

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

The Author's Intention

JEFF MITSCHERLING, TANYA DITOMMASO, AREF NAYED
Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004; 143 pages.

The Author's Intention is the second volume of a proposed trilogy concerning the critique and reconstruction of the ontological foundations of hermeneutics. This project arose out of problems identified in the first volume, Mitscherling's *Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics* (1997). The third volume is a work in progress tentatively entitled *Aesthetic Genesis*. The stated task of *The Author's Intention* is to "place the current discussions of 'the author's intention' back into the larger historical and conceptual framework in which they belong" (ix). In doing this, *The Author's Intention* offers intriguing insights into the nature and origins of the deficiencies of current hermeneutic ontology and points towards a new direction for its revision.

The book includes an Introduction and four chapters: "Nietzsche and the Revision of Hermeneutic Ontology," "From Inspiration to Intention," "The Question of the Relevance of Authorial Intention," and "Authorial Intention and the Logos of the Work." In the Introduction the authors set out the overall argument of the book, stating that "our basic thesis in this work is that the 'traditional,' common-sense view of authorial intention is largely correct, and that recent attempts to do away with this view—most notably current attempts by philosophical hermeneutics and poststructuralism—are ill-founded and misleading" (1). The introduction continues by claiming that contemporary scholarship tends to overlook essential features of the aesthetic experience: the experiences both of the author engaged in artistic creation and of the audience or reader. According to the authors, these essential features are accessible to the analyst through "proper phenomenological analysis" (1). It is further suggested that these features are prelinguistic and, as such, have been overlooked given the overwhelming influence of Heidegger and Gadamer upon current hermeneutic discourse.

Chapter One begins with a discussion of Nietzsche's contributions to the field of hermeneutics and his identification of certain prelinguistic features of aesthetic experience. According to Nietzsche, language itself is the manifestation of a series of metaphors through which nerve impulses are translated into images that are in turn translated into spoken sounds. Each step in this process represents the transference of meaning into another cognitive realm and, in this way, constitutes a metaphor, a carrying over of meaning from one meaningful state to another. The im-

portance of this notion to the overall thesis of *The Author's Intention* is that it identifies a meaningful event of understanding (two in fact) that is essentially prelinguistic. Chapter One concludes with a brief explanation as to how Gadamer was led to overlook this feature of Nietzsche's philosophy and, in so doing, misdirected the progress of hermeneutics in general.

In the second chapter the authors sketch the genesis and evolution of the notion of "the author's intention." This evolution begins with Plato's notion of the inspired author through the work of the Neo-Hegelian philosophy of Croce. The most important discussion in this chapter concerns Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics. At the heart of Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics is his doctrine of reenactment. For Schleiermacher interpretation is, in a manner of speaking, a process through which the interpreter gets into the author's head and attempts to re-experience the self-same thought process that went into the creation of the work. The interpreter's ability to access the author's thought process, however, is precisely what later theorists have rejected (36).

The third chapter provides a review of contemporary movements in hermeneutics and the various figures associated with them. The first discussion focuses on poststructuralism and the work of Derrida. Discussions that follow address the work of Greenblatt, Foucault, Rorty, and Eco. More lengthy treatments of Betti and Hirsch are also offered. By far the most important discussion of this chapter, and indeed one of the pivotal discussions of the book, concerns Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and what the authors refer to as his "metaphysics of light." After some prefatory discussion concerning Gadamer's *Truth and Method* the authors characterize his *magnum opus* as a commentary on the prologue to the Gospel of St. John. The authors explain that at first Gadamer identifies language with the Greek notion of *logos*, then proceeds to equate it with the medieval Christian notion of *verbum*. Language, as such, requires the invocation of certain analogies in order for its subject to extract meaning from the written text. The most appropriate analogy, we are told, is the analogy with light. Accordingly, Gadamer concludes that language reveals its meaning to the subject just as light reveals all things to consciousness.

In their concluding chapter the authors return to the notion of *logos* that Gadamer raises. This concept turns out to be pivotal in their reaffirmation of the notion of authorial intention. Their analysis reveals two types of intention: (1) dynamic intention (referring to the Greek term *dunamis*), which is described as the fixed potential meanings that any given word possesses; and (2) energetic intention (referring to the Greek term *energeia*), which is said to activate the potential meanings of words

through their arrangement according to the *logos* of the work. The *logos* of the work is revealed through the author's act of composition. Through the process of reading the text we come to engage its energetic intention; in so doing we reactivate the dynamic intention possessed by each word of the composition, and ultimately we come to participate in the *logos* of the work. Energetic intention, as it turns out, *is* the author's intention. Understood in this way, the author's intention is not merely the moral or point of the text, but is the experience "embodied" in the text; it is the experience of inspiration that the author engaged in and which we as readers are meant to share.

