid out the problem concerning nature that would remain thematically central to his phenomenological work: “how to characterise nature as an assemblage of meanings that are embodied without being real, and experiential without being subjective.” (22)

At this initial stage, though, this problem is not resolved. Although Merleau-Ponty—developing an idea from von Uexküll—eschewed the scientific objectification of nature by analogising its *Gestalt* structures with *melody*, and although he construed the consciousness to which these structures are disclosed as itself a *Gestalt* structure that would be, as Toadvine put it, “ontologically continuous” with matter and life, and hence as relating to them through a sort of recursively teleological movement that would enjoy no “constitutive priority” over them, there nevertheless remains a problematic ambiguity concerning the relationship between structure and its signification, i.e., between perceptual and intellectual

consciousness. For inasmuch as structure remains a perceptual phenomenon, meaning in nature remains dependent upon a perceiving subjectivity. This is what Merleau-Ponty called “the problem of perception”—how perception as embedded in nature can yet generate reflective awareness of nature’s autochthony. While at this point Merleau-Ponty may well have seen that this required an account of thought as an expression of life, i.e., as based on “an expressive movement within nature itself” (25), what was not yet clear—for it would require a de-subjectifying “methodological reversal”—was how to provide “an account of philosophical reflection as a modality of [that expressive movement].” (49)

This is taken up in Chapter 2, “Radical Reflection and the Resistance of Things,” where Toadvine deals with the expressive role of reflection in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Here he shows how Merleau-Ponty, now based methodologically on his reinterpretation of Husserlian phenomenology, approaches nature ‘from within’ rather than from the standpoint of an ‘outside spectator’—specifically, as the correlate of the ‘natural’ body in an expressive dialogue that underwrites perceptual awareness. Although *prima facie* paradoxical, this move is intended to address the problem of *The Structure of Behaviour* by formulating an account of ‘radical reflection’ in which philosophical thought would take up its own pre-reflective conditions through a non-coincident process of creative expression that would also serve to reveal nature’s “aloofness” and “immemoriality” (70), that is, its intrinsic resistance to philosophical articulation, phenomenological or otherwise.

But as Toadvine shows, this is no less ontologically ambiguous than the earlier position. For it remains unclear whether the required methodological self-reference is grounded within nature or without. He suggests that the latter is ultimately the case, that the sort of auto-affection implied by Merleau-Ponty’s “radical reflection” hinges on his account of the “tacit *cogito*,” an account which Toadvine reads—somewhat uncharitably, perhaps, given certain countervailing indications—as positing a “retreat of non-being” that breaks with our natural being (74), and hence as not effecting any significant progress with regard to the philosophical problem of nature.

The next two chapters (versions of which have appeared previously) deal with different “paths of transition” between these early works and Merleau-Ponty’s later work, in particular, the unfinished manuscript of *The Visible and the Invisible*. They thus serve to illustrate

how Merleau-Ponty tried to work through the paradoxical tension inherent to the very idea of a phenomenology of nature in order to discharge more fully and consistently the spirit, so to speak, of the “methodological reversal,” and hence to formulate a more nuanced “a-subjective” approach to nature.

In Chapter 3, “Animality,” Toadvine looks at Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach to the theme of animal life, in particular as this is dealt with in his lectures on nature at the *Collège de France* in the late 1950s. Here Merleau-Ponty developed the intriguing ideas of a human-animal “*Ineinander*” or “intertwining,” and of an “interanimality” based upon lateral rather than hierarchical relations between human and non-human animal life. Whatever the ontological status of these claims may be, Toadvine takes them as implying a fundamentally new conception of the relation between mind and life, and therefore a fundamentally new conception of philosophical reflection as a corporeally-based manifestation of being’s own “self-interrogation.” (95) In Chapter 4, “The Space of Intentionality and the Orientation of Being,” Toadvine takes up from *Phenomenology of Perception* some suggestive indications concerning a primordial level of spatialisation in order to argue that, rather than representing a break with nature, intentionality is directly a feature of nature itself. He then takes this ontological understanding of intentionality to support a view of the being of nature as fundamentally oriented, which in turn he takes as the decisive piece of evidence in support of the crucial claim, to wit, that nature is in its own right expressive (103), that it includes a tendency to self-expression of which human philosophical reflection is an extension, and upon which it is ontologically dependent. Taken together, then, the conclusions of these chapters effectively characterise the way in which Merleau-Ponty hoped that the phenomenological project could successfully escape from what Agamben more recently called “the anthropological machine.”

The fifth chapter, “The Human-Nature Chiasm,” explores Merleau-Ponty’s notion of chiasm, with the particular aim of showing how the “expressive convergence” (122) of nature and culture can be understood as a chiasmatic relation, that is, as a “reversible movement of self-mediation.” (115) This would replace the traditional dualism with a dehiscence or duplicitous ontology of flesh wherein “being is not primordially self-identical but”—like the linguistic rendering of nature’s silent sense—“an event of originary non-difference.” (125) Toadvine’s

claim is that the logic of this expressive ontology, not despite but precisely in virtue of the ineliminable *écart* that it involves, “provides a compelling alternative to both naturalistic and constructivist approaches to nature, while accounting for the limited truth of each.” (109)

While the quality of Toadvine’s reading of Merleau-Ponty is first-rate, and while his general conclusion is philosophically sound, in that the ontological intertwining he describes could have significant positive consequences for contemporary environmental philosophy, it is unclear just how compelling its alternative chiasmatic logic would actually be in that context. For Merleau-Ponty provided but a cursory sketch which, pending extensive elaboration, amounts to little more than an invitation to regard reality in a radically new way by simultaneously recognising “nature as the very embodiment of sense and being as equivalent to perceived being.” (134) This is a challenging view, to say the least, and it is unclear whether it could be effectively motivated among ecophilosophers, many of whom would balk fervidly at the suggestion that “[t]o encounter nature...is also to creatively express it” (135)—and all the more so if, as is the case here, no clear line can be drawn between the expressed and its expression. But if one is concerned to rethink in a philosophically rigorous way the deeper issues at stake with respect to humanity’s relation to nature, and if one is unperturbed by the prospect of ambiguating anthropocentrism metaphysically rather than trying to dispose of it altogether, then one would do well to consider Toadvine’s stimulating reconstruction of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of nature. For in addition to being a valuable contribution to Merleau-Ponty scholarship, it also lends support to the hope that there could actually be, at least in philosophical terms, a viable and productive response to the “ecological crisis” of our times.