With their basic thesis articulated, the authors then return to the larger project of the revision of hermeneutic ontology. They conclude by elaborating upon the greater significance of *The Author's Intention* within this project and briefly outlining the trajectory the project will take in the third volume, *Aesthetic Genesis*. The authors present a direct critique of Heidegger's and Gadamer's position(s) that language is the foundation of all experience, arguing that neither provides any insight into the origin of language itself. This has led to what the authors refer to as the "linguistic mistake." That is, without considering where language may come from, as Nietzsche did, both Heidegger and Gadamer elevate language to the pinnacle of existence without, at least explicitly, scrutinizing the possibility that language may itself arise out of certain ontological preconditions. Recalling Nietzsche's analysis of the rhetorical origins of language discussed in the first chapter, the authors reaffirm their position that the meaning of language can be traced back to the prelinguistic reception of sensory data. Indeed, according to the authors, "conceptual thinking, logic, and all 'rational' cognitive operations are grounded upon and ultimately—via the operation of the imagination—derive from brute sensations and raw feeling" (117).

What is especially appealing about *The Author's Intention* is that it manages to achieve considerable depth in its analysis without reverting to the jargon in which discussions of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gadamer are so often couched. This is not to say that *The Author's Intention* is entirely exoteric in its delivery. In their concluding comments the authors suggest that "We have to extend the Ingardenian sort of phenomenological analysis [the kind to which they themselves subscribe] to fields beyond art, demonstrating the importance of the peculiar mode of being belonging to intentional objects in all sorts of interpretive acts" (117). This line of thought, we are told, has led them to what they describe as a "new Copernican Hypothesis" (118), suggesting that the notion of authorial intention of which they speak is itself ontologically prior to the text to which it gives rise. We must, however, await the sequel to *The*

Author's Intention to find out to what this line of thought ultimately leads.

DARRYL J. MURPHY, *University of Guelph*

Phenomenological Epistemology

HENRY PIETERSMA

New York: Oxford University Press, 2000; 204 pages.

The scholarly literature has mapped the intricate filiations and complex affinities weaving together the works of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. An additional study bringing together these towering figures of Continental philosophy can hardly be unusual for readers familiar with phenomenological debates. However, a rigorous inquiry into the epistemologies underlying their works has failed to arouse the deserved interest. Pietersma's attempt to fill this gap is thus all the more rewarding.

Remarkable for its richness of historical detail and systematic investigation, Pietersma's book follows an original line of thought. Unlike so many scholars who situate themselves within the phenomenological tradition, comfortably assuming its vocabulary, Pietersma feels at ease in encountering philosophical crossroads that allow him to step outside the phenomenological tradition in order to challenge it from the standpoint of theoretical alternatives.

Pietersma focuses his book on the controversy between phenomenology and epistemological realism. Flanked by a lengthy Introduction and concise Conclusion, the core of the book comprises three independent expository chapters, one for each of the thinkers mentioned above. The Introduction provides terminological clarifications and conceptual scaffolding for the following analyses. The Conclusion assesses the hypotheses set forth in the Introduction on the basis of the findings arrived at by means of a close reading of Husserl's, Heidegger's, and Merleau-Ponty's essential texts. Classical realism takes the role of a foil for transcendental phenomenology. Pietersma warns the reader that realism should not be confused, as is often the case in phenomenology, with naturalism or physical objectivism. Instead of hastily condemning realist theories for being abstract, naive, or dogmatic, Pietersma construes the realist position as a strong adversary for phenomenology. Epistemological realism (externalism) grants an external observer the capacity to report the relations between a cognitive subject and her environment. A realist episte-

mologist gives preference to second-order discourse because she is more concerned with the nature of truth than with how truth is to be sought. For her a belief can become knowledge either as a result of a causal connection between a state of affairs and the subject's holding of the belief or because the belief is the product of a reliable cognitive mechanism. What justifies a belief is the fact that it is made up of concepts that are instantiated in a given. Concepts are abstracted from an inquiry into the nature of things and serve to apprehend the general properties of things.

Is the realist position radically incompatible with transcendental epistemology? In Pietersma's view, transcendentalists do not reject realism as such. Rather, they refuse to take it as their starting point. The main purpose of transcendental philosophy is to demonstrate the possibility of knowledge against radical skepticism. Radical skepticism and realism share the core tenet of mind-independent entities existing in themselves. If radical skepticism is to be rejected, then its core tenet has to be abandoned. Does this compromise realism entirely? Pietersma believes that it does not. For transcendentalists, the given becomes an object of knowledge only when it is filtered and transformed by conceptual forms. The only reason why realists regard the external relation between cognitive subject and objects of knowledge as an easily bridgeable gap is their lack of interest in the epistemic conditions that make possible any apprehension of something real. The object-oriented attitude characteristic of realism loses sight of conceptual frameworks. However, the idea of a mind-independent state of affairs corresponding to a true belief is not to be repudiated as such. The phenomenologist would relegate it to the pre-philosophical level.

It is the idea of conceptual frameworks that dominates Pietersma's "tool kit." Defined as "extensive interpretive schemes in terms of which the factual data of a domain of entities are conceptualized" (21), conceptual frameworks constitute the landmark of transcendental phenomenology. Pietersma focuses on the way conceptual frameworks operate in the texts of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, supplementing his analyses with references to other philosophers belonging to the same tradition, especially Kant and Hegel. For Pietersma, conceptual frameworks serve two purposes: they indicate the kind of entities accessible within a framework and show how knowledge of these entities is to be attained. Making conceptual frameworks explicit results in an internalization of externalism. It only makes sense to talk about subject-object relations from within a conceptual framework, whatever its constituents may be. What Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty have in common is that they charge realism with relying on unexamined assumptions. One cannot make claims about the nature of things without inquiring first into

the cognitive powers of the knowing subject. Thus, transcendentalist epistemologies propose that knowledge of entities is conditioned by the broadening of the context of meaning. For Husserl, this context is given by the *absolute consciousness*, Heidegger identifies this context with *the being of Dasein*, while Merleau-Ponty believes that *embodied percipience* should be the privileged context.

Of the three studies that Pietersma dedicates to Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, I will restrict myself here to a more detailed examination of the last of these. Pietersma gives an excellent account of embodied percipience as an integral and self-sufficient awareness of objects that need not be supplemented by conceptualization. The arising of meaning within the perceptual field, the secondary and unfaithful character of reflection with respect to prereflective experience, embodiment as a means to reach a perceptual optimum, and objectification as blockage of perceptual teleology are only a few of the important aspects of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy discussed in great detail. Pietersma's reading of Merleau-Ponty diverges from other well-known interpretations, such as Dillon's. Instead of emphasizing how a non-dualist metaphysics of flesh wards off epistemological skepticism, Pietersma reads Merleau-Ponty as proposing a more adequate theory of knowledge which goes beyond the epistemic duality of subject and object toward a unifying context of meaning. This context of meaning is that of the primordial being of the percipient.

What is the place of Merleau-Ponty in the dispute between transcendentalists and realists? Merleau-Ponty seems to identify transcendentalism and idealism, rejecting the latter as philosophy of reflection. He takes the percept's inexhaustibility in relation to our perception to suggest that objects remain external to perceptual acts. Thus, one might think that Merleau-Ponty is a realist. However, this initial impression is quickly dispelled by the fact that externalism is incompatible with the core requirement of phenomenological discourse, that is, direct apprehension of experience.

Pietersma spends a great deal of his efforts explaining how the idea of conceptual frameworks is played out in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*. Embodied subject, perceptual field, the movement of transcendence, appearances and reality are the constitutive elements of the broad context of meaning on which cognitive success depends. Only by abstracting from this context of meaning can the realist posit an external, mind-independent entity. Science and common sense are proof that this tendency is inescapable. However, from a phenomenological point of view, this happens because self-forgetfulness plagues perception. Merleau-Ponty is not a realist in

the classical sense of the term. He finds unacceptable the idea of external, material entities independent of the human mind. However, primordial perception as natural, pre-personal capacity is able to deliver an apprehension of reality. The distinctive sign of this apprehension is that it refrains from severing the result of the perceptual process from the process itself. The fact that apprehension of reality always takes place within a context of meaning or as an aspect of a context constitutes a warrant against skepticism. The skeptic's complaint—that we can never gain access to reality either because there is no way out of the circle of impressions or because conceptualization distorts the given by fixing an appearance into an entity—loses its weight.

Pietersma is not satisfied with Merleau-Ponty's arguments against idealism. To charge idealism with being reductive is to assume that concepts cannot grasp the real. In so doing, Merleau-Ponty fails to acknowledge that conceptualization poses no problem for realists who take concepts as expressing the general properties of things. Pietersma believes that a sustained dialogue with realist theories could compensate for the insufficiency of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the nature of concepts. The remarks with which the Merleau-Ponty chapter ends mirror the conclusion of the book. The confrontation between phenomenology and its rivals cannot but increase the finesse and scope of the contending theories. In addition to the quality of its hermeneutical work, the greatest merit of Pietersma's book lies in the intelligent stage-setting for ongoing debate between transcendental phenomenology and its alternatives.

VICTOR BICEAGA, *University of Guelph*

Éthique. Le Brouillon sur l'éthique de 1805–1806

FRIEDRICH DANIEL ERNST SCHLEIERMACHER

Traduction de Christian Berner. Paris: Cerf, 2004; 240 pages.

La traduction française du *Brouillon sur l'éthique* des années 1805 et 1806 de Friedrich Schleiermacher par Christian Berner complète le cycle de traduction des grandes œuvres philosophiques du théologien. L'*Herméneutique* et la *Dialectique* furent traduites respectivement en 1989 et 1997 et l'*Esthétique* en 2004. Les années 1805 et 1806 furent comblées par des occupations diverses et intenses. En 1804, Schleiermacher a entamé la longue publication de ses traductions des *Dialogues* de Platon. Il se trouva alors en poste à Halle et assumait une fonction de pasteur qu'il honora jusqu'en 1806, année de la parution de la seconde édi-

tion des *Discours sur la religion*. Le *Brouillon sur l'éthique* prit naissance alors qu'il eut à donner, parallèlement à ses charges de pasteur, des cours à l'université. Le séminaire sur l'éthique s'est tenu à raison de cinq heures tous les jours. En 1807, alors que Halle fut envahie par les troupes napoléoniennes, l'université fut forcée de fermer ses portes et Schleiermacher regagna alors Berlin pour y devenir, à peine deux ans plus tard, professeur de théologie et secrétaire de la commission chargée de la fondation de l'Université de Berlin. Le *Brouillon* constitue une première préparation de ce que sera, en 1812-1813, l'ouvrage sur l'*Éthique*. Le traducteur a utilisé les notes prises au cours de Schleiermacher par son élève August Boeckh. Elles ont été incluses en notes de bas de pages et servent à éclairer les passages les plus obscurs.

Selon Schleiermacher, l'éthique se définit comme l'action de la raison sur la nature. Cette activité se divise elle-même en deux fonctions : organisatrice et symbolisatrice. Notre présentation du *Brouillon sur l'éthique* s'attache principalement à dégager le lien qui unit les deux activités symboliques que sont l'art et la religion. Nous suivons en cela la prescription de Schleiermacher lui-même selon laquelle « Le véritable exercice de l'art est religieux » (66) et se trouve donc, du même coup, relié à la morale.

À la septième heure de cours, Schleiermacher propose de définir l'essence de l'éthique comme la « présentation scientifique de l'agir humain » (49), première face dira-t-il de la philosophie à laquelle on ne peut en opposer qu'une seule autre, la physique. À propos de cette dernière, Schleiermacher se permettait de renvoyer ses étudiants à Henrik Steffens, le *Naturphilosoph* et disciple de Schelling alors lui aussi en poste à Halle. Éthique et physique ne peuvent se développer indépendamment l'une de l'autre; c'est pourquoi Schleiermacher entrevoit leur perfection respective dans un « devenir parallèle », c'est-à-dire une mise en commun et une influence réciproque. Une troisième « proposition » vient compléter les premières définitions de l'éthique; celle-ci concerne son style, qui ne pourra être qu'historique puisque la science n'est effective que là où la loi et le phénomène observés sont donnés comme « identiques ». Ce ne sera ni sous la forme de l'impératif (l'ordre, la règle ou le devoir-être), ni sous celle du conseil (l'extériorité bienfaitrice et le « conditionné ») qu'elle devra donc s'écrire. Sa forme suivra le développement de l'intuition et cette dernière, à son tour, sera attentive à voir partout où cela est possible une âme dans la personne (ce qui est nommé « doctrine de la vertu ») et une âme dans le temps (ce qui est alors appelé « doctrine des devoirs »). Le style de l'éthique sera donc celui de la description et de l'explication.

Schleiermacher entrevoit tout ce qui ressort de l'« individuel » comme ce qu'il nomme l'« *Unübertragbarkeit* » (55), l'*intraduisible*. Or,

ce qui est individuel doit s'investir dans une communauté car sans cette « entrée en communauté », il nous serait impossible de parler de particularité, cette dernière n'existant que par rapport à d'autres particularités. Schleiermacher fait la même remarque en ce qui concerne la communauté qui, selon lui, tire son fondement de cette notion de particularité. L'organisation des particularités sous l'emblème de la communauté donne naissance à la plus vaste organisation qu'est l'État. L'éthique doit faire en sorte que l'élément intraduisible puisse bel et bien être intégré à une communauté. L'unification se fait donc à partir de la « particularité en commun » de toutes les individualités composant les diverses organisations humaines (État, famille, propriété). À la suite de cette première opposition, Schleiermacher en élabore alors une seconde, qu'il place au centre de son éthique entre le penser (la connaissance) et le parler (l'extériorisation de la connaissance). Le penser est une forme intérieure du parler et tend naturellement à vouloir s'exprimer puisque nous ne pouvons percevoir nos pensées que sous la forme de mots. Voilà pourquoi le langage est défini comme une *médiation* du penser et du parler. L'autre versant, qui n'est point réductible au penser, se nomme sentiment (*Gefühl*). Il s'agit du caractère proprement intraduisible de l'intériorité de l'individu; seulement, si l'intraduisible demeure incommunicable, il s'ensuit que l'unité de la vie et de la raison d'une même personne est supprimée. Schleiermacher nomme cette conséquence « l'implantation nécessaire du caractère opposé. » (64) Celle-ci constitue en fait une « *Schwingung* », une « oscillation » entre le penser et le parler et qui ne peut atteindre de résolution dialectique. Toute organisation humaine est en fait une analogie de cette oscillation puisqu'elle décrit un va-et-vient infini entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur de l'être, entre le sujet et le monde. Chaque effet reçu par un individu est alors perçu comme un mouvement venant de l'extérieur vers l'intérieur capable d'engendrer un sentiment. Mais une fois constitué en nous, ce sentiment veut ressortir à l'extérieur, s'exprimer. En s'extériorisant, il ne se manifeste pas d'abord comme langage mais plutôt à partir des organes du corps: tons, gestes et regards du visage; ce que Schleiermacher nomma dans l'*Esthétique* la « mimique ».

L'extériorisation du sentiment se rattache d'abord aux grandes branches de l'art, discipline à propos de laquelle Schleiermacher précise qu'elle est la présentation et, donc, l'extériorisation du contenu rationnel d'un individu. La parenté de l'art et du sentiment se trouve dans le fait que ni l'un ni l'autre, bien qu'ils veuillent tous deux être compris, le veulent comme le serait le langage. Ainsi, l'art n'est en rien réductible au langage et l'idée que toute œuvre renferme en elle est d'abord irrationnelle du point de vue de la compréhension. L'art est ainsi l'« exposition

matérielle » de l'intuition d'un sentiment qui cherche à être reconnu par la communauté. La langue en est un élément mais encore une fois, n'est pas à être comprise et identifiée en tant qu'une extériorisation immédiate du sentiment.

Lorsqu'il termina la seizième heure de cours, Schleiermacher insista sur la signification morale qui doit rassembler le penser et le parler, le sentiment et sa présentation. De cette union dans la morale est alors déduit le lien entre la religion et l'art. Le sentiment, dans l'existence morale, le sentiment organisé et noble tourné vers le bien et le beau appartient à la sphère de la religion. C'est pourquoi la vision morale de l'art doit coïncider avec la religion qui, seule, permet de prendre conscience de l'absolu. Lisons à ce propos la longue note de cours prise par son élève August Boeckh. Il y est dit d'abord que la religion est mise en rapport immédiat du fini à l'infini. C'est de cette manière que Schleiermacher définissait la religion depuis les *Discours sur la religion* de 1799. Or, le sentiment est lui aussi rapport immédiat du fini à l'infini. La présentation de ce sentiment, c'est l'art en tant que tel et Boeckh peut donc conclure que « la *moralité* et l'*art* doivent être unis » (67) puisque, selon Schleiermacher, la vision morale de l'art est en tout point identique à la religion. Le sentiment moral correspond ainsi à la sphère religieuse parce que pour arriver à une conscience de la « vie morale », il faut d'abord qu'un individu puisse être conscient du principe qui lui a donné une âme (l'absolu). La relation immédiate de la conscience à ce principe correspond à ce que Schleiermacher définit par le terme de « religion ». L'art, qui est présentation d'un sentiment moral, *coïncide* donc avec la religion. En ce sens, l'art est aussi le langage ou si l'on veut l'extériorisation de la religion, son expression rendue disponible pour toute la communauté. Ce raisonnement si important pour l'*Éthique* explique en quoi Schleiermacher, dans son *Esthétique*, a pu distinguer deux voies possibles de l'extériorisation de la religiosité, à savoir le dogme qui en est une « expression par réflexion », puis l'art qui en est une « expression par représentation » (*mimesis*).

À la question de l'art succède alors celle de la « beauté » qui lui est implicite. Schleiermacher remarque en un premier temps que l'organisation de la communauté « reçoit » la beauté et que cette dernière est de l'ordre d'un « développement de la vie » et non quelque chose qui est « déjà donné ». La beauté est plus précisément l'« individuel » incarnant la raison en de multiples façons. Nous noterons en ce point, une proche parenté de Schleiermacher avec le Schelling de la *Philosophie de l'art* et du *Bruno* de l'an 1802. Schelling avait développé à cette époque l'idée selon laquelle le fini et l'infini sont unis par l'éternel, éternel qui est aussi,

disait-il, responsable de la beauté des œuvres parce qu'il a un rapport intime et privilégié à l'artiste.

Il ressort donc de ces considérations que sans la religion, l'art ne pourrait arriver à présenter un véritable sentiment « moral ». La culture qui fait en sorte de vivifier les sentiments moraux est donc elle aussi religion. Voilà la raison pour laquelle Schleiermacher affirma dans son introduction au *Brouillon* que toutes les théories de l'art doivent procéder de l'éthique. Ajoutons que si le sentiment présenté par l'art doit éveiller le sentiment d'autrui, c'est qu'il devra contenir en lui le lien très étroit partagé par tous les êtres constituant la communauté entre l'univers et l'individu. L'art est ainsi rattaché immédiatement à l'éthique puisque le premier vise à éduquer et à faire progresser l'individu vers la beauté (beauté du sentiment individuel) « formée » et construite par la morale et devenue commune à tous; c'est-à-dire la beauté produite, présentée et reconnue par chacun. L'éthique philosophique de Schleiermacher refuse ainsi de se laisser entraîner dans un travail de prescription; en cela elle s'oppose aux éthiques de Kant et de Fichte qui l'ont précédée. Elle cherche, en effet, à démontrer la moralité qui habite les formes d'organisations humaines dont l'art, tout comme la religion, l'Église et l'État, compte au nombre des plus brillantes.

MORGAN GAULIN, *Université de Montréal*

Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother

THOMAS Y. LEVIN, URSULA FROHNE, AND PETER WEIBEL, Editors
Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002; 665 pages.

This volume was published on the occasion of a major exhibit of the same title that took place at the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) / Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany from October, 2001 to February, 2002. Both projects look at surveillance strategies and their political consequences for civil society. Curated by Thomas Levin, the exhibition's website (<http://ctrlspace.zkm.de/e/>) provides reams of additional material on the artists as well as an interview (in German) with the curator.

The book/exhibit aims to explore the entire range of the "Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother," i.e., from the paradigmatic notion of controlled space articulated in the architectural model of the panopticon to the new episteme of control in state of the art dataveillance invoked by the reference to the 'ctrl' and space-bar keys of the

computer interface." The Foucauldian concern with power is obvious, but the main focus is the Deleuzian one of the surveillant control that arises out of the new information technologies of the twenty-first century: "open systems of control no longer centralized around single authorities, but rather functioning according to a multitude of corporate interests in a global network of information flows" (11). Levin, in the "Curatorial Statement," says that the exhibition took its cue from the central role played by the architectural model in the genealogy of surveillance, and concentrates therefore on "the complex relationships between design and power, between representation and subjectivity, between archives and oppression" (12).

This is a large and attractive book: 8 1/2 x 11, with cloth binding, a slick textbook cover, glossy paper, and many color images in its 665 pages. It includes seventy-nine artists and twenty-eight essayists, including Foucault, Virilio, Zizek, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Robert Darnton, Steve Mann, Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, Peter Weibel (note the NASCAD connection), Rem Koolhaas, Julia Scher, Warhol, Lennon/Ono, Sophie Calle, and Harun Farocki.

The editors divide the work thematically into eight sections: "Phenomenologies of Surveillance," "Surveillance and Punishment," "Politics of Observation," "Surveillant Pleasures," "Controlled Space," "Tracking Systems," "Control, Surveillance, and Everyday Life," and "Recastings: Surveillant Subversions." Each section begins with several essays which are then followed by the "Projects" or artworks. Some essays appear to be written specially for this volume, while others were seemingly chosen for their relevance. The historical movement throughout is from sovereign society (taking a cut of production and condemning to death—Astrit Schmidt-Burckhardt, "The All-Seer: God's Eye as Proto-Surveillance") to disciplinary society (organizing both production and life—Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot"), to control society (metaproduction: organizing organization—Deleuze's "Postscript on Control Societies").

The text "rhizomatically" (in Deleuzian terms) reflects this historical movement. Throughout, the anxiety about time, which characterized sovereign society, continuously interacts with an anxiety about space characteristic of disciplinary society, which, in its eternally recurrent turn, interacts with a "future perfect" anxiety about time that is characteristic of control (see Winifried Pauliet, "Video Surveillance and Postmodern Subjects: The Effects of the Photographesomenon—An Image Form in the 'Futur antérieur'"). Indeed, this book is as much about time as it is about space. Trying to understand how people let themselves be run by pleasure requires providing a vocabulary for describing the proleptic

structure of panoptic control. The philosophy of time is thus the key to understanding how Big Brother changed from an icon of totalitarianism to the symbol of panoptic science.

It is not all doom and gloom: the third section (Weibel, Zizek, Frohne, Brandon Joseph on Warhol) is, after all, devoted to pleasure, while section eight deals with subversion (Thomas Keenan, Levin on "real time" in cinema, Tom Holert on George Michael, cyborg Steve Mann on seditious tactics). The overall impression, however, is negative. Essays like those found in section six, "Tracking Systems" (Lev Manovich and Mackenzie Werk on visual vectors of power), and section four, "Politics of Observation" (Duncan Campbell on global surveillance), seem to carry more weight than the odd light moment from Mann or the dizzying rhetoric of Virilio. Even the dark irony of Robert Darnton on the Stasi files or the fascinating brilliance of Baudrillard and Zizek on "reality" T.V. tends to be somewhat depressing.

The art provides some relief, but the criteria for inclusion are not specified. The book/exhibit's genesis is given, rather confusedly, in the opening "Editorial," but there is much left unsaid. Both the book and exhibit are connected to the annual international media/art award given jointly by the ZKM and the Sudwestrundfunk broadcasting network (SWR) in Germany. Weibel, chair and CEO of the ZKM, chose as the theme of the 2001 awards and concurrent exhibition and, at the suggestion of Ursula Frohne, invited Levin to curate the show. Unfortunately, we are told nothing about the international media/art award itself—who won, how it is organized, or even what it is—nor are we told exactly how the book/exhibit is connected to it.

For the record, the international media/art award is a competition that takes place yearly on both television and in the ZKM. Each year the chair of the ZKM chooses a theme and puts out a call for artists' submissions in video and interactive media. Fifty pieces are chosen and SWR's program planners organize a coordinated thematic focus by scheduling program segments, movies, and interviews relevant to the theme for television and radio broadcast. Other broadcast partners are also involved: Swiss TV (SF DRS), ARTE, and RTV Slovenia. Parallel to this, the ZKM presents exhibitions and lecture series dealing with the theme of the year. From the fifty finalists, an international jury of experts chooses the winners, usually four in all: two main prizes, a special award, and a non-monetary viewer's award.

How any of this is related to the 2001 project, however, is left unexplained. It is clear that not all the seventy-nine artists included in the book/exhibit entered the competition, and not all of those listed on the

award's website as among the top fifty contestants for 2001 are included, most notably Istvan Kantor.

Despite these problems, the material contained here is still first-rate. The book is to be highly recommended as much for its visual appeal as for its value as an introduction to contemporary visual politics.

DARREN HYNES, *Memorial University*

Bodies of Meaning: Studies on Language, Labor, and Liberation

DAVID McNALLY

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000; 277 pages.

Language has been the paradigm for the human sciences for a sufficient time now that critiques of the linguistic or discursive turn have started to weigh in. This is one such critique. When a certain activity—be it language, labor, education, whatever—stands as the paradigm for knowledge of human activity, there are at least two interrelated issues that require some degree of separation: how is language itself understood, and what is clarified, and what obscured, by language standing paradigmatically for human activity outright? McNally's intentions address both these questions, though the emphasis is on the first. His main issue is to develop a materialist theory of language. He describes his project as "think[ing] about language *through the body*.... [A]ny attempt to understand language in abstraction from bodies and their histories can only produce an impoverished knowledge" (10).

The touchstone of materialism here is neither technology (which would yield an orthodox Marxist technological determinism) nor physical science (which would yield an equally orthodox Marxist scientism), but the human body. This brings his project close to phenomenological Marxism and, more specifically, to Merleau-Ponty due to the importance of the gesture, though this connection is not followed up at all. Rather, McNally rests his concept of language on interpretations of Voloshinov-Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin. However, the constructive attempt at a materialist theory of language pales beside what seems to be the main concern of this work: to criticize what he calls the "new idealism" of the "postmodern fetish of language" in which "mind is de-materialized, while the body is de-subjectivized, reduced to a mere thing" (2, 15, 5).

These manifold concerns rather overburden the work. It rushes through five chapters, including a critique of postmodernism, linguistic theory from Saussure to Derrida, attempts at a positive connection to

Darwinism, Voloshinov-Bakhtin, and then Benjamin such that the critical and constructive concerns are rather at odds. The first two critical chapters presuppose a more coherent and embodied theory of language as their basis, whereas the later constructive chapters often tend merely to explicate the positions of the authors in question rather than demonstrating their superiority. McNally wants a theory of language that is carnivalesque (Bakhtin), feminist (Vicky Kirby and others), counter-hegemonic (Gramsci), embodied (Benjamin), and production-oriented (Marx), but he gives very few clues as to how these various components might hang together coherently. Overall, the argument does not amount to much more than preferring Benjamin's theory to any others. The systematic ambitions to develop a coherent materialist theory of language are not followed up. This might be recognized in the subtitle. If these are to be understood as separate "studies" in the relation of language to the body, perhaps the fact that they point vaguely toward (rather than show) what an adequate theory would be can be forgiven. Nonetheless, it rather pulls the mat out from under one of his main critiques of the postmoderns—that their conception of the body is abstract and de-materialized, without relation to labor and suffering. The book itself certainly does not fulfill the Benjaminian imperative that McNally approvingly quotes, "to force the utopian impulse into the closest contact with a world of pain and ruination," such that it "must emerge through immersion in the brute facts of a suffering world" (13). The references to sweatshops, exploited labor, childbirth, etc. are scattered and inconclusive, no less abstract and de-materialized than those that are criticized.

However, there are some very good specific analyses in the book, including the critique of the fetishistic completed circuit in postmodernism as a masculine myth of self-birth, the analysis of technology that ties it closely to language, and the account of consumer and fashion eroticism. It is just that it does not add up, although it claims to develop a coherent theory. The whole notion of linguistic materialism remains rather vague. Carnavalesque, *pace* Bakhtin. Mimetic and onomatopoeic, *pace* Benjamin. Where, why, and how is this a materialist theory? What does materialism mean when applied to language? (I must admit to some special pleading here, since the core of my own theory of language and communication is that it is materialistic in the sense of the "living body" in Husserl and phenomenology. See my *Primal Scenes of Communication: Communication, Consumerism and Social Movements* [Albany: SUNY Press, 2000].) The closest that I can find to an answer is McNally's incorporation of Darwin into his theoretical argument. This is, as he is well aware, the most contentious part of his argument in the contemporary theoretical milieu and in many ways the most interesting.

The chapter on Darwin is the only one where all the themes of the materialist theory are in play together to form what he calls the *generativity* of language: natural variation, female sexual selection, gesture, toolmaking and language, embodied knowledge. He argues, correctly in my view, that toolmaking and technology have been largely misunderstood in social theory as asocial and alinguistic. Thus, both orthodox Marxism and bourgeois social science often converge on a technological determinism that would derive social and linguistic formation from technical changes—which forgets, to paraphrase Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach, that technical changes are generated by social and linguistic human beings. McNally thus proposes the outline of a theory of the relation between sociality, language, and toolmaking that really deserves more development.

Let me reconstruct the argument this way. First, human beings are not the only animals to use tools, but they are the only ones to use tools to make tools. Second, making tools requires a set of intermediate structures that are meaningless in themselves, much in the way that a phoneme is a meaningless bit of language. Third, these meaningless units are nevertheless meaningful in relation to the entire complex system, much in the way that a phoneme takes on meaning within an utterance. Fourth, the complex system requires social cooperation and cognition. Fifth, language is thus essential to the generation of the complex tool systems that are embodied in work. McNally's core argument thus seems to be a continuation of the synthesis between Marx and Darwin that has a long history within Marxist social theory from Marx and Engels themselves, through theorists as diverse as Karl Kautsky and Anton Pannekoek, up to contemporary writers such as Alfred Sohn-Rethel and Lawrence Krader. It seems to me that, despite his disclaimer that "my argument is not that critical social theory ought to shift its attention from language to the body" (9), this theory would at least shift attention from language to the labor-tools-language complex. In the end, language is a part of his theme, not the whole of it, and not the whole of language is important to his theme.

I find it puzzling that McNally does not seem to find (at least judging from this book) the current resurgence of interest in the nature-society relationship in environmentalism and ecological thought to be important. This is not only another key point at which the work of Marx and Darwin can be brought into a productive relationship. It is also the case that the fundamental motive and meaning of technology for Marx and Darwin is the transformation of nature into goods useful to human beings. Surely the labor-tools-language complex needs the addition of nature to be complete.

In sum, the book strikes me as more of a prolegomenon than a complete work. It points in a direction worthy of further development, but it rather fails in its attempt to propose a materialist theory of language.

IAN ANGUS, *Simon Fraser University*